UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
BUSINESS COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 6 SEPTEMBER 2018

Present: Nigel Lindsay (Convener), Nuala Booth, Professor George Boyne (Principal and Vice-Chancellor), Mike Cooper, Eric Crockart, Colin Duncan, Graham Hunter, Tom Lynch, Duncan Macniven, Lynne Mennie, Alan Milne, Jenny Mordue, Graeme Nicol, Iain Percival, Patricia Pugh, Mary Stephen and Brian Wood, with Caroline Inglis (University Secretary) Katrina Allan (Head of Alumni Engagement), Maggie Chapman (Rector), Nicole Cochrane (Clerk) and David Watts (Item 8).


1. MINUTES

The minutes from the meeting held on 7 June 2018 were approved.

2. MATTERS ARISING

The Convenor advised the Committee that data had been obtained by Alumni Relations pertaining to the number of contactable General Council members but that further work was required to establish the accuracy of said data. The Convenor relayed the suggestion that Alumni Relations would work to bring the data to the next meeting. The Committee was in agreement with this course of action.

ACTION: Mrs Allan

3. REPORT FROM THE CONVENER

The Convener prepared a written report ahead of the meeting in which he spoke about:

- Participation of the Business Committee in Summer 2018 Graduation Ceremonies.
- The proposal for a combined University AGM and Winter Statutory Meeting of the General Council (Item 9).
- The involvement of Patience Schell in ‘Reclaiming our University’ and her invitation to speak at the November Business Committee meeting.
- Ongoing work regarding a follow-up publication on the history of the first hundred years of the General Council.
- The proposal to make Maggie Chapman a member of the Business Committee, either through co-option or by making the position of Rector an ex officio committee member.

Further discussion focused on the potential membership of the Rector, Mrs Maggie Chapman. The Committee discussed different options available to them, which included co-option, ex officio status, and continued ad-hoc attendance.

Mr Crockart highlighted the requirement to change the Standing Orders if ex officio status were pursued. As such, notification of the intention to change the Standing Orders would need to go to the Winter Statutory Meeting to then be put to the Summer Statutory Meeting for agreement. Ms Inglis reminded the Committee of the impact that such a change would have on the size of the Committee. The Convenor proposed that members take the time to consider this discussion further before the next meeting, after which notice could then be prepared, if required, ahead of the Winter Statutory meeting. The Committee was in agreement with this course of action.

4. ALUMNI RELATIONS UPDATE

Mrs Allan, Head of Alumni Engagement, provided a comprehensive written report to the Committee on alumni relations activity. Updates further to the publication of the report were:

- The two vacancies within the Alumni Relations team referenced therein had since been approved for recruitment and are now live in the University’s redeployment pool.
• Autumn / Winter Aberdeen Connect Programme is now live and events are open for booking.
• Voice magazine had been issued by post and also electronically as a PDF. The Convenor noted that the article on the General Council was very useful and suggested that follow-up in future editions would likely prove useful in helping encourage involvement. The Committee was in agreement with this, as was Mrs Allan.

ACTION: Mrs Allan

The Convener thanked Mrs Allan for her update.

5. PRESENTATION: PROFESSOR GEORGE BOYNE, PRINCIPAL AND VICE-CHANCELLOR

The Convenor welcomed Professor George Boyne, Principal and Vice-Chancellor, and thanked him for attending. Professor Boyne spoke about the activity he had undertaken since beginning his new position on 1 August 2018, including:

• Recruitment of the Senior Vice-Principal position.
• Recruitment of a new Vice-Principal of Student Recruitment.
• Meeting University staff at a series of Garden Parties at Chanonry Lodge.
• Meeting with Heads of School on an individual basis over the coming months.

Professor Boyne spoke about key areas of focus in the immediate term, including:

• Instilling further the founding principles of the University, these being that the University is "open to all and dedicated to the pursuit of truth in the service of others". We should be rooted in tradition but forward thinking, an inclusive place for all staff and students.
• Interdisciplinary collaboration going forward and tackling problems by sharing knowledge and information with each other.
• Continuing to train professionals for local improvement whilst furthering internationalisation.
• Creating and implementing a longer term strategic plan.
• Expanding research income and international student recruitment.
• Identifying academic areas of priority.

The Convenor thanked Professor Boyne for his inspiring address, noting that his words will have stuck a chord with those in the room. The Convenor invited questions and comments from the Committee. These covered topics including:

• Partnership of the University with RGU.
• Widening access.
• University impact on UK and Scottish industrial strategies.
• Raising the profile of the Business Committee with University Court in the long-term.
• Strengthening links with schools in the North East through the provision of University curricular activities.
• What Aberdeen can learn from Professor Boyne’s success at Cardiff University.
• The lack of any performing arts space and the link to Marischal College.
• Fostering inter-School and inter-disciplinary collaborations through matched funding.
• The lack of a traditional Student Union and student representation.
Aberdeen’s ability to attract and retain local talent and the effect that high living cost has on student recruitment.

