

**University of St Andrews
General Council**

**MINUTE OF THE STATUTORY HALF-YEARLY MEETING OF THE GENERAL
COUNCIL HELD ON SATURDAY 27 NOVEMBER 2021 AT 10.30AM IN
PARLIAMENT HALL, SOUTH STREET, ST ANDREWS**

The Principal and Vice-Chancellor, Professor Sally Mapstone, was in the Chair. Welcoming 38 members to the meeting, she gave apologies for the Chancellor, Lord Campbell of Pittenweem.

1. Minute of the last ordinary half-yearly meeting of the General Council held on 30 November 2019

The minute of the meeting ([General Council Minutes](#)) was agreed as a correct record .

2. Announcement of the result of the 2021 Business Committee election – Registrar and Clerk to the General Council

The Registrar and Clerk announced the results of the election to fill six vacancies on the Business Committee from 1 July 2021. The election opened on 10 May 2021 and closed on 7 June 2021, and took place online by means of the Single Transferable Vote system. 18 candidates stood for election and a total of 673 votes were cast. The following candidates were elected-Ms Wendy Russell; Mr Callum MacLeod; Mr John Edward; Dr Ralitzia Nikolaeva: Revd Matthew Lawson and Ms Lauren Stewart.

3. Report by the Convener of the Business Committee – Ms Wendy Russell

The Convener presented her report which covered the period since the last General Council meeting in November 2019.

Meetings of the Business Committee

The Business Committee had met at its normal frequency. All meetings had been conducted exclusively via video-conferencing facilities. Members were invited to note the minute of the Business Committee's April 2021 meeting, which appears on the General Council webpage (linked above).

Business Committee membership

The Convener welcomed the five newly elected members of the Business Committee and thanked all those who had stood. The Convener was delighted to have been re-elected for a second and final term of office and noted that the Business Committee once

again had a majority of women, and now included two members of the University Academic Staff.

The Convener thanked those members of the Business Committee who had demitted office in June (Alison Baverstock, Stuart Bryan and Brittany Collins) for their contribution and commitment.

The death of Business Committee member Alan Chalmers, after sudden illness, was noted with regret. Mr Chalmers was elected to the Business Committee in 2019 and had made a valued contribution to its work and more broadly to the University. He will be sadly missed.

Business Committee Work Streams

The Convener provided an update.

Work has continued on both the Engagement and Entrepreneurial strands of work.

Engagement

Development had been receptive to a number of the ideas outlined in a discussion paper presented by the Business Committee to the Development office.

The pandemic had afforded the opportunity to launch a diverse programme of live webinars and Q&A sessions with University Academics and Alumni authors. These had been a great success and were available to view online. The Director of Development had joined the Committee for its January 2021 meeting, and it was hoped that attendance from Development will become a regular occurrence.

Entrepreneurial

A small sub-group had met with the Quaestor and Factor, and Vice-Principal Research and Innovation to discuss how the General Council might support the University in this area. The work will be progressed with a newly invigorated working group.

Progress has been made with the *Legacy of the Gown* Project. The Business Committee would like to create a gown library for St Andrews Undergraduates. There is a perceived opportunity to widen gown ownership by making them more accessible and affordable, in keeping with the University's wider aims for access and participation. The *Legacy of the Gown* will support and re-invigorate the ownership and usage of the red gown through the creation of a Gown Library enabling students to borrow a gown at low cost, that they return upon graduation to pass to the next generation of undergraduates.

The Students' Association was supportive of the project and market research into

student attitudes, completed by the Students' Association earlier in the year, had indicated that the perception of gowns is positive and that, given wider ownership, student would be willing to wear their gowns to more events and activities.

The *Legacy of the Gown* library would be created and sustained through the donation of old gowns and sponsoring the purchase of new ones. The Committee's next steps will be to contact General Council Members to assess support for the initiative.

Meeting of General Council representatives.

The meeting of the General Council Business Committee Conveners of the Ancient Universities of Scotland – Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow and St Andrews, scheduled for May 2020 had been postponed. No alternative date has yet been fixed.

General Council Standing Orders

The Business Committee proposed a number of modest amendments to the General Council Standing Orders. These were set out in the Billet (pages 3-6). The Convener outlined the proposed changes and the rationale for each. The changes related to (1) the contact details for the Convener of the Business Committee; (2) the date of General Council meetings; (3) removing Gender-specific wording; and (4) restricting the length of motions put to the General Council.

