

MINUTE OF THE STATUTORY HALF-YEARLY MEETING OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL HELD ON SATURDAY 2 JULY 2022 AT 10.30AM IN PARLIAMENT HALL, SOUTH STREET, ST ANDREWS

The Chancellor, The Rt Hon Lord Campbell of Pittenweem, was in the chair.

Welcoming 48 members to the meeting, the Chancellor gave apologies for Wendy Russell, Convener of the Business Committee, who was indisposed. Jonathan Hewitt, one of the General Council Assessors to Court and a member of the Business Committee, would read the Business Committee report on her behalf. The Chancellor reported that Jonathan Hewitt had recently been reappointed to serve a second term as General Council Assessor to Court, a decision that had been warmly welcomed by the Business Committee.

1. Minute of the last ordinary half-yearly meeting of the General Council held on 27 November 2021.

The minute of the meeting was agreed as a correct record.

(See [General Council Minutes](#))

2. Business Committee Report – presented by Jonathan Hewitt, General Council Assessor to the University Court, on behalf of Wendy Russell, Convener of the Business Committee

Jonathan Hewitt passed on the Convener's apologies for her absence due to testing positive for Covid a few days earlier. Wendy's report began by offering warm congratulations to the Principal on receiving a DBE in the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Birthday Honours list and applauding her outstanding services to higher education, and to the University of St Andrews in particular. Congratulations were also conveyed to other staff members recognised in the Birthday Honours List with MBEs: Dr Isobel Falconer, Claire Lavelle and Stephen Stewart.

Since the November 2021 meeting of the General Council, the Business Committee had met twice, in January and April, the latter being the first in-person meeting for some time in St Andrews. The Committee was pleased to have Robert Fleming, Director of Development, join them in January, and Lottie Doherty, President of the Student Association, in April. Through improving their engagement with the University, they aim to be a more effective and efficient Business Committee to the General Council.

It was hoped that General Council members had taken the opportunity to engage with some of the diverse and fascinating Development initiatives that Robert had discussed with the Committee - from academic talks, to meet the author events, and special occasions such as the annual Burns Night and the Carol Service. Ideas for further events would be welcomed.

Lottie Doherty, President of the Students' Association, was keen to have the General Council's support in encouraging applications to the University from the traditionally under-represented areas of society. General Council members can all do more as advocates for the University, and particularly for those groups of young people, through their own work and social communities.

Members were invited to note the minutes for the September 2021 and January 2022 Business Committee meetings, which can be found on the [General Council Minutes webpages](#).

The [revised Standing Orders](#) approved at the November 2021 meeting can also be viewed online.

Work continues on the Legacy of the Gown initiative. Development has requested an outline business case, which is being completed, albeit slightly more slowly than hoped. A survey of a section of General Council members is expected to go ahead in the near future through the social media channels of Business Committee members and also through the alumni groups. Options for the storage and distribution of gowns were being explored.

Reference was made to the data included on the General Council page of this year's *Chronicle* which shows that the pool of full General Council members (i.e. Graduates and Honorary Graduates) for whom the University has a valid mail address now numbers over 56,000. In addition, there are now almost 800 General Council Staff on the Register. The current Business Committee includes two members from the academic staff and they bring with them a distinctive and helpful viewpoint. It is impressive that 151 General Council members graduated between 1940 and 1949 when the numbers attending the University were likely to be lower than normal due to the World War. It was also good to see over 20,000 graduates registered as General Council members from 2010 to 2019. These are not just statistics and data, but represent the greatest diversity of age, nationality, creed, and interest, each with their own story to tell. After three consecutive weeks of graduation ceremonies, several thousand more join the ranks of General Council members. Indeed, all of

these graduates were informed of their automatic inclusion in this body during each individual ceremony.

In closing, on behalf of the Convener, Jonathan thanked all staff involved in organising and participating in General Council meetings, and those who provide ongoing support to the Business Committee throughout the year. He also thanked Business Committee colleagues for their commitment, support and willingness to give time to General Council work, despite the very busy lives they lead. Particular thanks went to Professor Stephen Gethins, Strategic Adviser to the Principal on External Relations and Professor of Practice in International Relations, for agreeing to present on community engagement. Finally, he thanked all those attending for showing such interest in General Council affairs. The Convener, Wendy Russell, looked forward to meeting everyone in person in November.

