

**MINUTE OF THE STATUTORY HALF-YEARLY MEETING OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL
HELD ON SATURDAY 28 JUNE 2014 at 10:30 IN PARLIAMENT HALL, UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS**

The Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University, Professor Louise Richardson FRSE, was in the Chair and welcomed 48 members to the meeting. The Chancellor's apologies were noted.

1. Minute of the last Ordinary Half-Yearly General Council Meeting held on 27 November 2013

The minute of this meeting, held in St Andrews, was received and agreed as a correct record. There were no matters arising from the minute which were not covered on the agenda.

2. General Council Assessor Election Result

The Vice-Principal (Governance, Policy and Planning) announced the result of the election of the General Council Assessor to the University Court to replace Sir Ewan Brown who would demit office on 31 July 2014. Four candidates stood for election to this position. A total of 1,290 votes were cast and a result was achieved after three rounds of counting. Mr Michael J Taylor was eliminated after the first round of counting with 148 votes. Mr James Wallace was eliminated after the second round of counting with 247 votes. After the third round of counting Mr Kenneth W M Cochran, BSc 1979, received 642 votes and Mr James N North 547 votes. Therefore Mr Cochran was elected to the position of General Council Assessor to the University Court to serve for a four-year term from 1 August 2014.

The Principal extended thanks on behalf of the General Council members to Sir Ewan Brown for his work as General Council Assessor and expressed congratulations for the recent and well-deserved award of a knighthood.

3. Appointment of Registrar and Clerk to the General Council

The Principal intimated that the University Court's Governance & Nominations Committee had agreed upon the nomination of Professor Nic Beech, Vice-Principal (Governance, Policy and Planning), as Registrar and Clerk to the General Council. There were no objections or comments from the members and this recommendation was therefore endorsed.

4. General Council Review

The Principal and Vice-Chancellor invited the Vice-Principal (Governance, Policy and Planning) to present an update on the General Council Review and the issue of Business Committee resources following the outcome of the proposal submitted by the Business Committee to the University Court on 20 June 2014.

The Vice-Principal reported that no consensus could be reached at the November 2013 General Council Meeting over the primary channel for distribution of information between the University Court and the General Council. There had also been no agreement about the future of the Business Committee, including the suggestion of a smaller committee to act as the executive committee of the General Council. Following the November General Council Meeting, the Business Committee considered the matter further and submitted a paper to the University Executive which was presented to the University Court at its meeting in June 2014. The University Court agreed that this paper provided an appropriate way to move forward and this paper was presented to the members at this meeting. A copy of the full paper can be found at Appendix 1 to this minute.

The members endorsed the paper and its proposals, including the change to the constitution of the Business Committee to reflect the fact that elections to the Business Committee would now take place every two years instead of every year with the next election taking place in the spring of 2015.

5. Business Committee Report

The Acting Convener, Mrs Jane Watkinson, invited members to note the full report of the Business Committee meeting held on 15 March 2014, which was printed in the Billet. Mrs Watkinson thanked Ms Heather MacMillan and Mr Alan Livesey who were retiring from the committee along with her on 30 June 2014. Mrs Watkinson confirmed that the new Convener would be elected at the Business Committee

meeting on 18 October 2014. Finally, on behalf of her fellow committee members, Mrs Watkinson congratulated Mr Cochran on his election to the post of General Council Assessor to the University Court.

The Principal expressed her thanks for the sixteen years of dedicated service Mrs Watkinson had given to the General Council and the University while a member, Vice-Convener and more recently Acting Convener of the Business Committee.

6. University Address by Professor Lorna Milne, Vice-Principal (Proctor)

The Vice-Principal (Proctor), Professor Lorna Milne, provided an update on a range of events and activities that had taken place at the University in the last year. The year had started in an outstanding way in September 2013 with the Academic Celebration marking the culmination of the 600th Anniversary celebrations. Other events during the 600th Anniversary celebration included academic debates, lectures, alumni service of thanksgiving, concerts, recitals, cycle race, fireworks, alumni receptions and film screenings and the continuation of the fundraising campaign.

