



THE UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
GENERAL COUNCIL

MINUTE OF THE 314th STATUTORY MEETING

The 314th meeting of the General Council was held virtually (due to Covid-19) on 20 April 2021. The Convener of the Business Committee, Dr Duncan Macniven, was in the Chair.

1 MINUTES OF THE 313th MEETING

The draft Minutes of the 313th Statutory Meeting were approved.

2 MATTERS ARISING

The Convener advised that the Business Committee had been kept updated on the the Blackbaud data breach which occurred in 2020 and noted that the Information Commissioner was taking no action against the University. He also noted that the University was reviewing procedures and making improvements wherever necessary.

The Convener referred to the concern, raised by a General Council member at the last Statutory Meeting (6 August 2020), that the important Action Against Racism agenda might have negative implications on the 525 Alumni of Achievement project. He advised that the Vice-Convener of the Business Committee, Mel Roberts, had been invited to be part of the selection group for the 525 project. Ms Roberts would be alert to the concerns raised by the General Council member.

3 MEMBERSHIP OF BUSINESS COMMITTEE – ELECTION UPDATE

Tracey Slaven, University Secretary and Chief Operating Officer, advised that under the terms of Standing Order 19, the following 3 members were due to retire from the Business Committee on 30 September 2021, but were eligible for re-election:

Patricia Pugh
Mary Stephen
Mark Strange

The following 5 members were due to retire from the Business Committee on 30 September 2021, but were not eligible for re-election:

Lynne Mennie
Willie McColl
Alan Milne
Mel Roberts
Brian Wood

Ms Slaven advised that nominations for positions on the Committee would close on Monday 21 June at 12 noon. If more nominations were received than there were vacancies, then an election would be held, and Council members would be notified accordingly. Nomination forms were available by contacting Nicole Cochrane in the Alumni Relations team at nicole.cochrane@abdn.ac.uk.

Ms Slaven encouraged General Council members to apply for the vacant positions, emphasising the important role the Business Committee played in representing General Council members to the University.

4 CHANGES TO STANDING ORDERS

The Convener invited Eric Crockart, Business Committee member, to speak on this topic.

On Standing Order 29, Mr Crockart explained that the proposed change from 6 months to 3 months for notice of motions was a practical measure. Now that the winter Statutory Meeting had moved to coincide with the University annual meeting, it had become clear that the requirement of 6 months' notice could not easily be met. The change to 3 months allowed more flexibility and ensured that motions would not be delayed unnecessarily by the new schedule of meetings.

On Standing Order 19, Mr Crockart went on to explain that the removal of General Council Assessors on Court required a new arrangement for the appointment of members linking the two bodies. Mr Crockart noted that the University's governance review was yet to be finalised, which might require further change.

The Convener pointed out that notice of these proposed changes had been given at the August meeting, with no opposition. He invited members to raise concerns in the meeting chat function. There being no opposing comments, the changes were approved.

5 UNIVERSITY NAME, MOTTO AND EMBLEM

The Convener presented the paper submitted by Ben Jump, who could not participate in the meeting.

The presentation covered Mr Jump's proposal of replacing the university motto with the founding statement, replacing the coat of arms with a pictorial emblem, and renaming the University as 'Aberdeen University'.

The Convener noted the difficulty in the virtual meeting of having an open discussion. He therefore proposed that the topic be taken forward to the next "in person" meeting for debate. He invited comments and feedback in the chat function of the meeting.

Summarising the comments, the Convener noted there was little support from attendees for the proposal, and some strong opposition. But there was general agreement to taking the topic forward to a future meeting for fuller discussion. He invited members to submit any further comments and feedback after the meeting had concluded.

6 NOTICE OF THE 315th STATUTORY MEETING

The date of the 315th Statutory Meeting was to be confirmed.