The Convener thanked Professor Boyne for taking the time to speak with the Committee. After Professor Boyne’s departure, it was noted that in the past some Business Committee meetings had been held at Chanonry Lodge and the Committee would be very pleased to revisit this if appropriate.

6. REPORTS FROM THE SUBCOMMITTEES

6A – MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

Ms Mennie confirmed that there was no update from the member engagement subcommittee. Upon reflection of the previous minutes felt it was best to have a subcommittee on this topic, suggesting that she will therefore work with Muriel Roberts on this. The Convenor was in agreement, noting the importance of this topic. Mrs Allan highlighted that out of the ezine sent to summer 2018 graduates in August, the further information on the General Council section received the second highest click through rate.

ACTION: Ms Mennie

6B – STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT

The Convenor noted the great work that has been done by Mr Macniven on this paper to date, and thanked him for this. Mr Macniven explained the intention to share this with the Committee at the November meeting and thereafter with Court. Mr Macniven asked for guidance from Court members on how best to represent this paper.

Mr Percival explained there is to be a two day strategic planning event for Court in November, stating the hope that those involved with both the Business Committee and Court would be in a position to represent the Committee’s views. Mr Percival noted that it would be useful to have frequent, short papers presented to Court.

Ms Inglis agreed that a ‘drip-feeding’ approach would be useful but noted that the November meeting of Court may not be the best opportunity to represent this paper. She suggested that the representation should be long term, keeping in mind the intention to hold the AGM together in January.

Mr Duncan stated that there is the hope to influence formal strategic plans of the University and queried how this can be done. Ms Inglis confirmed that it would be useful to capitalise on the discussion with Professor George Boyne. Ms Inglis confirmed that a first draft of the strategic plan is not imminent and that Professor Boyne is looking for input from many areas.

Mr Macniven will complete the paper and share with the Committee in November.

ACTION: Mr Macniven

6C – TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Convenor confirmed his approval of this document. Mr Macniven had minor drafting suggestions. He will therefore prepare these to share directly with Mr Mackenzie.

ACTION: Mr Macniven

Mr Crockart asked for opinions on the terminology of ‘remit’ versus ‘terms of reference’. The Committee agreed to use ‘terms of reference’.

The Committee approved the document, pending minor amendments.

7. CO-OPTION OF NEW MEMBERS

There is one vacancy available for co-option. The Committee agreed to fill the remaining vacancy at the next meeting.
8. DAVID WATTS: GAUGING POSSIBLE DEMAND FOR AN AFFINITY BOND

David Watts introduced himself and stated that he was attending the Business Committee meeting to gauge its opinion on an affinity bond. Mr Watts presented several slides with information on this (enclosed).

There were a number of areas which were discussed by the Business Committee. These areas require consideration and/or further investigation and are as follows:

- New alumni are likely to have other financial concerns at their stage in life; consideration is required regarding likely demographic of potential interested parties.
- The possibility for the bond to be cashed early if required, if so what the implications are.
- The difference beneficially between starting an affinity bond and investing in publicly traded bonds.
- Additional benefits or perks that come with investing in the affinity bond.
- Appeals to raise funds for specific projects may be more attractive across a wider demographic than a long term investment.
- Concerns over the effect this could have on the Development Trust and their fundraising efforts.
- Administration costs associated with the bond.
- Do other universities offer this and if so, how it has worked for them?
- Potential lack of tax benefit.

The Convenor thanked Mr Watts for his presentation and his time. The Convenor stated that the Business Committee has a responsibility to take an interest in matters of prosperity and invited Mr Watts back to speak to the Committee when he has further information to report.

9. UNIVERSITY AGM AND ‘WINTER’ GENERAL COUNCIL MEETING

The Convenor, Mr Crockart and Ms Roberts met with Ms Inglis and Bruce Purdon in June to discuss the University AGM and Winter General Council Meeting. The paper provided gave a full summary of the meeting. The Convenor asked if the Committee was in agreement with the proposal in the paper, to which all agreed.

Mr Duncan asked if approval from Court is required to finalise the change in meeting, and Ms Inglis confirmed this is the case. Ms Inglis also stated that this new AGM format would not be a formal meeting of Court but an annual meeting supported by Court and the General Council.

The Convenor also noted that it might be useful to continue the subcommittee in the case that the University needs to discuss this further, or if a Business Committee response is required. All were in agreement with this.

Mr Crockart suggested that if the plan does not progress for any reason, the Statutory Meeting should default back to the original December date. The Committee agreed.

10. DRAFT COURT MINUTES FROM 27 JUNE 2018 MEETING (IN STRICTTEST CONFIDENCE)

The Committee noted the minutes.

11. AOCB

No other items of business were noted.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Business Committee will be held on Thursday 08 November at 4pm in the Court Room.