The Chancellor thanked Jonathan Hewitt for presenting the Business Committee report and invited members to ask questions.

There being no questions, the Chancellor moved to the next item on the agenda, the University Address, taking the opportunity to congratulate the Principal on her damehood and to pay tribute to the extraordinary effort and commitment which she has shown, particularly since the outbreak of Covid.

3. University Address – Professor Dame Sally Map stone DBE FRSE, Principal and Vice-Chancellor

Thanking the Chancellor for his kind words, the Principal welcomed members and said it was a pleasure to have the opportunity to address them once again.

[The Principal's University Address to the General Council](#) can be read in full online.

Following the Principal's address, the Chancellor invited questions from the floor.

Referring to newspaper articles reporting concern over Chinese students, a question was raised as to whether this is an issue at St Andrews. The Principal reassured the member that the concerns reported were primarily in relation to Confucius Institutes and so were not relevant to St Andrews. The University takes precautions and not exclusively in relation to China.

There being no further questions, the Chancellor thanked the Principal for her leadership - and also the collective leadership at the University - and invited Professor Stephen Gethins, Strategic Adviser to the Principal on External Relations and Professor of Practice in International Relations, to deliver his presentation on community engagement.

4. Presentation on community engagement - Professor Stephen Gethins, Strategic Adviser to the Principal on External Relations and Professor of Practice in International Relations

Professor Gethins began by thanking the Principal and members of the General Council for the opportunity to speak about community engagement activities at the University. He would be referring particularly to the role of his colleague, Lesley Caldwell, the University's Community Engagement and Social Responsibility Officer, with whom he works closely and as part of a team on community outreach, and who regretted being unable to attend the meeting.

Lesley joined the University in the summer of 2019 in a new role designed at its core to bridge between the University and local communities. Acknowledging that the last two years had been amongst the most challenging ever faced by the University due to the pandemic, Professor Gethins went on to explain how the Community Engagement and Social Responsibility Officer role straddles both operational and strategic activities. Community Engagement in the context of our global institution considers our internal community, our students, and staff, and also our external community more broadly - from the local, to national and international communities. The day-to-day operational activities of the role over the last two years had been 'hyper local' – involving the communities on our doorstep with whom we interact daily and whose lives are impacted directly by the actions and activities of the University. However, there is also a commitment by the University to wider social responsibility and it is the role of the Community Engagement and Social Responsibility Officer to help nurture that commitment and work with colleagues to encourage them, and ultimately inspire others, to follow the University's example.

Developments to Date

One of the principal day-to-day activities of the Community Engagement and Social Responsibility Officer role is to act as a conduit for the University in the community and connect internal and external communities. To enable this and achieve a broad understanding of activities, Lesley participates in a significant number of internal meetings, steering and operational groups and also in a number of external networks and boards. Professor Gethins encouraged members to contact Lesley directly if they would like further information on any of the following activities with which she is involved: the Student and Community Working Group, the University of Sanctuary Operational Group, the Film Festival Steering Committee, the Community Safety Group, the University/Madras College Operational Forum, the Royal Burgh of St Andrews Community Council, the St Andrews Pilgrim Foundation, the Business Improvement District, the Madras College Endowment Trust, the Transition Board, the Byre Stakeholder Group, the Local Net Zero Network, the Scottish Universities

Communities Network, the Civic University Network, the International Network of Town and Gown Universities.

In addition, Lesley works with Professor Gethins on two major University projects: the University Community Fund and the One St Andrews initiative.

University Community Fund

The University Community Fund has enabled the University to consider requests for funding to support bigger projects with greater impact for communities locally. Whilst the fund was conceived before the Covid-19 crisis, its early launch in April 2020 came at a time when small voluntary bodies were responding to the needs of their communities and stakeholders. Over the financial year, a total of £30,000 was made available from the University across three funding rounds. In addition, the fund received substantial financial support from a mixture of private donors, donations from the Principal's Strategic Response Fund, student fundraising activities, and a percentage received from Covid fines, significantly extending the reach of the fund across the three rounds. A total of 110 applications were received over the year, with requests totalling £192, 694.42. So far 81 applications have been supported to the sum of £130,211.33, making a really significant difference. Whilst applications were open to projects and organisations from across Fife, the submissions were primarily made from St Andrews and the immediate surrounding communities. Domestic abuse, those impacted by long-Covid, refugees, and children with disabilities are just a small number of issues and groups which have benefitted from funding and support from the University.