Members approved the changes to 1-3, which were uncontroversial.

(4) the proposed change in the definition of a motion to be put to General Council.

This proposal set out in the Billet suggested wording for clause 6 of the standing orders:

"Such a motion shall be succinctly addressed in no more than fifty words as a request to General Council to approve a particular course of action".

An amendment proposed from the floor was considered to be out of order by both the President and Convener of the Business Committee, since it was unrelated to the core purpose of the proposed change to standing orders, and was in effect a new motion. Members were reminded of the procedures in place for bringing forward motions in advance of meetings of the General Council.

A member asked about the appointment of the Registrar and Clerk and received confirmation that the incumbent's appointment had been endorsed at the meeting of the General Council in summer 2015.

General Council then approved the motion as tabled.

Closing remarks

The Convener ended her report by expressing thanks to all staff involved in organising and participating in General Council meetings and to those who provided ongoing support to the Business Committee throughout the year. She also extended warm thanks to fellow General Council members for demonstrating their continued interest in General Council affairs through their attendance.

The Vice-Chancellor thanked the Convener for her report which was noted.

4. University Address – Professor Sally Mapstone, Principal and Vice-Chancellor

The Principal's address to the General Council Meeting can be read in full [General Council-meetings 2021-Principal's Address-November 2021](#)

Having delivered her address, the Principal invited questions from the floor.

A member of General Council asked about recent media coverage of pre-matriculation training courses that students were expected to complete.

In response the Principal confirmed that these courses would continue to be offered. They had been requested by and co-written with students, and recent media coverage had been misleading. The courses related to:

- Good academic Practice
- Sustainability
- Consent
- Equality and Diversity

Far from closing down dispute and discussion, these courses were precisely designed to encourage it, and open up questions for debate. The University was proud to be a diverse community with representatives from 140 communities in one square mile of North East Fife. The Principal regarded it as her duty to ensure that all those in the University Community treated each other with civility, understanding and respect. The courses provided encouragement and the opportunity to think personal issues through and the University was happy to work with students to co-create courses which would give them a chance at a formative and important stage of their careers to do so. The University would never tell students what to say but did invite them to look at issues which the University thought would make them better global citizens in the future.

Contrary to the impression given, no student had been stopped from matriculating. Students were asked to undertake the courses at matriculation because this provided an opportunity for effective engagement. The courses would continue to be run for

the duration of the Principal's time in office. They had been asked for by the student body and the University would continue to support this request. It was a matter of regret that these courses, of which the University was proud, had been misunderstood and misrepresented by certain media commentators and outlets.

There being no further questions the Vice-Chancellor invited Professor Frank Müller to give his presentation.

5. Presentation by Professor Frank Lorenz Müller ,Assistant Vice-Principal Dean of Learning and Teaching .

The New College at Madras – Restoring a Historic Site and Stepping into the Future

Professor Müller, Project Sponsor, delivered an entertaining, informative, and inspiring presentation which outlined the University's plans to create a new hub for the Social Sciences on the site of the former Madras College. The New College project was presented from three perspectives, which combined to emphasise the excitement, importance, and potential use of the project as well as to provide an overview and update as to progress:

1. Restoring and reviving a charismatic site in the historic townscape of the Royal Burgh of St Andrews.

Professor Muller provided a brief resumé of the history of the use of the site which was suffused with history and a tradition of learning that reaches back for centuries. Following the completion of the new secondary School on land previously owned by the University, the Madras College site on South Street had been handed over to the University in the late Summer. The University had thus become the custodian of the South Street site, which was both an amazing opportunity and also a great responsibility.

A brief overview of the current state of the site highlighted the need for the restoration and refurbishment of the historic 19th century set of buildings at the front of the site and the demolition of the jumble of post-war buildings at the rear. Fife Council had stopped maintaining these buildings some time ago and they were in a shockingly dilapidated condition. This would leave the University with a charismatic, historic set of buildings facing South Street and, following the significant and complicated demolition programme, a blank canvas behind; space which would be used to turn the New College Project into a reality, and transform the site into a vibrant jewel in the St Andrews streetscape.

Some early ideas for the project were shared including concepts for developing the

historic front into a learning and meeting commons for students, academics and visitors, and for taking full advantage of the glorious frontage of the neo-Jacobean building; plans for transforming the existing “Music Block”, which is a historic gem but currently in bad condition, into a Centre for Interdisciplinary Research. This would provide a place where international visitors and senior global fellows can work with teams of St Andrews academics and researchers on strategic research projects. The hope was to provide space for offices, meeting rooms and discussion areas, and possibly even some limited accommodation for visitors.

