



University of
St Andrews

**MINUTE OF THE STATUTORY HALF-YEARLY MEETING OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL
HELD ON SATURDAY 21 NOVEMBER 2009 at 11am in THE GREAT HALL,
LANYON BUILDING, QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST, BELFAST**

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 Reverend W Orr (BD 1972) of St John's Presbyterian Church, Newtownbreda.

The Senior Assessor welcomed 35 members and their 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 Northern Ireland.

1. Minutes of the last ordinary half-yearly meeting of the Council held on 27 June 2009

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

2. Assessor of the General Council on the University Court

The Acting Clerk intimated that Professor E Brown falls to vacate office as an Assessor of the General Council on the University Court on 31 July 2010. Nomination forms for the resulting vacancy would be available from the Acting Clerk, to be returned not later than 1 March 2010. In the event of more than one nomination being received an election would be held by postal ballot in 2010. The result would be intimated at the General Council Meeting on 26 June 2010.

3. Business Committee

(a) Report of the Committee's meeting on 24 October 2009

The Council considered and approved the full report of the meeting held on 24 October 2009, which included the recommendation that the University Court be asked to approve at its meeting on 11 December 2009 the appointment of Miss L F Taylor as Clerk to the General Council with effect from 1 January 2010. It took particular note of the following items of business highlighted by the Convener, Mr M P L Strachan: -

(i) Report from the Working Group re location of statutory meetings

The remit of the Working Group that had been established in 2008 to consider the most

appropriate destinations for the statutory meetings of the General Council had been expanded, in consultation with the Convener, to consider how more people could be attracted to attend statutory meetings. This led naturally to a more general look at the role of the Business Committee, the General Council and its relationship to the University Court.

The Working Group reported to the Business Committee in October which, after a full discussion, agreed that the Working Group should consider practical ways in which the Business Committee, and through it the General Council, could improve its visibility and offer assistance to Court. The Group would report its findings to the full Committee in March 2010.

(ii) Garden Parties

For the 2009 Graduation Garden Parties the Committee decided to double the amount of financial contribution it had made towards these events over the last few years because the Royal Bank of Scotland had advised the University that it was not in a position to continue its sponsorship of the Garden Parties. The amount of General Council sponsorship would be reviewed by the Business Committee at its meeting in March 2010 and would not necessarily remain at the level granted in 2009. The Committee had been advised that efforts were being made to find another external sponsor for this event for 2010.

(iii) Admissions Report

The Committee had been informed that the University had exceeded student numbers in terms of postgraduate and overseas recruitment, but that these categories were not constrained by government. In 2009 the number of Home and European Union students was almost exactly on the target of 1,105 and it was this category which would be closely monitored.

(iv) General Council Fee

Members noted and *approved* the recommendation that the General Council Registration Fee for 2010-11 should rise from £50 to £52 to provide additional income which could be utilised in marking the 600th Anniversary of the foundation of the University. It was also noted that the indicative fee for 2011-12 would be reviewed in March 2010.

(b) Membership 2009-10

Members noted that Mr Martyn Strachan had been elected to the post of Convener until 30 June 2013.

Members also noted 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 2010. Further details about the voting process were available from the Acting Clerk.

4. Committee of the Alumnus Association

The Council considered and approved the report of the Committee of the Alumnus Association meetings held on 29 August and 31 October 2009, taking particular note of the following items of business highlighted by the Convener, Miss KM Patrick: -

(a) Report of the meetings held on 29 August and 31 October 2009

The Convener reported that the 2009 *Alumnus Chronicle* had been produced and distributed to over 38,500 alumni, at a cost of under £52,000. The Convener thanked the joint editors for their hard work in keeping the costs down. A number of favourable comments had been received about its content and design.

In addition to the items mentioned in the Report the next edition of the *Alumnus Chronicle* would include features on the 150th anniversary of the birth of D'Arcy Thompson and the context around the debate over the correct founding date of the University. In response to requests from readers more short items of news from around the University would be included along with updates about recent research.

The Convener also reported on the continued activity of Alumni Clubs and Networks across the world and expressed a hope that many of these groups would be actively involved in running alumni events to celebrate the 600th Anniversary.

