



Business Committee Meeting on Thursday 27 June 2024 at 5.15pm in the Conference Room, Edinburgh Climate Change Institute (ECCI), Infirmary Street, Edinburgh

Tea, coffee and biscuits will be available at 5.00 pm.

AGENDA

1. Welcome and Apologies
2. Observations by General Council Assessors on Court meeting on 22 June Paper 1

ITEMS for APPROVAL

3. a. Minutes of the Meeting of 2 May 2024 Paper 2
b. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Meeting of 2 May 2024
4. Draft Resolutions of the University Court [formal item]
5. Co-option of new members of Business Committee to fill vacancies Paper 3
6. General Council Prince Philip Fund – further scholarship appointment Paper 4

ITEMS for DISCUSSION

7. University Consultation on Responsible Investments Policy Paper 5
8. Feedback on the 15 June Half Yearly Meeting and Symposium at EFI Paper 6

ITEMS for REPORTING

9. Minutes of Standing Committee meetings Papers 7 - 10
10. Report from the Secretary of the General Council – items for information Paper 11
11. Any other competent business (notified in advance to the Secretary)
12. Date of next meeting – Thursday 10 October 2024 at 5.15pm

The meeting will need to finish by 6.30pm for reception in St. Cecilia's Hall at 7pm to thank retiring and welcome new members of the Committee



University Court
Edinburgh Futures Institute, Lauriston Place, Edinburgh
Monday, 17 June 2024

AGENDA

[Version for General Council Business Committee,
indicating whether papers are open or closed]

OPENING ITEMS

- 1 **Minutes [Open version of minutes to be published in due course]**
To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 22 April 2024 A1
- 2 **Matters Arising & Review of Action Log [CLOSED]** A2
To raise any matters arising and review the Action Log
- 3 **Principal's Report**
 - **Principal's Report [OPEN]** B1
To note a report from Peter Mathieson, Principal
 - **Report from the Short Life Working Group on Definition of Armaments for Investments [CLOSED – but outcome published here: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/news/staff/2024/a-statement-from-the-university-court>]** B2
To consider a paper presented by Peter Mathieson, Principal
- 4 **Committee Business**
 - Senior Lay Member's Overview Verbal
 - Exception Committee [CLOSED] C1
 - Policy & Resources Committee [CLOSED] C2
 - Nominations Committee [OPEN – appointments made; CLOSED – other business] C3
To approve appointments to standing committees
 - Audit & Risk Committee [CLOSED] C4
 - Knowledge Strategy Committee [CLOSED] C5
 - Senate (Senatus Academicus) [OPEN] C6

KEY ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION/DECISION

- 5 **Finance**
 - **Director of Finance's Report [CLOSED]** D1
To consider a paper presented by Lee Hamill, Director of Finance
 - **Planning and Budgeting: Planning round 2024-29, 2024-25 proposals [CLOSED]** D2
To consider a paper presented by Rona Smith, Deputy Secretary Governance & Strategic Planning, Kim Graham, Provost, and Lee Hamill, Director of Finance, and approve the Group-level budget
- 6 **Annual People Report [OPEN]** E
To consider a paper presented by James Saville, Director of HR

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| 7 | <p>Court External Effectiveness Review Report [OPEN – report will be published over summer]
 To <u>consider</u> a paper presented by Dr Veena O'Halloran, External Facilitator for the Effectiveness Review</p> | F |
| 8 | <p>Student Experience [CLOSED]
 To <u>consider</u> a paper presented by Colm Harmon, Vice-Principal Students</p> | G |
| 9 | <p>Students' Association and Sports Union Reports [OPEN]
 To <u>consider</u> the reports presented by Dora Herndon, Students' Association President</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students' Association Report • Sports Union Report | <p>H1
H2</p> |
| 10 | <p>Estates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential Strategy 2023-2030 Update [CLOSED]
 To <u>approve</u> the updated strategy, presented by Catherine Martin, Vice-Principal Corporate Services • Strategic Acquisition [CLOSED]
 To <u>approve</u> the acquisition of property proposed in a paper presented by Damien Toner, Director of Estates • Churchill House Refurbishment [CLOSED]
 To <u>approve</u> funding for refurbishment, as proposed in a paper presented by Catherine Martin, Vice-Principal Corporate Services • Sport & Active Wellbeing Facilities Development Recommendations [CLOSED]
 To <u>consider</u> a paper presented by Catherine Martin, Vice-Principal Corporate Services, and <u>approve</u> a reallocation of capital funding • CRIC 4 – National Total-Body Positron Emission Tomography facility at Edinburgh Imaging [CLOSED]
 To <u>approve</u> funding as proposed in a paper presented by Damien Toner, Director of Estates • Queens Medical Research Institute Collaboration Works [CLOSED]
 To <u>approve</u> funding as proposed in a paper presented by Damien Toner, Director of Estates • Midlothian Centre of Excellence and First Opinion Practice [CLOSED]
 To <u>approve</u> funding as proposed in a paper presented by Damien Toner, Director of Estates | <p>I
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| 11 | <p>Digital</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital Strategy [CLOSED] | P |

- **Digital Estates Capital Plan 2023-2029 [CLOSED]** **Q**
To *consider* papers presented by Gavin McLachlan, Vice-Principal and Chief Information Officer and Librarian, and to approve the strategy

ITEMS FOR NOTING OR FORMAL APPROVAL

- 12 Annual Recognition of Alumni Clubs [OPEN]** **R**
To approve
- 13 Donations & Legacies and Alumni Relations Activity [CLOSED]** **S**
To note
- 14 Prevent Duty Annual Compliance [OPEN]** **T**
To note
- 15 Education Act 1994 requirements in relation to the Students' Association [OPEN]** **U**
To note
- 16 Resolutions: Degree Programme Regulations [OPEN]** **V**
To approve
- 17 Resolutions: Chairs [OPEN]** **W**
To approve
- 18 Any Other Business**
To consider any other matters
- 19 Date of Next Meeting**
Monday 7 October 2024, all day (seminar and meeting)

**Minutes of the Business Committee Meeting held on Thursday 2 May 2024
at 5.15pm, in the Raeburn Room, Old College**

Present

Sir Philip Mawer, Convener of the Business Committee
Mr Gordon Cairns, Vice-Convener of the Business Committee
Dr William Duncan, Secretary of the General Council
Ms Alison MacLeary, Assistant Secretary of the General Council
The Rt. Hon. Douglas Alexander Professor Stephen Hillier
Mr Arron Ashton Ms Kirsty MacGregor (online)
Professor Alice Brown Mr Jock Millican (online)
Ms Manya Buchan Dr Bruce Nelson
Lady Joyce Caplan Professor Graeme Reid
Mr John Clifford Mr Devin Scobie
Ms Ann Cormack (online) The Rt. Rev. Brian Smith
Mrs Almira Delibegovic-Broome Ms Krystyna Szumelukowa
Ms Candice Donnelly The Rt.Hon. Sarah Wolffe KC
Dr Frances Dow
Dr Mary Gunn (online)

In attendance Councillor Cammy Day, Leader of the City of Edinburgh Council

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Convener welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Alistair Dunlop and Francis McManus.