The Proctor also spoke about the excellent teaching and learning experience for students at St Andrews. This included the growing opportunities for study abroad and the involvement of undergraduate students in research projects. The latter demonstrated that research was at the heart of all teaching at St Andrews. The continued excellent performance in league tables was also highlighted with the National Student Survey placing St Andrews as best in Scotland and second equal in the UK. Students were encouraged to nominate staff for teaching awards and School Student Presidents represented their fellow students through working with the Deans and Principal's Office to raise issues and improve the overall student experience.

Outside of academic life students continued to be involved in a range of sport and student society activities. There were currently around 140 student societies, including the Charities campaign which raised over £100,000 per annum. The Mermaids regularly sent shows to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and the Debating Society recently reached the semi-finals of the World Championships. Many student activities involved local schools and groups, with students providing coaching and referees and also undertaking classroom placements as part of the University's outreach programmes. A number of other activities took place to engage with school pupils, including access programmes and summer schools.

Looking ahead a number of developments were underway or planned for 2015. This included the redevelopment of the Students' Association building, a revamp of Fife House and the redevelopment of St Salvator's Quadrangle which were all due to be completed in 2015. Discussions were underway in relation to the future of the Byre Theatre.

Questions from members included topics such as student statistics, international programmes and links and the new academic calendar.

The Principal and Vice-Chancellor thanked the Vice-Principal for outlining the activities, events and achievements of the past twelve months.

7. Research at the University of St Andrews – Professor Derek Woollins, FRSE FRSC CChem, Head of the School of Chemistry and Director of EaStChem

The Principal and Vice-Chancellor invited Professor Derek Woollins to address the General Council informing the members that Professor Woollins would take up the role of Vice-Principal (Research) on the retirement of Professor Chris Hawkesworth in September 2014.

Professor Woollins outlined the continued importance of research at the University. The number of PhDs continued to grow and played a vital part in the life of the University. In terms of research citations, the University was fifth in the UK, seventh in Europe and thirty-ninth in the world, and 79% of Research Excellence Framework impact case studies had international reach. A further indication of the excellence of the University's research was the election of new Fellows to the Royal Society and the Royal Society of Edinburgh which recently included the Librarian. A number of younger University staff were also elected to the RSE - Young Academy of Scotland. Each year, the RSE highlighted some of the UK's most outstanding talent through its Royal Medallists and Prize Winners awards and a number of these awards were made to St Andrews researchers in 2013 and 2014.

Professor Woollins then presented a fascinating account of the development of crystallography and its importance. Using complex equations, this branch of science solved the molecular structure of crystalline materials and thus predicted their physical, chemical and biological properties with great precision. The science of crystallography had developed over 100 years to the point now that it was integral to today's research, from aiding the development of HIV inhibitors to showing that soil on Mars was not much different from that on places on earth. The United Nations recognised the importance of the science of crystallography by proclaiming that 2014 would be the International Year of Crystallography. There have been twenty-nine Nobel Prizes dedicated to scientists in this area and discoveries had laid the foundations for ground-breaking technologies and an enhanced understanding of biochemical processes. At St Andrews, crystallography played an important part in the research output, with 50% of Chemistry papers involving crystallography and a recent £1m grant from EPSRC 'Core Capability' for single crystal and powder instruments. A further £3.8m was received from EPSRC for Materials, including £2m for a new Electron Microscope. An exhibition celebrating crystallography took place at the St Andrews Museum in the spring of 2014 to raise awareness of this field and allowed the public to see how molecules fit together from diamonds to DNA.

There being no questions from the floor for Professor Woollins, the Principal and Vice-Chancellor thanked him for his thought-provoking presentation.

8. Any other competent business

The Principal and Vice-Chancellor responded to a question about the independence referendum and the assessment of the risks associated with the outcome of the vote. This issue had been discussed at length and was being monitored carefully but, until the result was known, there was limited formal action that could be taken.

The Principal closed the meeting by thanking the speakers for their contributions and the General Council members for their attendance and participation.

*Professor Louise Richardson FRSE
Principal and Vice-Chancellor*