UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN  
BUSINESS COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL  
MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 7 JUNE 2018  

Present: Nigel Lindsay (Convener), Nuala Booth, Mike Cooper, Eric Crockart, Steve Duggan, Colin Duncan, Tom Lynch, Euan Mackenzie, Duncan Macniven, Alan Milne, Jenny Mordue, Iain Percival, Patricia Pugh, Mel Roberts, Judith Taylor and Brian Wood with Caroline Inglis (University Secretary), Katrina Allan (Head of Alumni Engagement), Hulda Sveinsdottir (item 6C), Maggie Chapman (Rector) and Fiona Urquhart (Clerk).


1. MINUTES

The minutes from the meeting held on 15 March 2018 were approved.

2. MATTERS ARISING

The Convener welcomed Mrs Maggie Chapman, the Rector and invited her to speak. Mrs Chapman emphasised that she hopes to forge and maintain close links with the Business Committee. She apologised for being unable to attend the recent Statutory Meeting.

3. REPORT FROM THE CONVENER

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

- The success of the Statutory Meeting of the General Council and the May Festival
- The recent meeting of the Annual Ancient General Council Conveners and Clerks
- Number of contactable General Council members

The Convener spoke in more detail about the recent Annual Meeting of “Ancient” General Council Conveners and Clerks. Discussion at that meeting had focused on the changes to the composition of Court and the impact this has had on General Council representation. The Convener highlighted that the representation of General Council Assessors at the other ancient Scottish Universities was different to Aberdeen. Glasgow and St Andrews still elect two General Council Assessors and Edinburgh advertises the vacancies, which are filled by members of the General Council.

The Convener asked if the University was able to identify the exact number of contactable General Council members. Mrs Allan confirmed that this was indeed obtainable and that it would be provided at the next meeting.

ACTION: Assistant Clerk

Mr Alan Milne notified the committee that he hadn’t been informed of the outcome of the recent Business Committee elections. The Convener apologised and confirmed that all standing for re-election had been elected, along with Mr Mark Strange, who had been elected for the first time. [Clerk’s Note: Since the meeting, all members have been issued formal confirmation of the outcome of the recent Business Committee elections.]

Dr Duncan Macniven welcomed the Convener’s suggestion at the Statutory Meeting to align the Annual General Meeting with a meeting of both Court and the Statutory Meeting of the General Council. There was a discussion among members about what the process would be if the proposal was not accepted by Court. Mrs Caroline Inglis sought further clarity about what was being proposed. Following a discussion it was confirmed that it would be an additional meeting - rather than a formal meeting of Court - to which Court and Business Committee members should be encouraged to attend. It was agreed that a small group of consisting of: Mr Eric Crockart, Mr Colin Duncan, Mr Nigel Lindsay and Ms Mel Roberts, would meet with the Clerk and Registrar to discuss the running order and logistics of the meeting.

ACTION: Mrs Inglis
4. ALUMNI RELATIONS UPDATE

Mrs Katrina Allan, Head of Alumni Engagement, prepared a written report ahead of the meeting in which she highlighted:

- A campaign to capture consent from the graduands ahead of their ceremonies. As of 1pm that afternoon there had been a 26% response rate, with 99% of them opting in.
- An alumni gin tasting in Glasgow the previous evening in collaboration with alumni entrepreneur Ben Iravani, co-founder of Porter’s Gin.
- The Alumni team had run a social media campaign during National Volunteers’ Week to which the Convener had contributed. The campaign had thus far obtained a reach of 25,000.

5. ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

The committee received a presentation from Mrs Katrina Allan, Head of Alumni Engagement, on the alumni engagement strategy. Mrs Allan explained that alumni engagement is important to universities as alumni are our best advocates and can talk with an authenticity that cannot be replicated. She spoke about the alumni relations vision, which is; ‘Engaging the Aberdeen family in the future of the University’ and spoke about the six strands that the programme is built around. These are:

- Student Experience and Engagement
- Communications
- Volunteering and recognition
- Alumni Networks
- Benefits and Services
- Parent and Family

Mrs Allan ended her presentation by highlighting some of the recent successes, which included a 90% increase in event attendance, a 34% increase in Facebook reach, and a review and augmentation of the benefits and services offering.