Touching briefly on design, it was confirmed that the University would build on its rich experience of rejuvenating historic buildings in the town and marrying them with new designs, fitting these developments into the historic townscape.

Slides reminded those present of recent projects including the Martyrs’ Kirk, Walter Bower House, Younger Hall and most notably the Laidlaw Music Centre which was an excellent example of transforming a site by combining old and new: This award winning and beautiful building offered unrivalled quality in terms of performance spaces and rehearsal space, and was a really good example of a sympathetic and quality design, attractively inserted on the historic St Mary’s site. The University was confident that it will be able to do this even more ambitiously at New College.

Procurement of a Design Team is under way and fundamental to the design brief is the creation of buildings which are to be of the highest quality and meet the needs of sustainability, inclusivity, and accessibility, to create modern multi-use, intelligently designed, versatile space within an attractive environment both inside and out. A key challenge will be to design space which will be agile and to respond to future needs, and to ensure a level of quality that the University will be proud of now and for generations to come. The building will define the University’s legacy for quite some time, and will be designed to be sustainable, beautiful, and durable.

2. A transformative project for the University of St Andrews in terms of its Estate.

To have access to this site and to redevelop it provided a once in a century opportunity for reshaping the University estate, and a great opportunity to engage with very substantial philanthropic supporters willing to assist in this endeavour.

- The Project would directly involve three Academic Schools (International Relations, Economics and Finance, and Management), 20% of the University’s students (undergraduates, taught postgraduates, doctoral researchers), and almost 200 academic staff; a facility benefitting the whole university and town community;
- it completes the University’s footprint across the historic heart of St Andrews with a major development only a few steps inside the West Port; enables the

University to envision and realise the state of the art, future-proof , post-pandemic space for learning and research at the heart of wider University and town community; and

- frees up three major buildings (Castlecliffe, the Arts Building, the Gateway Building) for much needed development .

3. A laboratory for solutions to 21st century problems; building a world-leading facility for teaching and research in the Social Science (Internationals Relations, Management, Economics and Finance)

This will be a space where future solutions to the important issues facing society can be addressed by a collaborative, interdisciplinary approach involving both staff and students.

The New College will incentivise and enable researchers, teachers and students across three disciplines (International Relations , Economics and Finance and Management) to become more than the sum of their parts. The project will be a concrete and ground-breaking expression of the University's commitment to the multi-and interdisciplinary scholarship and the New College will be designed to facilitate, support and champion this approach. The three Schools have already begun to chart out highly topical research challenges that are crying out for solutions informed by expertise derived from different, interlocking fields.

Professor Müller concluded the presentation with a brief summary of the intended timeline and next steps on the journey to the New College, including the appointment of a Design Team.

Questions from the floor included the selection or non-selection of particular schools for location in the New College. Professor Müller explained the rationale and process for the selection of the specific Schools. Selection was constrained by what the building could deliver and that there had been extensive consultation over which Schools should be located in the new development. New College was intended to be a building for use by all, however, and the potential for collaboration with colleagues remained, and would be encouraged.

Professor Müller also responded to a question on the timescale for completion (2026 aimed for); and a request that the University continue to cooperate with those responsible for maintaining the Archives of Madras College (and working with the Heritage Committee of the new Madras) to allow as much historical information and material to be gleaned from the site before demolition and refurbishment. Professor Müller agreed to follow up on this, and to put the relevant individuals in touch to ensure that the opportunity to gather archival material, so relevant and important to the living history of a building, is not lost.

The request was also made to acknowledge the contribution made to the Madras project by the late Lindsay Matheson, former Rector of Madras College who had led calls for a new school. The Principal agreed and indicated that a way would be found of recognizing the contribution of Mr Matheson, and other individuals key to the project, in the fullness of time.

There being no further questions, those present joined with the Vice-Chancellor to express warm thanks to Professor Müller for the presentation. The Vice-Chancellor called upon the Registrar and Clerk to intimate any motions to be considered.

The Registrar and Clerk confirmed that no motions had been received.

6. Any Other Competent Business

None intimated.

There being no further questions or other competent business, the Vice-Chancellor brought the meeting to a close and asked members to rise for the benediction.

Alastair Merrill
Registrar and Clerk to the General Council
December 2021