



THE UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
GENERAL COUNCIL

MINUTE OF THE 312th STATUTORY MEETING

The 312th meeting of the General Council was held in King's College Conference Centre on 25 January 2020. The Convener of the Business Committee, Dr Duncan Macniven, was in the Chair.

1 MINUTES OF THE 311th MEETING

The draft Minutes of the 311th Statutory Meeting were approved.

2 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

3 REPORT FROM THE CONVENER OF THE BUSINESS COMMITTEE

The Convener of the Business Committee, Dr Duncan Macniven, reported on the activities of the Business Committee. He thanked Mr Nigel Lindsay, the previous Convener, for the work he had completed during his time in the role.

The Convener explained that this was the second year in which the winter Statutory Meeting of the General Council had been combined with the University Annual Meeting. He noted that this seemed a successful format and that the meeting saw increased attendance. He highlighted there might be a need to bring the Standing Orders in line with the current distribution of meetings (January and May), unless it were possible to advance the publication of the University's annual report to December.

The Convener informed the meeting that the Business Committee had set up several working groups, to focus their expertise on specific areas – an innovation of his predecessor, which had so far worked well. He thanked all those who had chaired and served on these groups.

The first group had drafted the Committee's input to the University's 2040 Strategy and had the opportunity to attend meetings and contribute to the preparation of the strategy. The Convener noted that the 20-year vision appeared to be a good timescale and that the Committee looked forward to seeing the final publication.

The member engagement working group, led by Ms Mel Roberts, sought to widen General Council members' knowledge of, and participation in, the work of the Committee. The Convener explained that the group was focussed on improvements to the General Council web pages and planning social media reports on Committee meetings.

The third working group had been concerned with widening access and student recruitment and retention and looked forward to continuing this work with Ms Ruth Taylor, Vice-Principal Education, who had just addressed the University Annual Meeting.

More recently, working groups had been set up to consider plans relating to Marischal College and the University's role in community planning. The Convener also mentioned the potential scope for graduate fundraising, about which the Committee had heard from Mr David Watt.

The Convener explained that the Committee sought to identify topics where members' experience could help the University. The Committee was open to suggestions for topics and the Convener encouraged input from those present..

Addressing committee membership, the Convener noted that, after the last election process, 3 members were re-elected and 2 were co-opted. He encouraged attendees to consider applying for the 2 remaining vacancies.

The Convener thanked the Principal and Senior Vice-Principal for their willingness to collaborate with the Committee, Ms Nicole Cochrane (Assistant Clerk and Registrar) for her work supporting the Committee, Ms Fiona Urquhart (Acting Head of Alumni Relations) for helping the Committee connect with alumni, and Ms Maggie Chapman (Rector) for her link with the Court which she chaired (which was particularly valuable now that the General Council no longer elected members of Court.

In conclusion, the Convener stated that he was privileged to be able to convene the Business Committee. The Convener then took questions. Mr Eric Crockart pointed out that a change in Standing Orders, for instance to alter the rhythm of meetings, required to be notified to a General Council meeting and then put to the next General Council meeting for approval. There were no other questions.

4 MEMBERSHIP OF BUSINESS COMMITTEE – ELECTION UPDATE

Mr Steve Cannon, Interim University Secretary, advised that under the terms of Standing Order No. 19, the following 5 members were due to retire from the Business Committee on 30 September 2020, but were eligible for re-election:

Duncan Macniven

Euan Mackenzie

Judith Taylor

Eric Crockart

Jan McRobbie

In addition, there were 2 existing vacant positions on the Business Committee which were open for nominations.

Mr Cannon intimated that nominations for positions on the Committee would close on Friday 27 March at 12 noon. If more nominations were received than there were vacancies, then an election would be held at the May statutory meeting and the General Council would be notified accordingly. Nomination forms were available today and would also be made available on the General Council website.

5 HISTORY OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL- DR CHARLES CALDER

The Convener welcomed Dr Charles Calder to provide an update on his work on the history of the General Council.

Dr Calder explained that the late Mrs Louise Donald provided two services to the University. Firstly, she wrote *A History of the General Council 1869– 1960*. Secondly, she began the editing the fourth volume of the roll of graduates up until her death in 1980. Her history of the General Council was pioneering and had been widely respected ever since. Dr Calder noted that he felt a sense of hesitation but also pride when he had been asked to write a continuation.

Dr Calder began writing in May 2018 and by January 2019 the narrative had reached the memorial service for Henry Jackson Butchart in December 1971. At present, he was working on the University's quincentenary - not only the events of 1995 but the intense years of planning and preparation. The next part of the research covered 2000 – 2020, for which he had access to personal recollection: until now he had relied on solely on archival materials. Dr Calder thanked previous Conveners - Joseph Leiper, Joan Catto, Eric Crockart, Colin Duncan and Nigel Lindsay - for their input. He also mentioned Ian Lawson, Convener from 1997 to 2000.

Dr Calder noted that his work could be assisted by the knowledge and experience of those attending the meeting, as everyone in attendance was part of the story being recounted in his work.

6 NOTICE OF THE 313th STATUTORY MEETING

The 313th Statutory Meeting would be held on Saturday 30 May 2020, this being the weekend of the 2020 May Festival.