



University of
St Andrews

**MINUTE OF THE STATUTORY HALF-YEARLY MEETING OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL
HELD ON SATURDAY 20 NOVEMBER 2010 AT 11:00 IN THE PENTHOUSE SUITE,
COLLINGWOOD COLLEGE, DURHAM UNIVERSITY, DURHAM**

The Senior Assessor of the General Council on the University Court, Miss K M Patrick, was in the Chair.

The meeting opened with a prayer by Rev L Rogers (*MTheol 2006*), Curate at St John the Evangelist, East Darlington.

The Senior Assessor welcomed a total of 37 members and guests to the meeting and stated that the practice of taking the winter meeting of the General Council to locations out of St Andrews started in 1997 in order to give as many members as possible the opportunity to attend a meeting nearer their place of residence and hear about developments at the University of St Andrews directly from University representatives. This was the first time the General Council Meeting had been held in Durham.

1. Minutes of the last ordinary half-yearly meeting of the Council held on 26 June 2010

The minutes of this meeting, held in St Andrews, were received and *agreed* as a correct record.

2. Business Committee

(a) Report of the Committee's meeting on 23 October 2010

The Council considered and approved the full report of the meeting held on 23 October 2010.

The Council approved the following specific items raised by the Convener, Mr M P L Strachan:

- (i) **Donation to benefit the University Library** – the sum of £80,000 to be given to the University to support the provision of four study / learning pods within the University Library, the gift being made on the basis that the Library project would provide an appropriate and tangible way for the General Council to engage with the work of the University and help support students and other users of the Library directly.
- (ii) **Dates and locations of the next three statutory meetings of the General Council** (*subject to approval by the University Court at its meeting on 10 December 2010*) – 25 June 2011 (St Andrews), November 2011 (London) and 23 June 2012 (St Andrews).

Mr Strachan also highlighted a number of items considered by the Business Committee at the October Meeting. These included the success of the Graduation Garden Parties (*which had been part supported by a gift of £20,000 to ensure graduating students and their parents received free tickets*); updates from the 600th Anniversary Steering Group and the Purposes and Venue Working Group; intimation that the election process for the General Council Assessor and Chancellor was under review. Finally Mr Strachan advised Council members that in future, the Court would not cede the General Council Registration Fee to the General Council, but instead would allocate a grant to the Council appropriate to its needs and obligations. The General Council registration Fee from 2011-12 would be set by the Court's Planning & Resources Committee and collected by the University and not by the General Council.

(b) Membership 2010-2011

Members noted the Business Committee membership for 2010-2011 and the timetable for the nomination and election of three new members of the Business Committee to serve for a four-year period from 1 July 2011. Further details about the voting process were available from the Clerk.

3. Committee of the Alumnus Association

(a) Report of the Committee of the Alumnus Association

The Council considered and approved the report of the Committee of the Alumnus Association meetings held on 4 September and 23 October 2010.

The Convener, Miss KM Patrick, reported that the 2010 *Alumnus Chronicle* mailing distribution had been just over 39,000 and the total cost of printing, fulfillment and postage was under £55,000. On behalf of the Committee, she thanked the joint editors for their hard work in ensuring that costs were kept down without compromising quality.

In addition to the features mentioned in her report, the Convener advised that there would be an article on the celebration of the University's 500th Anniversary in the 2011 edition of the *Chronicle* which would be a useful corollary to that of Norman Reid in the 2010 edition explaining the background to the choice of dates for the 600th Anniversary celebrations. There would also be an "all the 11s" historical page and highlights from items of University news, including research activities. The Convener also recommended that Council members visit the University's website which published all press releases and events and was easily accessed.

The Convener concluded by remarking that it was encouraging that alumni clubs were so active and new gatherings were continuing, the most recent being the prospect of a group in Paris. During the celebrations to mark the 600th Anniversary of the foundation of the University it was anticipated that special alumni events would be held.

(b) Membership 2010-2011

Members noted the Alumnus Association Committee membership for 2010-2011 and the timetable for the nomination and election of one new member of Committee to serve for a five-year period from 1 July 2011. Further details about the voting process were available from the Clerk.

4. University Address by Vice-Principal (External Relations)

The Vice-Principal (External Relations), also the Registrar to the General Council, Mr S R Magee, addressed Council members and outlined a range of issues facing the University in the current difficult economic times.

Mr Magee reported on the considerable change to the student population over the last 40 years, including a growth from 3,000 students in 1970 to over 7,000 in 2010. He reported that the composition of the student body was currently 30% from Scotland, 30% from the EU (including England, Wales and Northern Ireland) and 40% from the rest of the world. An interesting statistic to note was that one sixth of all US full degree-seeking undergraduates in the UK were studying at St Andrews. It was generally agreed that this international mix of students was a positive element of the St Andrews experience and something that should be maintained even in the current economic conditions where many students looked to institutions closer to home to reduce the cost of studying.

The Vice-Principal reported that St Andrews continued to perform well both nationally and internationally in various league tables and research assessments. The University consistently achieved fifth / sixth place in the UK, out-ranked only by Cambridge, Oxford and the more

specialist Imperial College and London School of Economics. A number of subjects placed highly in the UK, including Philosophy (first and one of the top departments in the world), Chemistry and Physics and Astronomy (second / third) and English and History were also highly rated. In terms of student satisfaction St Andrews was ranked as the highest mainstream institution. In the world rankings St Andrews was placed 103rd (20th in the Arts) with an ambition to get back into the top 100 overall.

The funding situation for higher education continued to be challenging with the Government set to reduce public spending through a range of cuts. These cuts would land differentially across universities and across different areas of this University's business. Undergraduate teaching would be the most likely to be affected with postgraduates less affected as they already received little direct state subsidy through funded places in comparison. The University's funding from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) would continue to fall.

The Vice-Principal closed his remarks by stating that St Andrews was determined to continue to be the best at what it did and that we are the custodians of this 600-year-old institution which brought great responsibility to safeguard its continued future success.

The Vice-Principal took questions from members. Areas addressed included: the University's relationship with the Carnegie Trust(s); the library development programme and the role of fundraising; the impact to the University of the cap on skilled migrants; performance in league tables; town and gown relations; the argument for privatisation as public funding decreases; length of Scottish degree and options for flexible study; composition of the student body; balance between arts and sciences at St Andrews; future of the Geology Department; research awards; funding for undergraduate teaching and the positive effect of US students at St Andrews.

The meeting ended with further general comments about the funding climate for higher education. The Vice-Principal encouraged members to take an active interest in the 600th Anniversary as alumni engagement would be crucial to the success of the campaign and celebrations.

The Senior Assessor thanked the Vice-Principal for his comprehensive address and the members for their active engagement and varied questions.

5. Any other Competent Business

No items having been intimated for consideration the Senior Assessor concluded the business of the meeting by thanking members for their attendance and participation in the meeting.

6. Next Meeting

The next statutory half-yearly meeting would take place on Saturday 25 June 2011 at 11am in St Andrews.

The meeting closed with the pronouncement of the benediction.

Miss K M Patrick
Senior Assessor of the General Council on the University Court