

BUSINESS COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD VIA ZOOM VIDEO CONFERENCE

Saturday 18th September 2021 10.00 – 12.15 p.m.

Present via video link : Adrian Greer (Chancellor's Assessor)(AG), John Edward (JE), Jonathan Hewitt (General Council Assessor)(JH), Matthew Lawson (ML), Callum Macleod (CM), Alastair Merrill (Registrar & Clerk & VP Gov)(AM), Gregory Newman (GN), Ralitza Nikolaeva (RN), Stephanie O'Rourke (SO'R), Wendy Russell (Convener)(WR), Lauren Stewart (LS)

Apologies : Iain Anderson (GC Assessor)(IA), Grace Lyon (GL), Sally Mapstone (Principal), Annabel Hamid (AH).

Abbreviations

BC = Business Committee of the General Council

GC = General Council

StA = St Andrews University

1. Introduction and appointment of minute secretary

The Convener welcomed members to the meeting and acknowledged that this would be the first meeting for those members elected to serve on the Business Committee in June 2021. The newly elected members are John Edward, Matthew Lawson, Callum Macleod, Ralitza Nikolaeva, and Lauren Stewart.

The agenda was agreed as circulated and no further items of competent business were added. GN was appointed minute secretary.

The Convener expressed regret at the recent death of Alan Chalmers who served as a member of the Business Committee from June 2019. Alan made a valued contribution to the committee (in particular in the area of entrepreneurship) and to the wider University community through the Wardlaw Scholarship and the Alan Chalmers Music Scholarship. He will be sadly missed.

2. Apologies for Absence

As above.

3. Minutes of Business Committee Meeting 24 April 21 and Matters Arising

The draft minutes were approved.

Matters arising are discussed under the various headings below.

4. Report from the Principal's Office

AM reported as follows:-

Covid 19 - While online provision continues, the extension of safe in-person teaching has gathered pace. In research and professional services safe onsite and flexible working are now supported. All locations are fully opened under eased restrictions, and options for safe

in-person events have been introduced. Over 90% of students were available for in person teaching at the start of Semester, and it is expected that 95% will be available by week 7. The University facilitated arrival of both UK and global students to St Andrews, and were permitted to quarantine a limited number of arrivals from red list countries in designated halls of residence. Students were asked to arrive vaccinated. Public Health Fife provided daily drop-in vaccination centres at the BB Hall, supported by weekend drop-in centres at the Community Hospital. Students and staff are encouraged to take twice weekly lateral flow tests. Victory Hall PCR test site, Scotland's first walk-in testing centre, continues to provide rapid PCR tests and the University holds a small stock which can be delivered to any student not well enough to go to Victory Hall. So far, although Freshers' 'Flu has made a comeback, we are not seeing any substantial increase in numbers of confirmed cases.

Court Strategy AwayDay - discussions took place on the external and operating environments post-pandemic, key priorities for refreshing University Strategy 2022-27, maintaining focus of new strategy and building in progress, but extending themes to include Sustainable and Digital St Andrews. Awards include:-

Good University Guide 2022, Times and Sunday Times: No. 1 in UK for first time. No. 1 for teaching quality, student experience, UCAS entry points.

NSS: UK's top mainstream university for 13th time in past 15 years.

Guardian UK University: St Andrews is top in Scotland for 2022 and third in UK

THE Awards shortlist: outstanding contribution to equality, diversity and inclusion. outstanding estates team, most innovative teacher of the year (Dr Alexia Petsalis-Diomidis, Classics).

Research - Final reports submitted to the UK REF team with results due spring 2022. At end of July 2021 research awards at £42.6m, £4.3m (9%) below average value over last 3 years. Continuing to support research applications - total £190m over same period, £5m ahead of 3 year average.

Education - For AY21-22 working to ensure that all small group teaching, and all experiential learning in practical laboratories, are in person. Classes above 35 will continue to be delivered on-line, although the University hopes to be able to deliver some larger classes and lectures in person later in the academic year. Curriculum and assessments continue to be provided online where possible to support students unable to return. There has been extensive investment in training for staff and IT facilities in classrooms to support new approaches to digital pedagogy.

Student numbers - 2021-22 admissions cycle buoyant, with increase of 6% UG applications (23,694). High exam grades resulting from teacher-assessed grades policy, combined with a much higher acceptance rate from all cohorts, means that the University is likely to exceed its target by some 300 (mostly undergraduate) students. Contingency plans have ensured that university accommodation can be offered to all first year students. The University has met and exceeded its outcome targets for widening access.