It was possible to invite Councillor Day to give a presentation to the Committee on the City of Edinburgh Council and its relationship with the University because Janet Legrand, Senior Lay Member of Court, was no longer able to attend the meeting due to other commitments.

2. Minutes of the Meeting of 29 February 2024

The minutes were approved.

3. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Meeting of 29 February 2024

- There were no matters arising;
- The Convener reported that further consideration had been given to an earlier query from Brian Smith about having an Effectiveness Review of the General Council. He advised that, due to the current heavy workload in the General Council office and impending changes of Business and Standing Committee Conveners, this was not an appropriate time to have such a Review. The suggestion could be returned to later should that be felt desirable.

4. Convener Election 2024

The committee warmly congratulated Gordon Cairns, who has been Vice-Convener of the Business Committee since 2016, on the outcome of the election process. He will begin his new role as Convener on 1st August 2024.

5. Presentation from Councillor Cammy Day, Leader of Edinburgh City Council.

- Cllr Day warmly welcomed the opportunity to address the Committee, in his capacity as Leader of the City Council.
- He began by giving an overview presentation (circulated with this minute) about the opportunities and challenges facing the City Council, and the present state of the relationship with the University. This was followed by a discussion based on questions from members of the Committee that were provided to Cllr Day in advance.
- The main points noted from the presentation were:
- Edinburgh is a city of contradictions; it is a growing, diverse and affluent city with the largest growing economy outside London and there many positives, but there are challenges, including:
 - Inequalities and poverty: there are marked inequalities in health and persistent areas of poverty; although child poverty is less than the Scottish average, it has remained at 20% over the past decade; middle-income households are now being adversely affected by inflation and other factors;
 - Housing: A housing emergency was declared in Edinburgh in 2023. This is due to high house prices continuing to rise; a lack of affordable social housing; private rents being the highest in Scotland - all resulting in homelessness being a serious problem with almost 5000 households in temporary accommodation;
 - Climate: although rated as 4th best in the UK at addressing climate change and City emissions have fallen by 44% over the last 20 years, and there are plans to encourage more walking and cycling within the city centre, much more remains to be done to address the risks of flooding and overheating, which impact disproportionately on vulnerable groups:
 - Financial: due to sustained reductions in central Government funding, the Council will need to reduce its running costs by £160m over the next four years, while demand for its services increases (because of a growing population and new legislative responsibilities) and the cost of providing these services increases due inflation and high interest rates.
- The Council Business Plan 2023-27 has three strategic priorities; ending poverty in Edinburgh, becoming a net zero city by 2030, and creating good places to live and work.
- 'Town to Gown;' many of the challenges and opportunities concern aspects where there is considerable academic expertise at Edinburgh University and sharing this knowledge could bring the skills and innovative ideas to support key projects;
The City Council is very keen to work more closely with the University for the benefit of all; specific aspects where this could be mutually beneficial include:
 - Delivering on Climate targets so that the City is net zero by 2030 and the University is zero carbon by 2040.
 - Transport, including working on active travel and green transport initiatives.
 - Maximising job creation from the transition to net zero
 - Addressing the regional skills gap, e.g. through alternative degree qualification routes
 - Developing AI and technological solutions
 - Marking Edinburgh's 900th anniversary and legacy initiatives arising from the celebrations

Discussion

Student housing is a contentious issue and attempts to create new student only accommodation developments often result in an adverse local reaction which in turn impacts on the planning approval process; Cllr Day suggested new housing developments should involve building a diverse community, with a mix of social housing, student development and private accommodation available to rent or sell; he also acknowledged that students contribute to the local economy and should be viewed as an asset to the community;

Cllr Day expressed gratitude to the University for hosting the recent housing summit at the Edinburgh Futures Institute, following which a letter was sent to the First Minister asking for action on housing; In response to a question about whether there is enough land available in the city for new housing developments, Cllr Day said there is, but a joint City/University approach to Government to create a Land Commission that could lead to the release of unutilized or vacant land could be more effective.

- **City Region Deal**

It was evident that the City Region Deal had brought considerable benefits to the University but Cllr Day felt that the wider benefits it was expected to bring to the City were not so obvious; the City Council was looking ahead to a City Region Deal 2, where housing would be the biggest priority, including enabling more social housing to be built.

- **Climate Change**

Cllr Day suggested more could be done in collaboration with the City, for example through the Net Zero Leadership Board (which he chairs), to help achieve its climate targets. The City Council is working with partners across the City, and with investors to borrow the money needed to deliver this. Cllr Day also emphasised the importance of the civic and academic parts of the City coming together to help with the planning and development of transport and mobility schemes, especially those that would improve access to university campuses such as Bio quarter.

Town and Gown relationship

- Asked how Cllr Day would characterise the Town and Gown relationship - what it means in 2024, what is working well and if there are areas where more could be done by both parties, he responded by commenting:
 - as outlined in his presentation and discussion, there are many ways that co-operation between Edinburgh University and the City Council could be of mutual benefit to both and to those who work and live in the city and neighbouring regions.
 - he is keen to encourage that collaboration and build on the positive relationship he has at a personal level with the Principal and other members of the Senior Leadership Team.
 - yet to many in the city, the University can seem rather 'detached, resulting in negativity around student accommodation developments, despite the significant amount of community engagement work done by the University.
 - the University might wish to take the opportunity afforded by the celebrations to mark the Edinburgh's 900th anniversary, to counter the general lack of awareness of its many current successes, e.g. winning the competition to house Exascale super computer.In response to a question about whether a more structured relationship with the University would be helpful, Cllr Day thought it would be.

In thanking the Committee for the opportunity to meet, Cllr Day said that although the discussion had, inevitably, dwelt more on the challenges, he would wish to emphasize the many positives that Edinburgh has to offer and the contribution that having many truly outstanding institutions based in the City, including Edinburgh University, can bring through effective synergistic relationships to the common good of its citizens.

The Convener thanked Councillor Day for a fascinating and positive exchange and he left the meeting.