(b) Membership 2009-10

The Convener reported that the rotational vacancy to be filled from 1 July 2010 for a period of five years was that of Convener. In terms of the constitution she was eligible to stand for re-election and would do so for one further term of office. Further details about the nomination and voting process were available from the Acting Clerk.

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

The Vice-Principal (External Relations), who is also Registrar to the General Council, Mr S R Magee, addressed members and outlined a range of issues facing the University as it approached its 600th Anniversary.

The Vice-Principal reported that the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise had demonstrated that St Andrews was one of the leading institutions in the UK for the quality of its research. St Andrews had emerged as fourteenth in the UK and second in Scotland with a number of subjects being placed at, or near the top, in the UK, including Philosophy (first); Physics & Astronomy, German and Film Studies (second); Chemistry, Applied Mathematics and French (fourth). We also achieve excellence in our league table results, where we are regularly placed in the top five universities and also named top mainstream university in the National Student Survey for the past four years. This level of performance is hard to maintain but the University continues to strive for excellence.

The Vice-Principal encouraged members to reflect on what made the University of St Andrews a unique place when they were students and how this was often a difficult thing to quantify. The student cohort had changed over the last 15-20 years and St Andrews had become an international institution with 30% of the student population now coming from outside Europe, broadly 30% from Scotland, 30% from the rest of the UK and the final 10% from the rest of the EU. St Andrews is second only to the London School of Economics as a major non-specialist institution in terms of the number of international students.

Another aspect that made St Andrews unique was the mix of historic estate in the town centre and the development of state of the art modern buildings such as The Arts Building and the

proposed re-development of the University Library.

The Vice-Principal also discussed University finances and in particular the issue of tuition fees and the reduction in funding that now came directly from the state. Mr Magee drew comparisons with England where the tuition fee cap will be removed after the next election and raised concerns about the ability of St Andrews, and other Scottish institutions, to retain staff and attract students when competing with English counterparts.

The Vice-Principal took questions from members. Areas addressed included: the growing number of students from Northern Ireland and their impact around the world in different fields; the level of scholarship support; the special historic nature of St Andrews; new accommodation developments including Fife Park; the size and geographic breakdown of the student population; the need to keep the student population below 7,500 to maintain the correct balance in the town; the number of postgraduate students and the impact of the current economic crisis on students' career prospects.

The Vice-Principal concluded by encouraging members to take an active interest in the 600th Anniversary as this would be a seminal moment and alumni engagement would be crucial to the success of the ambitious plans.

The Senior Assessor thanked the Vice-Principal for his interesting address and the members for their particularly active engagement and range of questions.

6. Presentation about the 600th Anniversary

Ms Nicole Gray Conchar, Deputy Director of 600th Anniversary Campaign, gave a presentation to the General Council outlining the plans that are underway for the 600th Anniversary. These included a fundraising campaign and a multi-faceted events programme. The 600th Anniversary would be an opportunity to mark the University's past achievements and signal key aspirations for the future.

Ms Gray Conchar showed members the newly created fly-through DVD presentation demonstrating the proposed plans for the redevelopment of the University Library.

Members were advised that a series of key events were being planned for the 600th Anniversary to take place from June 2011 to November 2013. Mr G Morris, who had worked on the Cambridge 800th Anniversary Campaign, has been appointed to advise on the 600th Events programme. Mr Morris would assist with developing a balanced 600th Events programme around various themes, including academic, cultural, sporting and musical.

Ms Gray Conchar reported that the 600th Anniversary website was now up and running and members were encouraged to record their personal perspectives on the 'Your Story' page.

Members asked a range of questions about the 600th Anniversary and the Library re-development in particular. The questions / comments raised covered areas such as: the similarities with Queen's University Belfast's new Library; details about the architecture of the building and the importance of investing in a high quality Library for the twenty-first century. Members were impressed with the quality of the proposed new Library building and in particular with the proposed architectural scope.

Ms Gray Conchar closed by thanking the members for their enthusiasm and encouraged members to keep in close contact with the 600th Anniversary Campaign Office in order to find out about latest developments and how they could become involved.

7. 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.

8. Next Meeting

The next statutory half-yearly meeting would take place on Saturday 26 June 2010 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