Following the presentation members of the committee were invited to ask questions. Mr Colin Duncan asked for clarity over the time frame for the percentage increases in event attendance and social media. Mrs Allan confirmed that the event increase was over eighteen months and Facebook was over twelve months. Mr Eric Crockart asked if the team were engaging with alumni on other social media channels. Mrs Allan explained that the team engage on a number of platforms, including LinkedIn, Twitter and Instagram. Finally, Mr Iain Percival asked if the team have a formal role during graduation week. Mrs Allan confirmed that the team has a presence on campus during Graduations Weeks but that it does not have a formal role in the ceremonies themselves.

Mr Alan Milne asked for more information on the retention group that was mentioned in Mrs Allan’s presentation. In a discussion which followed, the committee decided that they would like to hear about widening access and retention. The Clerk and Registrar suggested inviting Professor Peter McGeorge to a future meeting.

ACTION: Assistant Clerk
6. REPORTS FROM THE SUBCOMMITTEES

6A MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

Ms Mel Roberts updated the committee on her meeting with Ms Lynne Mennie and Mrs Katrina Allan, Head of Alumni Engagement. She explained that while the Business Committee has a similar mission to Alumni Relations, they are not the same entity and members of the General Council need to be aware of the difference. She also explained that the Business Committee acts with autonomy and that it should have a means of receiving enquiries directly from other General Council members. It was also decided that the Business Committee would look to secure a more prominent position on the University website, but before that happens the Committee need to be clear about its message.

Dr Duncan Macniven suggested having a small group of committee members who were able to respond to emails to ensure a fast and efficient response.

The subgroup will discuss how to communicate their message and how to implement the proposed changes at their next meeting.

6B TERMS OF REFERENCE

Mr Euan Mckenzie led the subgroup working on terms of reference, which consisted of: Mr Iain Percival, Mrs Pat Pugh and Mrs Judith Taylor. Members of the committee were asked to comment on the paper produced by the subgroup, either at the meeting or by email at a later date. In the discussion which followed it was suggested that the word ‘independent’ be added to point three and the word ‘challenge’ to be included somewhere in the paper. It was agreed that members would email any suggestions to a member of the subgroup and once finalised the paper would be sent to the General Council for approval.

6C STRATEGIC PLAN, DR HULDA SVEINSDOTTIR, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING

Dr Duncan Macniven led the subgroup that was looking at the strategic plan. The group identified three themes that they felt were missing from the current strategic plan. These were:

- The widening access agenda
- Local community and in particular the North-East
- Scottish Government Industrial Strategy

Dr Macniven handed over to Dr Hulda Sveinsdottir and noted the Business Committees interest in being involved in the planning process for the next strategic plan.

Dr Sveinsdottir thanked Dr Macniven and informed the committee that the University had already started work on the next strategic plan. The planning team currently have an intern who is reviewing strategic plans from other institutions to see how we compare. The preparations for the 2020-2025 plan involve looking back to see what can be taken from the past process and researching what other universities do. Dr Sveinsdottir explained that she would welcome the input of the Business Committee to the planning process for the next plan.

In the discussion which followed, it was decided that the Business Committee would have a detailed discussion about ways they could contribute to the process and will meet with Dr Sveinsdottir to convey their suggestions.

7. COMMUNICATION FROM THE UNIVERSITY COURT

The Committee noted the papers from Court.
8. **AOCB**

The committee would like to invite Professor George Boyne to speak at the September meeting.

*ACTION: Mrs Inglis/Assistant Clerk*

9. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Business Committee will be held on Thursday 6 September at 4pm in the Court Room.