**Action: Slides used during the presentation will be circulated to the committee.
: Note of this part of the meeting to be shared with senior University staff.**

5. Observations by General Council Assessors

- Douglas Alexander gave a report from the Court meeting on 22 April, which had been held in the Institute for Regeneration and Repair in the Edinburgh Bio quarter. An agenda for the meeting had been circulated to the Business Committee (Paper 2);
- This was the new Rector's first Court meeting and in his introductory remarks, Simon Fanshawe had expressed his intention to foster constructive debate in Court and beyond;
- Principal's Report
 - Noted success in attracting research funding and a 16.6% increase, relative to the three-year average, in the first 5 months of the current academic year;
 - Discussed recent protests and occupations that had taken place in other university campuses concerning events in the Middle East. Regarding challenges to the University's investment policy, it was made clear to the student representatives on Court that the University operates a clear and transparent approach to its investment practice. A wholly independent investment committee makes commercial decisions in terms of investments but within carefully defined boundaries set by the University, who use external fund managers working within the University's social, environmental, governance and other policies;
- Committee Business –
 - There had been no Senate meeting since the last Court meeting;
 - Brief update on Senate elections and the early work of the group implementing recommendations for Senate effectiveness;
- Student Experience
 - Continues to be a challenging area;
 - Positive work being done on a new model for student support and particular roles for Student Advisers;
 - A mechanism is in place to track data across Schools and Colleges relating to the three-week turnaround goal for providing assessment and feedback and this data is expected to be available at the next Court meeting in June;
- Students' Association and Sports Union Reports
 - EUSA's budget for the next academic session has been approved by the Policy and Resources sub-committee of Court;
 - The Student and Teaching Awards have received a very high volume of nominations;
 - Welcomed newly-elected EUSA representatives on Court. Reported continuing challenges with engaging students in existing structures that allow them to be represented in the University's affairs;
- Finance
 - A brief update within the context of an ongoing planning and budget setting process. Discussion centred on both short and long-term cost controls to meet the thresholds that had been set by previous frameworks;
- People and Money Systems and Roadmap Update
 - A general update was given on the improvement plan (the 'roadmap') which was agreed by Court as a consequence of the published consultant's report. The University Executive is now moving to different governance arrangements for People and Money and taking advice from a new body, The University Initiatives Portfolio Board.
 - Court approved its part of the responses provided to the letter sent from the General Council Business Committee. There was recognition that it was an exceptional letter reflecting exceptional circumstances and the weight of concern that had been expressed regarding the implementation of the People and Money changes;
- Annual People Report

- Discussion of the paper by James Saville, Director of HR, would be deferred to the next meeting of Court so that there would be time to consider appropriately serious concerns regarding staff morale and the student experience;
- Donations and Legacies
- Chris Cox, Vice-Principal Philanthropy, gave a broad overview of current activity and acknowledged that the Principal had been travelling internationally, in consequence of which progress had been made in terms of attracting additional philanthropy.

6. Response from Court to submission by General Council on People and Money

- The Committee considered the response (Paper 3 previously circulated) from Court and the senior executive staff.
- Although it would be possible to ask various questions or seek clarification of some aspects of the response, the Business Committee agreed not to do so both to avoid diverting staff from implementation of the work programme and to avoid creating the impression with Court that we wished to engage in 'ping pong'. The Committee would continue to monitor progress in delivering the improvements through its normal channels of feedback;
- It was noted that Court will exercise scrutiny and oversight of the recommended programme of work to address the issues raised by PA Consulting by receiving reports from the new Finance and HR Process and System Implementation Board, via the University Initiatives Portfolio Board and Senior Leadership Team.
- The committee agreed to proceed with putting the correspondence from the University Court on the General Council website, for the benefit of members who had previously expressed concern about issues relating to People and Money. This would be done on the basis that the University will be notified in advance of doing so and that all the material being made available is suitable to be on the public record.

Action: -

A reply will be sent from the Business Committee by the Convener and Secretary to the Court's response on People and Money. [This is shown in Appendix 1]

7. Draft Resolutions of the University Court

Professor Steve Hillier, Convener of the Academic Standing Committee (ASC), reported that ASC was content to recommend the following Resolutions:

- No. 4/2024: Undergraduate Degree Programme Regulations
- No. 5/2025: Postgraduate Degree Programme Regulations
- No. 6/2024: Foundation of a Personal Chair of Engineering Biology
- No. 7/2024: Foundation of a Personal Chair of Medieval History

The Resolutions were approved by the Business Committee and a letter will be sent to Court Services to that effect.

8. Note of meetings with Chris Cox and James Smith on alumni engagement

- The main purpose of the meeting on 21 March was to discuss synchronizing connections with alumni hubs and to create opportunities for a collaborative and supportive approach in reaching out to key partnerships;
- The discussion had emphasised the importance of respecting boundaries i.e. the governance role of the General Council as distinct from the executive remits of Development and Alumni and Edinburgh Global;

- Paper 5 is intended as a useful reference document containing action points which will be taken forward;
- Noted that the current Director of Alumni Relations, Rebecca Jones, will be leaving the University in June to become Keeper of Scottish History and Archaeology at the National Museums Scotland; a replacement is expected to be recruited;
- Professor James Smith, VP International, will give an update on progress with the University's Global Engagement Plan at the next meeting of ISC on 7 May.

9. Reports from the Standing Committees

- The Committee referred to the minutes from the Finance and Standing Committee meeting of 11 April (Paper 6);
- Almira Delibegovic-Broome, Convener of FSSC, highlighted the following:
 - Court Assessors will be able to provide reports on progress with recommendations arising from the Court Review of People and Money;
 - WD is pursuing the issue of access to reports showing the current financial status of the General Council Prince Philip Fund, so that a decision can be made by the Business Committee about the appointment for further General Council scholars in the autumn.

10. Report from the Secretary of the General Council

- Paper 7 had been previously circulated for information;
- BC members had received paper copies of Summer 2024 Billet and were pleased with the design;
- The following action points were noted:

Action:

- *The Secretary will write shortly to those eligible to stand in the forthcoming election for Vice-Convener of the Business Committee;*
- *The Secretary will invite committee members to give their indicative preferences for Standing Committee membership;*
- *The General Council website will be updated in due course with detailed information about the AI sessions arranged for the June 2024 HYM;*
- *Business Committee members who have not already responded should do as soon as possible to the invitation to the Reception at St Cecilia's Hall on 27 June.*

11. Any other competent business

None.

12. Date of next meeting

The next meeting would take place at 5.15pm on Thursday, 27 June 2024 in the Conference Room, Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Innovation, Infirmary Street. The newly-elected members of the Business Committee have been invited to attend as observers.

A reception in St. Cecilia's Hall will follow the meeting, to give thanks to the Convener, Vice-Convener and other Business Committee members demitting role, and to welcome new Business Committee Office Bearers and members.

Reply from Business Committee to the response from Court and the Senior Leadership Team to the letter from General Council on lessons learned from People and Money

Sent to Janet Legrand (Senior Lay Member of Court) and Sir Peter Mathieson (Principal and Vice Chancellor)

On behalf of the Business Committee of the General Council, we should like to express our gratitude to Court and the University Executive for the full and informative joint response we received via Dan Wedgewood (Head of Court Services) to our letter and submission dated 2 February 2024 about learning the lessons from People and Money.

The Business Committee carefully considered your composite response when it met on 2 May and we also had the benefit an oral report from General Council Assessor, Douglas Alexander, on the Court meeting held on 22 April. Members were pleased to hear of your recognition that the Committee's intention in writing to you, in an exceptional set of circumstances, was intended to be constructive. We were seeking to look forward to and encourage solutions, rather than a provide a retrospective analysis of the issues set out in the PA Consulting report. We are encouraged that your response clearly reflects a similar approach to dealing with this complex issue.

Members of the Committee appreciated knowing more about the extensive programme of work now underway to implement the recommendations of the PA Consulting report. We have no wish to impede the further progress of that essential work by raising fresh questions at this point.

