

**BUSINESS COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL**  
**DRAFT MINUTE OF MEETING HELD VIA ZOOM VIDEOCONFERENCE**  
**TUESDAY 7th NOVEMBER 2023 6 - 7.30 PM**

**Present via video link:** John Edward (JE), Jonathan Hewitt (GC Assessor) (JH), Grace Lyon (GL), Callum MacLeod (CM), Ralitza Nikolaeva, Lauren Stewart (LS), Wendy Russell (Convener) (WR)

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

**Apologies:** Sally Mapstone (Principal), Iain Anderson, Matthew Lawson (ML)

### Abbreviations

- BC = Business Committee of the General Council
- GC = General Council
- StA = University of St Andrews

#### 1. Introduction, including appointment of minute secretary

WR welcomed members to the meeting. GL, former member of the Committee also joined proceedings. The agenda was agreed as circulated. A verbal report regarding the St Andrews Forest was added under further items of competent business (AOCB). WR agreed to take the Minutes.

#### 2. Apologies for absence

As noted above.

#### 3. Minute

A minor amendment to Item 4, Business Committee Governance was suggested and accepted.

#### 4. Business Committee Governance

GCBC has reviewed its responsibilities under Ordinance 129 and has updated and agreed relevant procedures for discharging its responsibilities in relation to any future election of the Chancellor. These will be held on file with General Council Office. These procedures will be reviewed again in 2028.

#### 5. Business Committee Membership

Since June 23 a number of members have come to the end of their terms of office. While elections have not yet taken place ahead of a business case being put to the university for the conduct of an election for new members, we do have the option to co-opt members. This is under consideration as a short term fix. There is no limit to the number of co-opted members

who can be appointed. Any decision to act on this is on hold as it is considered that the most pressing issue is to prepare and present the business case to the university.

Currently the Committee does not have a Vice-Convenor. A proposal to elect a new Vice-Convenor was agreed.

## 6. GC Meetings

The summer meeting of the General Council is to be held on 25 November at 10.30 in Parliament Hall. Professor Ineke de Moortel, Master of the United College, will present to GC members on the topic of “Sustainable St Andrews: Strategies, Challenges and Impacts.”

## 7. University Update

- The University has celebrated the huge achievement of a double first ranking in the Guardian and The Times/Sunday Times University of the Year. St Andrews has also re-entered the Times Higher Education top 200 for the first time since the early 2000s. Currently the reputation of the University is riding high.
- The new Senior lay Member Ray Perman took up office on 1st August 2023. Also, the new Rector, Stella Maris, who was previously the Rector’s Assessor, commenced her term of office on 1st November 2023.
- The student population has reduced in line with plans from the high reached as a result of the pandemic and is currently at 10,234 FTEs. Numbers are heading back to the 10,000 total which is considered sustainable for both the town and university infrastructure. These numbers do not take account of the students taking advantage of the new digital offerings which have so far had a good take up.
- There is a surplus in student accommodation places this academic year possibly on account of more students commuting. The surplus is being used for conferences and other lets. RN raised a concern about PG students being unable to find accommodation. AM recommended that they contact Residence and Business Services for further assistance.
- The Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) issue has affected a small number of facilities within the university estate. These include the 601 Nightclub in the Students Union, the Sports Pavilion and the Purdie Building. Replacement work is underway and alternative arrangements have been made where possible.
- The Israeli-Gaza Conflict: The neutrality of the University has been emphasised in a joint statement from the Principal and President of the Students Association. Student run events have been facilitated. A small number of reports of perceived anti-semitic and Islamophobic activity have been made. The University is working closely with the Students Association around messaging to make clear that this behaviour is not tolerated and to ask for tolerance and respect.
- Industrial Relations: The marking assessment boycott was in hand at the time of the last GCBC meeting. The University ensured that all students graduated even though some had interim classified degrees. The boycott ended in September 2023 and all outstanding marking has been completed. The impact on the quality of interim degrees, on analysis, was

negligible and well within normal tolerances. Further to the resolution of the USS pension dispute and a vote for no action on the dispute over pay and conditions in the autumn, the University is working to rebuild collaborative working relationships with campus trade unions.

#### 8. General Council Assessor's Report

Key items discussed at the Court Strategy Away Day included the people and strategic innovation pillars. The people strategy is focusing on the diversity and inclusion space with a goal that the university population represents that expected of a leading global university. Court was reassured by the diligence being applied to the task. There is impressive progress being made around the business school development and the roll-out of the digital academic offering.

#### 9. Programme of GC and BC Meetings

These were circulated and noted by members.

#### 10. Review of Draft Resolution 2023 No. 1 - Degree of Doctor of Divinity

A new draft Resolution promulgated by Court on 20 October 2023 was reviewed by the General Council Business Committee. The Committee is content with the wording of the Resolution as drafted. Court Office will be notified by the Convener.

#### 11. AOB:

WR reported that the monies raised by members of the Committee towards the St Andrews Forest initiative had been donated to the University for that purpose.

Meeting closed.