Going forward, the promotion of future rounds will focus on engaging areas beyond North East Fife. Professor Gethins explained that the concept of a traditional 'town and gown' relationship is changing and, as one of the main employers in Fife and with more and more students commuting, the areas in which the University can build relationships and make a difference are also changing. The University Community Fund is the route to the creation of new links, new relationships and new stories and it is really important to share the story of the fund and those we are supporting. This year the Principal will visit a number of the projects and it is hoped that further links and opportunities for collaboration and support can be established.

Professor Gethins has enjoyed serving on the University Community Fund panel and emphasised the importance of now reaching out beyond St Andrews since the University's footprint extends more than ever before beyond the town.

One St Andrews

One St Andrews is an umbrella initiative under which we will celebrate the diversity of our community, promote inclusivity and signpost clear support for anyone with concerns, fears or complaints within the local community and working with the local community.

Discussions within the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) subcommittee of the Students' Association, and subsequently with a number of individual students, indicated that some of their negative lived experiences derived from out with the University's community. Following additional discussions with Madras College and St Leonards School, it was proposed that a University/community-wide initiative should be developed to enable the University to work with the local community to tackle these behaviours.

One St Andrews will encapsulate several existing activities, including the Emily Test, the Ask for Angela Scheme, the Inclusion Calendar, Report and Support, and training such as Bystander and Third-Party Reporting. An internal One St Andrews Steering Group has been set up, made up of representatives from across the University and the Students' Association. An external forum will be the mechanism to engage further with the wider local community. A priority for the immediate future will be working with the local high Schools to support and facilitate training opportunities and run workshops, as well as supporting sessions with the BAME Sub-committee and the LGBTQ+ Sub-committee. There has been considerable groundwork undertaken over the last semester and following the appointment of Vice-Principal (People and Diversity), Dr Rebekah Widefield.

Covid

Covid has impacted the role of community engagement at the University. Early in the pandemic, time was spent talking to local groups, businesses and individuals about the reality of Covid in St Andrews and feeding any concerns and questions back to senior management. It was critical to provide reassurance to the local community on all of our activities and to respond to concerns about noise, parties, social distancing and general behaviour. On several occasions, the Community Council and other groups had praised the work of the University and Professor Gethins had also, on joining the University, noticed how mindful it is of the impact it has on the local community. The Community Council's relationship with the University is the best it has been for a significant period of time, helped by having a direct contact person with whom they can raise issues or questions.

In summing up, Professor Gethins noted that while much of the University's impact had been on the local community, St Andrews and surrounding area, the work of the Access and Outreach Team, the Public Engagement Team, as well as cultural

colleagues, are an excellent basis for further engagement with communities, groups and organisations out with North East Fife.

The University Community Fund is well placed to continue the development of sustainable relationships with small groups and organisations, building resilience within communities. The priorities for the coming months would be the continuation of the University Community Fund and the launch of the One St Andrews initiative, as well as further local communication initiatives.

Professor Gethins ended by paying tribute to Lesley Caldwell, thanking her for being an outstanding colleague and for the huge amount of work she does as the University's Community Engagement and Social Responsibility Officer. He encouraged members to be in touch with Lesley directly with any questions about her work at Email: community@st-andrews.ac.uk

The Chancellor thanked Professor Gethins for his presentation and invited questions from the floor.

Matters raised from the floor included a request for the University to remind students, especially new students, to avoid noise disturbing local residents and to encourage them to recycle. Members were thanked for raising these matters and were offered reassurance that the University regularly reminds students of the need be responsible citizens in the town. The importance of reinforcing this in first few critical opening weeks of the academic year was also acknowledged. Another member enquired about the University's links with Europe since Brexit and was assured by the Principal that Europe remains very high on the University's agenda and is at the heart of its global strategy.

There being no further questions, the Chancellor thanked Professor Gethins for his presentation and called upon the Registrar and Clerk to intimate any motions to be considered.

The Registrar and Clerk confirmed that there were no motions to be considered.

5. Any Other Competent Business

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

Alastair Merrill

Registrar and Clerk to the General Council

August 2022