We look forward to learning more in due course as this work progresses from the reports we receive from the General Council Assessors. We will also hear, where appropriate, of the progress from our normal programme of meetings in the coming academic year with a wide range of senior executive staff.

You will recall that we drew attention in our letter to the impact of the adverse publicity surrounding People and Money on the University's standing among its external as well as internal stakeholders, including its alumni. With that point in mind, and as there seems to us to be nothing in our various exchanges of a commercially sensitive nature, the Business Committee would like to make them available on the General Council website. Doing so will give re-assurance to those members concerned about this matter by demonstrating the serious way it is being dealt with. You will recall that in our original letter we mentioned the possibility of making the correspondence more widely available after the exchanges had reached a conclusion.

Also, as People and Money issues were covered extensively in Peter's report to the February Half Yearly Meeting, we need to be prepared for this topic to be raised at the next meeting of the General Council on 15 June. It will simplify dealing with this then to be able to refer to the information available on our website and, of course, we shall be happy to coordinate the timing of this with Leigh Chalmers and are sending her a copy of this letter.

Finally, we should like to thank you both for your personal contributions to the preparation of this joint response by Court and the Senior Leadership Team to our representations to Court and for the constructive way in which this exceptional matter has been handled in line with our complementary responsibilities for the prosperity and well-being of the University.

Yours sincerely

Sir Philp Mawer
Convener Business Committee

Dr William Duncan
Secretary to General Council

Copies to - Leigh Chalmers, Vice Principal and University Secretary
General Council Business Committee, including General Council Assessors

Co-option of new members of Business Committee to fill vacancies**Paper 3**

There are 3 vacancies to fill on the Business Committee due to Elizabeth Feldstein and Kate Hawley standing down due to work commitments and Bruce Nelson becoming Vice Convener.

The General Council Constitution allows the Business Committee to fill casual vacancies by co-option for the remaining balance of the term of the member who is no longer continuing.

As can be seen from the allocation members to Standing Committees – see Appendix 1 below – the vacancies on the Business Committee result in **two vacancies to fill on Academic Standing Committee and one on the Finance & Services Standing Committee.**

The choice of who is co-opted lies with the Business Committee, as they become full members of the Business Committee, but following consultation with the Gordon Cairns, Bruce Nelson and the relevant Standing Committee Conveners, the following are proposed for consideration by the Business Committee.

Academic Standing Committee

Professor Judy Hardy has a Personal Chair of Physics Education. She was Director of Teaching in Physics and Astronomy for several years before taking on the role of Dean of Learning and Teaching in the College of Science and Engineering, giving her extensive experience of working across the wider university with colleagues in both academic and professional services roles. She retired in 2022. **AND**

Dorothy Welch was College Registrar in Science and Engineering before moving to the University of Glasgow as Deputy Secretary, a wide-ranging senior role covering many of the areas analogous to those associated with the UoE Deputy Secretary (Students). She held this role for over ten years before retiring in 2020.

Finance and Services Standing Committee

Dame Anne Richards CVO FRSE was the CEO of Fidelity International until her decision to step down last year from full time executive roles and is now its Vice Chair. Previously she was chief investment officer of Aberdeen Asset Management and CEO of M&G Investments. She was the final Vice Convener of Court before the role was replaced by Scottish Government legislation with an elected Senior Lay Member. **OR**

Alan Johnston is former Commercial Director of Inveresk Research International (subsequently Charles River Laboratories). He served on the University Court until last year and chaired its Audit and Risk Committee, and was a member of the Nominations, Remuneration and Exceptions Committees.

If members would like to suggest other names for co-option, these must be made in writing reach me no later than Wednesday 26 June, along with brief statement about the person they would like to be considered.

No approach has been made to those suggested above about their willingness to serve, as this would be premature until the matter has been considered by the Business Committee, so if you are in contact with any of those mentioned above meanwhile, please do not raise this with them.

Standing Committee	Convener*	Members*	Comments
<u>Academic</u>	Graeme Reid (28)	Brian Smith (25) John Gillies (28) Former Chair of Royal College of GP's in Scotland Vacancy – to fill by co-option Vacancy – to fill by co-option	
<u>International</u>	Ann Cormack (27)	Mary Gunn (27) USA based but often in Scotland Nikhil Agarwal (28) India based entrepreneur Richard Andrews (28) Former Head of Moray House Beverley based Vacancy – to fill by co-option	
<u>Finance and Services</u>		Almira Delibegovic Broome (28) Manya Buchan (27) Kirsty MacGregor (25) Lucy Blackburn (28) Former Head of HE Scot Gov Vacancy – to fill by co-option	
<u>Public Affairs</u>	Alice Brown (26)	Candice Donnelly (26) Devin Scobie (25) Arron Ashton (25) Tamara Raidt (28) based in France	
<u>Constitutional</u>	Candice Donnelly (26)	Convener ASC Convener ISC Convener FSSC Convener PASC	

Black = continuing existing member

Blue = new Convener

Red = newly elected member

Vacancy to fill by co-option

*date of retiral shown in brackets

ITEM 6 Business Committee Meeting on Thursday 27 June 2024

General Council Prince Philip Fund – further scholarship appointment Paper 4

The two Prince Philip scholars appointed in 2020 - **Mohamad Alnasser** and **Mahdee Abir** - will finish their 4 year awards this summer.

The Finance and Services Standing Committee has stewardship responsibility for the Fund and as the minute of its meeting of 21 May shows – see Paper 8 – FSSC **recommends that one new award is made this autumn. The Business Committee is asked to approve this.**

The reasoning behind proposing only one new appointment is:

- it is proving impossible, despite repeated requests, to obtain any meaningful information from the People and Money system about the investment income or the expenditure being attributed to the Prince Philip Fund and until we can be provided with this information, we should adopt a prudent approach to new appointments
- The current stipend is £3000 pa, with the Prince Philip Fund paying 50% of this – i.e.; £7500 for 5 scholars. The Fund Capital is about £160K, held as part of the University Endowment Fund, but the investment returns over the last few years have been poor; no information on the expected current year investment income is available.
- two new scholars were appointed last year, although the University was asked to appoint only one, meaning there are 5 currently in post. With two about to finish, this means that there will be 3 continuing in post next academic year, plus 1 new appointment.
- The stipend has been frozen at its present level for at least 5 years, while its real value has been eroded by inflation. The stipend level is set by the University, which is under pressure to increase it.
- making one appointment avoids a 'stop/go' appointment pattern producing lumpy expenditure profiles.

To encourage donations to the Fund, a leaflet about the Prince Philip scholarships – see attached - was produced recently and available at the Half Yearly Meeting.

The Convener has also asked that donations should be made to the Fund in lieu of any collection for a gift to be presented at the reception at St Cecilia Hall that follows the Business Committee

Dr William Duncan

Secretary to General Council

20 June 2024

Item 7 Business Committee Meeting on Thursday 27 June 2024

University Consultation on Responsible Investments Policy

Paper 5

The University launched a consultation with staff and students at the very end of May about its investment policies. Details of the consultation are shown in Appendix 1.

