# BUSINESS COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

## MINUTE OF MEETING HELD VIA ZOOM VIDEOCONFERENCE

**Saturday 18 February 2023 10.00am – 12.15pm**

**Present via video link:** Iain Anderson (GC Assessor) (IA), John Edward (JE), Jonathan Hewitt (GC Assessor) (JH), Grace Lyon (GL), Callum MacLeod (CM) Wendy Russell (Convener) (WR)

**In attendance:** Alastair Merrill (Registrar & Clerk and Vice-Principal (Governance) (AM).

**Apologies:** Sally Mapstone (Principal), Adrian Greer, Annabel Hamid, Stephanie O’Rourke, Gregory Newman, Matthew Lawson, Ralitza Nikolaeva, Lauren Stewart.

**Abbreviations:**

BC = Business Committee of the General Council

GC = General Council

StA = University of St Andrews

### Introduction, including appointment of minute secretary.

WR welcomed everybody. The agenda was agreed as circulated and no further items of competent business were added. GL was appointed as Minute Secretary for the Meeting.

### Apologies for absence: as above

### Minute

The draft minute of the previous meeting was approved.

Matters Arising - Legacy of the Gown, St Andrews Forest, Governance of the GCBC, and Delivering Value - are dealt with below.

### 4. General Council Business Committee Election 2023

Although Business Committee elections have been fully online for a number of years, the member of staff who organised the election in previous years, is no longer available. AM explained that StA outsourced all other elections some years ago to Civicas, but had maintained the previous in-house system informally to support the GCBC. This was no longer possible due to the personal circumstances of the member of staff involved, and the University did not have other expertise or capacity to maintain the system. To arrange the GCBC election through the University’s external suppliers would cost around £5K, every two years. Since the payment would have to be made to an external supplier, the University could not absorb this cost without a budget. To secure funds, a business case would have to be put forward to establish a budget. AM would be happy to do this, but any such business case would need to demonstrate that the value that the GCBC elections would deliver to StA was sufficient to justify this expenditure, which would be at the expense of other calls on University funds.

There followed a discussion on the position of the GCBC during which a number of points were made:

* In years past, when communications with the GC were mainly by letter, the GCBC was a useful proxy for the whole GC. But nowadays StA can communicate directly with the whole GC cohort.
* The GCBC has in fact no method of communicating with the whole GC other than by the twice-yearly GC meeting and through the GC page in the *Chronicle.* Otherwise it relies on the University email systems. Data protection issues mean that the GCBC cannot be given direct access to university mailing lists.
* Unless there is a specific requirement for the GC to consider and respond to a University request of some sort, the GCBC has a limited role. This had been noted and attempts to carve out a useful space had been made in the past.
* Now that GC Assessors to Court are nominated on a new system rather than by GC elections, the only substantive duty of the GC, where a GCBC could be useful, is in the election of the Chancellor - an occasional occurrence.
* On such occasions, perhaps an *ad hoc* method of creating a small committee can be managed. It was noted that the committee which organised the election of the current Chancellor was composed of four people including the Convener of the Business Committee.
* A short-term remedy was proposed; that members who would become time-expired in June 2023 continue to serve for a fixed period.

This debate took up most of the allotted time. It was decided that a further meeting be arranged to continue this discussion. WR to organise.

### 5. Report from the Principal’s Office

AM gave an update of current University activities, covering recent senior appointments, plans for the new Business School and digital offerings,

admissions and accommodation, industrial action and community engagement. Questions covered student accommodation, including in Dundee, and the plans for New College.

### 6. Oral Report from General Council Assessors

JH reported that all the items of interest had already been summarised by AM.

### 7. St Andrews Forest

It is not possible to arrange any special planting or photo shoot to link the BC to a specific tree/area of planting and WR offered to make a single donation if we were happy to send our contributions to her personally.

### 8. Legacy of the Gown

This item is to come back to a future meeting as there was not sufficient time to address the topic.

### 9. Delivering Value

This was included in the discussion in Item 4.

### 10. Schedule of GC and BC meeting dates in 2022

WR referred to the schedule of GC and BC Meetings which had previously been circulated.

### 11. AOCB

There being no other competent business, WR thanked those present for taking part and closed the meeting at 12.15pm.