Libraries and Culture - Libraries have completed their move to Eden Campus – 14km books and journals relocated from main library and off-site store in Dundee. The Wardlaw Museum has re-opened to the public The Laidlaw Music Centre started work in-person with student groups, and for the first time in world class McPherson recital room. Centre shortlisted for World Architectural Festival award. The Byre theatre opened to the public on 5 September and welcomed the Barron Theatre to permanent residency in Lawrence Levy Studio Theatre. The second round of community engagement fund is providing valued seed-corn funding to range of initiatives across Fife.

Entrepreneurial - Entrepreneurship centre at Eden Campus has opened. It provides an innovative space in which an entrepreneurial spirit can be nurtured. StAAR continues to build and share University's entrepreneurial pathways in business and social enterprises. Finalised role descriptions for entrepreneurial pathway team and appointments expected this

month. Four ideas from St Andrews selected as semifinalists in Converge Challenge, Scotland's largest entrepreneurial competition for HE with two going on to the final. Walter Bower House at the Eden Campus has won a Scottish Design Award in the category 'Architecture: Building Re-use category'. The building has also achieved a 'BREEAM Excellent' rating for the sustainable approach taken to its refurbishment.

Sustainable - St Andrews has been selected in the Sustainability Institution of the Year category as a finalist in the UK and Ireland Green Gown Awards, which recognise exceptional sustainability initiatives undertaken by universities and colleges. The University has obtained observer status at COP 26, and will send a small delegation to the Glasgow conference.

Members raised questions on topics including the St Andrews Survivors and sustainability as a major plank of the university strategy.

5. General Council Business Committee Election 2021

GL and GN worked with Elaine Cartwright (EC) in General Council Office to plan, organise and manage the election process. The process used built on the methodology of previous elections. Everything went very well with only one minor issues arising which was easily dealt with. Congratulations were given to all the new Committee members on their election. The Convener informed the Committee that a gift would be arranged for EC as a thank you for her work throughout the year on behalf of the Committee and General Council.

6. General Council Meeting

It is hoped that the next meeting of General Council, scheduled for 27th November, will go ahead in Parliament Hall. This will be dependent on how Covid develops and the presence of any Covid restrictions. A decision will be made by end October. The theme for the guest speaker was discussed - pedagogy, Covid management, global St Andrews, and environmental sustainability were all suggested. Preference was given to a forward looking topic.

Action : AM to approach potential speakers.

7. Legacy of the Gown

JH reported on progress including the results of the survey undertaken by the Student Association and summarised the paper shared with the Committee. The aim is to develop a bank of "pre-loved" gowns which are lent out to students for their time at StA and then returned and re-used.

The Committee extends its thanks to Dan Marshall, Past President of the Student Association, who made a considerable contribution to this work.

Comments and questions included whether this could be tackled with the involvement of the university shop, whether it might interfere with the efforts of anyone else, and recording the past owners of each gown.

The Committee expressed a wish to progress this project. CM, JE, LS, JH, WR, SO'R agreed to continue with/join the working group recognising that LD, the current President of the Student Association, needs to be involved.

Action: Working Group to meet and develop a project outline.

8. Delivering Value

Engagement – (WR, SO'R) - has not progressed further.

Action: WR and SO'R to contact Robert Fleming in Development.

Entrepreneurship – WR informed the committee that members of the original working group are no longer available and requested support from committee members. ML and RL volunteered to review the original paper that was discussed with the Quaestor and VP Research and Innovation in 2020.

Action: WR to circulate the paper

Action: The topics of diversity and sustainability are to be added to the agenda for discussion at the next meeting.

9. Ordinances and Resolutions Sub-Committee

This sub-committee reviews all university Ordinances and Resolutions as part of the process of consultation with General Council. It currently has two members, AH and WR. It is suggested that a discussion takes place at the next meeting as to the continuing requirement for this sub-committee and subsequently its membership.

Action: To be included on the agenda of the January Business Committee meeting.

10. General Council Assessors Report

At the most recent meeting of Court there was a sense of getting back to the normal business having dealt so well with Covid and the issues which arose. The PARC sub-committee is now looking at the ongoing strategic development of the university resources including the building programme.

Finances remain on a good footing. There is a great deal of focus on risk. Some of the risks identified prior to Covid have been exacerbated, while others have been resolved.

Court has held discussions about the teaching model in the transition period out of Covid and the various lockdowns and restrictions.

Student numbers jumped significantly because of the circumstances that arose as a result of Covid meaning that the University has reached its planned expansion in one leap rather than over a period of years. Court satisfied by the work that has been done not only to accommodate the incoming students into the subjects they wished to study but also provide them with living accommodation.

The revised strategy will have a big focus on sustainability with the aim of the university reaching net zero by 2035. This will consider not only the university footprint but also that of its suppliers and students.

WR thanked everybody for attending and for their input. The meeting closed at 12 noon.