This was discussed at a recent FSSC meeting, which recommended that the Business Committee should submit a response to consultation. See Appendix 2 for extract of the minute on this topic.

This was discussed with the University Secretary, Leigh Chalmers, and with the Principal, Sir Peter Mathieson, during the preparations for the Half Yearly Meeting. They would both welcome a submission from the Business Committee because it seems to be by oversight that General Council members have been excluded from the consultation.

There are two aspects to this:

1. **Enabling General Council members who wish to submit views to the consultation to do so.** Discussions are taking place with senior staff in D&A to determine whether this can be done through setting up a separate General Council email address which would allow the submissions to be redirected to the team under Dave Gorman in Community Engagement that is managing the consultation. As the number of responses is difficult to predict given both the huge size of the General Council membership and because this is a potentially controversial topic, it will be essential to avoid the General Council office being overwhelmed or being expected to respond to queries or comments about the current investment policy. This must be the responsibility of those managing the consultation under Dave Gorman
2. **Setting up an expert group to formulate a response for approval by the Business Committee.** In doing so there are three aspects that the Business Committee should consider

a. Remit of the expert group.

It will be important that this focuses on issues of general principle and procedure related to ethical investment practices, rather than centring on a particular, current areas of conflict or pressure for particular categories of divestment

b. Membership

Almira Delibegovic-Broome; Gordon Cairns; Ann Cormack
Alan Johnston; Bruce Nelson; Anne Richards
The Secretary would support the work of the group

c. Approval process

As responses to the consultation are expected to be submitted by end of August, and the next meeting of the Business Committee is not until October, if it is not possible to secure an extension, approval will be sought by correspondence. It is not intended to call an extraordinary meeting to approve the response

Share your views on changes to the University's Responsible Investment Policy**The University has opened a three-month consultation on its Responsible Investment Policy.**

We invite all University students and staff to share views on proposed changes to our investment approach to help us ensure that the Policy is fully aligned with our values, and sufficient to guide our investment approach over the next several years.

The Responsible Investment Policy Statement (2016) guides the University's approach to its investment activity and has been under review for the past year.

The consultation presents a range of proposals for staff and students to review, including a commitment to socially positive investments, aligning portfolios with a 1.5°C emissions pathway, and ensuring that our investment activities are responsible in international contexts.

Share your views

https://www.ed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/atoms/files/responsible_investment_policy_-_consultation_text.pdf

Who is eligible to respond?

All individuals employed by the University and all matriculated students are eligible to respond to our proposed changes to the policy. This includes members of staff employed by University subsidiaries e.g. Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh Innovations.

Why is the review happening now?

A review of the Responsible Investment Policy has been ongoing for the past year, and proposals for updates to the Policy have now been drafted.

Following recent conversations with our communities, the University acknowledges it has more work to do to:

- ensure that our investment activities are responsible in an international context, in accordance with our values and the UN Principles for Responsible Investment
- review our definition of 'controversial weapons' in the context of our Responsible Investment Policy
- ensure transparency and communication of investment reporting

How will the results of the review be communicated?

An analysis of the consultation responses will be undertaken and a report published in Semester 1, 2024/25.

What is the role of the Working Groups?

The Short-Life Working Group on Definition of Armaments for Investments is undertaking a rapid review of the definition of armaments and controversial weapons in the context of the University's investments.

The second Working Group will work to ensure that our investment activities are responsible in an international context, in accordance with our values and the UN Principles for Responsible Investment.

Further details about the membership and remit of these Groups can be found below.

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/sustainability/programmes-and-projects/supply-chains-and-investments/responsible-investment/our-responsible-investment-policy>

When will the new policy be confirmed?

The new Responsible Investment Policy will be submitted to the University Executive in late 2024, with a view to being formally agreed in 2025

What is the difference between Endowment and Treasury investments?

University Endowment and Investment Fund: Its objective is to increase the Fund's value and maintain its capital in the long-term, whilst providing yearly income to support the University's academic missions, such as scholarships. The focus is on long-term investment horizon with the aim of preserving and growing the University's financial resources over generations.

Treasury: Works on immediate to short-term financial needs – enabling the University to operate day-to-day. Tuition fees and staff salaries are managed by treasury, rather than the University Endowment and Investment Fund.

Where are the investments reported?

Access the annual University Endowment Fund reports and Portfolio of Investments here:

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/finance/about/sections/financial-information-reporting-strategy-team/investments-and-endowments/investment-committee/reports>

Who invests on behalf of the University?

The University enlists fund managers to invest on its behalf, complying with the Responsible Investment Policy.

Our current Fund Managers are listed here:

https://www.ed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/atoms/files/endowment_fund_managers_and_type_of_investment_as_at_30042024.pdf

What is the role of the Investment Committee?

The Investment Committee's role is to consider the corporate governance and other related implications of the University's investments.

This involves making sure that the University's asset managers are complying with the Responsible Investment Policy, and meeting agreed performance targets.

Find out more about the role and membership of the investment committee:

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/finance/about/sections/financial-information-reporting-strategy-team/investments-and-endowments/investment-committee>

Are Pensions included?

Pensions are not included in the scope of the Responsible Investment Policy. University staff pension funds are managed by separate pension schemes managed independently from the University.

University's Responsible Investment Consultation

- Noted the University's intention to issue a 3-month consultation on its Responsible Investment Policy; there was strong support within FSSC to recommend to the Business Committee that it should respond to the consultation and if so agreed, that a small working group with an appropriate range of expertise should be set up to draft a submission for approval by the Business Committee;
- the Committee was surprised and disappointed that the consultation documentation seen so far made no reference to consulting alumni or General Council members; it was agreed the Secretary should seek clarification on this omission from the University Executive.
- It was also noted that this consultation would be launched against the fraught background of protests by many staff and students calling for the University to disinvest promptly from companies involved in the present conflict between Israel and Gaza; these protests included occupation of the Old Quad green, with some students on hunger strike; given this sensitivity it was agreed that before recommending to the Business Committee that it should respond to the consultation, the Secretary would discuss this with the Convener-elect, Gordon Cairns, when he returns to the UK
- In response to the protests, it was reported the University is setting up a short life working group to report on whether current investments are fully consistent with University's current responsible investment policy or the values indicated in other University strategies – e.g.; Strategy 2030;
- It was agreed that the Business Committee should not become involved in the work of the short life working group, but should seek to keep abreast of developments because dealing sensitively with this situation presented a considerable challenge to the University and could impact on its well-being and prosperity.

Action: -

- **WD to consult Gordon Cairns about responding to the Consultation and if he is supportive to seek Business Committee approval to setting up a Working Group to draft a response.**
- **WD will pursue this subject with the University Secretary**

Item 8 Feedback on the 15 June Half Yearly Meeting and Symposium at EFI

As background to this item, enclosed are:

-Programme for the symposium on recent developments in AI and Data Science Appendix 1

-The Convener's Report to the business meeting Appendix 2

In terms of feedback, it would be helpful to structure this according to the following headings:

1. EFI and the suitability of its facilities, recognising that it is still at the 'snagging' phase and many facilities were being used for the first time. Should we use it again?
2. The lunch; was quality and service acceptable, given that it was a 'free' lunch?
3. Registration and communications to members from General Council Office about the meetings. No registration is required for the Business Meeting, but was required – via Eventbrite - for attendance at the symposium.
4. How to discourage the high level of 'no shows'. The Event Space would have been full if all who had registered had attended, but at least 100 didn't show.
5. Programme timings and suitability of speakers' presentations
6. Should the summer HYM – which by the Constitution must be held on a Saturday in June - include a "show casing" event as the main component? Or should that be entirely separate from the business meeting to avoid truncating discussion then and avoiding the complications of holding "show casing" events in venues that are not normally open on a Saturday and when many staff have other commitments?

WD

18 June 2024

Appendix 1

General Council Half Yearly Meeting - Saturday 15 June 2024
at Edinburgh Futures Institute, Lauriston Place, Edinburgh
Symposium on Artificial Intelligence and Data Science

Programme and Timetable

Part 1: Implications for the University

11.15 – Welcome by Sir Peter Mathieson, Principal and Vice Chancellor.

Followed by presentations by

- **Kev Dhaliwal, Interim Director, Edinburgh Futures Institute.**
- **Gavin McLachlan - Vice Principal and Chief Information Officer.**
- **Professor Themis Prodromakis - Regius Chair of Engineering.**

Panel discussion / audience Question and Answer session

Concluding remarks by Sir Peter Mathieson.

12.30 - 13.45 Lunch

Part 2: Implications for people and society

**14.00 – Introduction by Professor Andrew Morris,
Vice Principal and President of Academy of Medical Sciences.**

Followed by presentations by

- **Steph Wright - Scottish AI Alliance.**
- **Dr Eve Poole – Chair Designate Woodward Corporation**
- **Professor Kenneth Baillie - Co-director of the Baillie Gifford Pandemic Science Hub**

Panel discussion /audience Question and Answer session.

Reflections by Professor Andrew Morris.

Concluding remarks by Sir Philip Mawer, Convener of Business Committee.

15.30 – Departures

Appendix 2

Convener Report to 15 June 2024 HYM

Rector, University Secretary, fellow members of the General Council –

I would normally have added to that list a reference to the University Chaplain. I am sure we all join in sending Harriet our best wishes for a speedy recovery.

As this is the last report I will present on behalf of the Business Committee to a meeting of the General Council, there will inevitably be a retrospective feel to much of it. However, I begin, as I will end, on a forward-looking note by welcoming Simon Fanshawe as University Rector to his first meeting of the Council. Simon, you have identified the main themes of your Rectorship as including your wish to promote the free exchange of ideas as one of the core purposes of the University and to improve communications and understanding among all sections of the University community. I am confident you will find many members of the General Council entirely supportive of these aims. Hopefully you will also find them generally better behaved than some of the other meetings you may be called on to chair over the next three years!

The context in which you have assumed your important role is one of particular challenge, not just for Edinburgh but for all UK universities. The inadequacies – and consequent dangers – of the current government funding model for all universities, not just in Scotland but throughout the UK, are becoming increasingly apparent. Growing international political tensions, coupled with threatened further changes in UK immigration policy, make universities' over-dependence on income from overseas students increasingly problematic. The Principal and his colleagues are doing what they can to highlight this problem and to diversify income streams. Within the constraints of national pay bargaining arrangements, they are also seeking to bolster staff pay and conditions and, with the active support of the General Council, to improve the student experience at Edinburgh, including the support the University provides for students in particular need.

However, issues of staff and student morale remain. The impact of Brexit continues to be felt in the funding available for research and in the pattern of student recruitment, in spite of the University's generally successful efforts to build new partnerships, not just in Europe but globally. And the ebb and flow of debate about complex social, moral and political issues is now conducted, through both conventional and social (or should that be, anti-social?) media, in ways often damaging to community cohesion and trust.

The most prominent current example of such a difficult and divisive issue was highlighted by the recently concluded student protest in the Old College Quad about the University's approach to responsible investment in the context of the ongoing conflict in Israel/Gaza. I believe everyone here will join me in welcoming the fact that the protest was conducted respectfully and ended peacefully.

The University has announced a consultation with staff and students on its approach to investments in the international context, including its definition of armaments. We are exploring with the University whether it will be possible for any views that General Council members may wish to express on this complex cluster of issues to be channelled through the General Council office, using a dedicated email address to receive any such contributions. The Business Committee will also consider when it meets later this month how best it can contribute constructively to the University's review.

These issues, and many more, have featured in the work of the General Council over the past 4 years. Other recurrent areas of focus have included the University's relationship with the City of Edinburgh; the role alumni can play in helping the University to achieve its local and global objectives; the legacy of historic, and the constant struggle against contemporary racism; and the University's approach to change management, in particular the troubled implementation of the People and Money system. Council members can find on the General Council website an explanatory note and a copy of the Business Committee's recent exchanges on this last matter with the University Court and the Senior Leadership Team.

That said, there is no need for despair. Indeed, the note on which I want to end my report is one of hope and confidence. When I presented my first report as Convener to a meeting of the General Council 4 years ago, the meeting was held entirely online. The world was in the grip of the Covid pandemic. The University proved itself then to be remarkably resilient, adapting its teaching and organisational arrangements to entirely novel circumstances with remarkable speed. I do not in any way underestimate the negative impact of the pandemic on many students, deprived as they were of normal opportunities to learn, research and socialise. However, the story of the University's adaptation to Covid, and then to post-Covid conditions, and of its contribution to helping society overcome the threat of the pandemic to the nation's health, is not yet fully known but overwhelmingly positive.

The pandemic forced change on the General Council too. Changes in meeting patterns have continued since the pandemic, with a shift to hybrid from purely in-person encounters. While not all have welcomed this, a more digitally led pattern of meetings and communications within the work of the General Council and its Business Committee holds out the hope of more effective and efficient engagement with General Council members globally. This is a growing necessity as the increase in international students is reflected in an increase in the number of overseas alumni. The live streaming of our meetings has enabled alumni living outside the UK to participate more fully and, coupled with a much improved, largely digitally based voting system, has helped encourage a larger number of candidates from beyond Scotland and the UK to seek and secure election to the Business Committee. While there is still great scope for improvement, there has been a step change in the number of candidates standing, and those voting in our elections.

Along with these changes there have been others reflecting our determination to be more inclusive and communicate more effectively with all our members. We refreshed the website – which is about to undergo further changes - and have developed a new style of *Billet*. We have modestly increased our rate of email communication with members and relocated our office to a far more accessible location in Charles Stewart House. The University Court has confirmed its support for proposals for simplifying and updating the rules governing eligibility for membership of the General Council, which are now being vetted by the Scottish Government's lawyers before wending their way to the Privy Council for approval. Our February Half Yearly meetings enable serious engagement with the issues covered by the Principal in his annual report to us by those members joining the meeting remotely as well as those present in person, and we have begun the process of building a more direct relationship with alumni clubs and groups overseas as well as in the UK. And the scope of our Summer Half Yearly Meetings has extended as, alongside Council business, we have sought to provide opportunities for alumni to gain greater insight into how the University is addressing key issues of wide social importance, of which the symposium on Artificial Intelligence and Data Science later today is the latest example.

The common threads through all of this activity over the past four years include:

- Our continuing deep concern to help promote the wellbeing and prosperity of Edinburgh University; and

- Our confidence in the University's future and in the contribution alumni can make, alongside the University's outstanding staff and students, to safeguarding that future.

One practical outworking of this commitment has been the restructuring of the Council's Prince Philip Fund (established in honour of our late Chancellor) to help deliver additional scholarship opportunities for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, five of whom we are currently supporting. I encourage all of you to donate to this Fund if you can possibly do so: there will be opportunity to learn more and to make a donation later today.

Of course, none of these developments would have been possible without the support of the University's senior leadership and the efforts of many colleagues past and present, virtually all of them volunteers. Some of these colleagues will, like me, complete their terms of office this summer. Among them are Professor Steve Hillier and Krystyna Szumelukowa, both of whom offer a personal reflection in this summer's edition of *Billet*. Steve has been an outstanding Convener of the Academic Standing Committee, firmly committed to furthering support for staff and students and to maintaining academic rigour and discipline. Krystyna has been an energetic and hugely committed Convener of the International Standing Committee, working tirelessly in support of Edinburgh's continuing position as a global centre of excellence and an international community of scholars. Other members who step down from the Business Committee this year include Dr Frances Dow, Francis McManus and Lady Joyce Caplan, all of whom are distinguished former members of University staff and each of whom has made an invaluable contribution to our collective business.

So "the old order changeth, yielding place to new". Gordon Cairns succeeds me as Convener of the Business Committee and Dr Bruce Nelson becomes its Vice Convener; Professor Graeme Reid takes over as Convener of the Academic Standing Committee; Candice Donnelly moves to chair the Constitutional Standing Committee; Ann Cormack takes on the International Standing Committee and Professor Alice Brown, the Public Affairs Standing Committee; while Almira Delibegovic-Broome KC remains at the helm of the Finance and Services Committee. It will not have escaped the notice of those who are rightly interested in whether or not we are observing the need to be inclusive, that half of the occupants of the most senior roles in the General Council are women, as is our Chancellor. And five newly elected members will join the Business Committee for the first time. So it is definitely a time of change.

That said, there will also be continuity. Gordon is a very experienced member and more recently Vice Convener of the Committee. And as you all well know, the real engine room of the General Council's modest operation is provided by its Secretary, Dr William Duncan, and Assistant Secretary, Alison MacLeary. Without them and the contribution of William's distinguished predecessor, Ann Smyth, nothing at all would have been achieved over the past 4 years. The debt we collectively, and I personally, owe to them is immense.

I conclude with this assurance – the General Council's role in the governance of Edinburgh University is undoubtedly an asset to the University overall, and it remains in good hands. I thank the Court (especially the three General Council Assessors), the Principal and his colleagues including the University Secretary, for taking that contribution seriously and continuing to work constructively with us. And I thank my colleagues and all of you for your continued support of the University and your determination to ensure that it continues to serve the common good, not only here in Edinburgh but throughout the world.

Minutes of the Academic Standing Committee Meeting held at 4.30pm on Tuesday 28 May 2024 in the Ochil Room, Charles Stewart House

Present: Professor Graeme Reid
Professor Alice Brown
Lady Joyce Caplan
Dr William Duncan, Secretary of the General Council
Sir Philip Mawer, Convener of Business Committee
Ms Alison MacLeary, Assistant Secretary of the General Council

In attendance: Professor Colm Harmon, VP Students
Ms Kirsty MacGregor (FSSC) – online
Dr Bruce Nelson (FSSC) - online

1. Welcome and apologies

Graeme Reid chaired the meeting in place of the Convener, Steve Hillier, who had sent in apologies. He welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited Professor Colm Harmon, VP Students, to update the committee on the Curriculum Transformation Project.

Apologies received from Gordon Cairns, Steve Hillier and Brian Smith

2. Presentation by Professor Colm Harmon, VP Students

- The Curriculum Transformation project (CTP) is a long-term commitment and is now starting to take shape: [Curriculum Transformation Project | The University of Edinburgh](#);
- Led by the students themselves around delivery of programmes they would like to see being offered in the context of a changing and evolving world with an emphasis on employability and the ethical and societal elements of living and working in an increasingly digital environment;
- This will affect how Schools and Colleges design and approach teaching methods going forward;
- Impacts also on IT/timetabling systems and acknowledged that this remains a big challenge;
- The central ambition and purpose of Curriculum Transformation is to maximise the positive impact of an Edinburgh University education, building on what is already very good and make sure that students are prepared for an increasingly dynamic and changing world beyond graduation;
- Curriculum Transformation will improve the experience for both students and staff, looking at how the University can become a better place to learn, teach and support education;
- Aligning teaching with research and University priorities around social and economic impact including climate, sustainability, health;
- Making it easier to update and refine the range of programmes and courses on offer;
- The scope is broad (UG and PGT) looking at structures, principles, support and infrastructure;
- A long-term project – likely to run for at least 5 more years, probably more like 10 years;
- Currently at an important transition point in the project - in 2021 and 2022 there was a lot of scoping and background work on what was to be achieved through curriculum transformation and to understand the current position and what to focus on;

- During 2023 starting to develop proposals for what might change - these have been discussed and tested with a range of audiences within and beyond the University and are being refined at the moment ready for consideration by the University Senate and Court;
- If and when the proposals are approved, there will be a move into a period of development, testing and piloting likely to last for 2-3 academic years before the new Curriculum Framework is fully implemented for all students (2028/9 will be the first full UG intake into the new curriculum);
- This includes a continued focus on the importance of disciplinary depth and expertise at the heart of the University's degree programmes, alongside support for the development of students as learners ready to thrive in a changing world, able to translate what they have learnt and their experience to future success, including employment, on their own terms;
- These three objectives are accompanied by a set of key components for the development of a curriculum that will support the achievement of these objectives;
- This includes supporting the development of self-directed, curious and confident learners; the inclusion of experiential, cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural learning alongside disciplinary depth, identity and expertise; to have curricula that develop high levels of digital and data literacy, with a clear focus on integrity, that are values-driven, and that builds understanding and engagement with global challenges;
- Taught Postgraduate Curriculum Framework is designed to be broad, adaptable and market responsive and supports a range of programme model structures to meet the requirements of different educational contexts and purposes i.e. stand-alone courses, collections of courses, Certificates, Diplomas and Masters programmes; through multiple and flexible modes of study (on-campus, online, hybrid; full time, part time, stackable);
- The framework was approved by Senate in May and will move into a transitional phase at the start of academic session 24/25;
- Stackable credits recognise prior learning as an entry pathway for students from non-traditional backgrounds and is a more flexible route to postgraduate study;
- Greater flexibility offered around the period of study for each block of learning (up to 5 years);
- Undergraduate Curriculum Framework follows the same model i.e. blocks of learning that make up a degree but individual Schools would decide on whether programmes would run as Single, Double or Combined Honours, preserving breadth but simplifying the processes involved without losing content, allowing for increased flexibility and adding an element of experiential learning;
- There is space for Challenge courses open to all first and second year undergraduate students across the University as an elective outside course, and these will be aligned to the University's research strategy and missions allowing provision for experiential learning on globally significant topics beyond the core discipline;
- Also looking at the potential to develop Challenge Courses at Honours levels and within interdisciplinary degree programmes;
- Senate rejected the proposal for Challenge courses to be compulsory;
- A consistency in approach to the radical transformation of a curriculum that has not been refreshed in many years will depend on the alignment of e.g., business case/budget planning and cultural change within the institution;
- Large reforms of this kind involve an element of reputational risk but highlighted other major projects undertaken by the University, such as significant changes to the Personal Tutor system which has been very positive;

- The committee agreed that the student experience offer should be varied and flexible and align with current times;
- The proposed transformational package is a big step forward but is consistent with the core approach of the University which already offers breadth and depth within its curriculum plus the advantage of an additional 4th year of study;
- Acknowledged the need for simplification and decluttering of the current methods and this is also a valuable opportunity to rethink how feedback and assessment will be delivered in the new framework;
- The University's financial investment in reshaping of this new model allows breathing space for Schools in this transitional period to consider a creative approach towards future income generation.

The Convener thanked Professor Harmon for updating the committee on CTP and acknowledged the pressures and challenges for delivery within the projected timescales. CH left the meeting.

Action:- Slides used during the presentation will be circulated to the committee.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2024

The minutes were approved.

4. Matters arising from the meeting held on 23 January 2024

None.

5. Draft Resolutions

Draft Resolutions No. 8-98/2024: Creation of Personal Chairs (various)

Action:-

- ***ASC recommended the above Draft Resolutions to the Business Committee for consideration before the response deadline of 15 June;***
- ***PM proposed that a letter be sent from the Secretary to Court Services asking for more information surrounding the creation of Personal Chairs in order that an informed decision can be made when approving these appointments.***

6. Any other Business

- The committee took the opportunity to thank Professor Steve Hillier [in absentia] for his contribution as Convener of ASC and expressed gratitude to Professor Graeme Reid who has agreed to take on the role when Professor Hillier demits office on 31 July;
- The committee thanked Joyce Caplan for her valuable input as a co-opted member of the committee during the last year and who will also come to the end of her term of office in July.

Minutes of the Finance and Services Standing Committee
4.30pm on Tuesday 21 May 2024
Ochil Room, Charles Stewart House

Present: Almira Delibegovic-Broome, Convener, FSSC
Manya Buchan (online)
Frances Dow
Kirsty MacGregor
Bruce Nelson
William Duncan, Secretary of the General Council
Philip Mawer, Convener of the Business Committee
Alison MacLeary, Assistant Secretary of the General Council

In attendance: Gavin McLachlan, Vice-Principal and CIO, Librarian to the University

1. Welcome and apologies

The Convener of FSSC, Almira Delibegovic-Broome KC, welcomed members of the committee to hear a presentation from Gavin McLachlan, Vice-Principal and Chief Information Officer, and Librarian to the University. A list of questions had been forwarded in advance of the meeting and were answered during the discussion.

Apologies received from Gordon Cairns.

2. Presentation by Gavin McLachlan, Vice-Principal and Chief Information Officer, and Librarian to the University

The following topics were covered during the presentation:

Digital Strategy

- The Digital Vision within the strategy is driven by user need to offer a personalized, intuitive, consistent and joined-up digital experience in the simplest possible way while being resilient, sustainable and reliable;
- Two University-wide consultations to review the strategy involved around 2000 staff, students and alumni (see Appendix 1 for the General Council response to the consultation);
- The Digital Strategy is a core University strategy which underpins the University's overall Strategy 2030 and includes the same 4 components: *People*; *Research*; *Teaching & Learning* and *Social and Civic Responsibilities* with an additional element relating to the University's Digital Estate (hardware/software);
- An emphasis on the *People* strand and how staff can successfully adopt the strategy through access to digital services, tools and training and adapt to changes within the areas of research where it is important to have cutting edge technology, and the impact of digitization on teaching to be able to support students in their educational experience;
- The Digital Estate is a major element of Strategy Implementation and adoption of the Strategy is a University-wide effort and will be considered by the University Court at its June meeting.

Digital Estate

- A key enabler for the execution of the Digital Strategy and to support Strategy 2030.
- Contributes to the following outcomes set out in Strategy 2030: -
 - Our estate will be fit for purpose, sustainable and accessible.
 - We will support efficient systems, learning, research and collaboration with our neighbours, businesses, and partners.
- Comprises over 1,200 items.
- Of these, the prioritisation of the most substantive (£1M and above) is conducted through the Digital Estate Prioritisation Group (DEP), a subgroup of Estates Committee. At present this is made up of 77 items;
- Capital Plan – expected to spend on average around £17m pa on the 77 largest items;
- In response to a question raised by BN if this would be a sufficient figure to replace/renew equipment, GM said that he estimates between £16m – £22m is needed per annum;
- The Digital Estate heatmap colour codes the status of University systems:
 - **Green** = *currently adequate* e.g. Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA), People and Money, Email and Diary applications
 - **Blue** = *under construction* e.g. network and wi-fi systems
 - **Amber** = *nearing end of life* e.g. the keycard access system to buildings is over 20 years old
 - **Red** = *need to be immediately replaced* (examples include problem areas which affect the University's resilience such as IT hosting to support AI infrastructure and Learning Analytics which don't currently measure marking turnaround times and this has a direct effect on NSS scores)
 - **Grey** = *missing functionality* e.g. data loss prevention which is very expensive and which institutions such as banks currently have but the University does not; investment is required in a Desk Sharing and booking application which is increasingly needed across the University, as well as systems which measure campus occupancy and energy use which would help in management of the Estate. Grey areas are regularly reviewed to ascertain whether a credible business case can be made for acquiring them as part of the normal budget setting process;
- The phenomenal speed of change of the various technologies means that some systems may only last around 3 years before needing to be replaced e.g. AI Supercomputer, and in relation to Cyber Security it is impossible to afford all the available options so can only predict what might be the best protection measures;
- 10-year roadmaps have been prepared for each theme within the Digital estate Heatmap which shows where work is taking place/expect work to take place.

Cyber Security

- Protecting University data from attacks is a key, highly sensitive and constantly evolving responsibility.
- The University systems are under constant threat of attack on three different fronts
 - hostile nation states that attempt to infiltrate and damage the University's infrastructure;
 - organized cyber-criminal gangs who try to steal data and hold the University to ransom by threatening to sell the stolen data on the dark web;
 - hacktivists who try to disrupt University business to highlight their cause;

- To resist these attacks there are systems like MFA and advanced firewalls within the University systems and these are further protected by being shielded within sophisticated JISC firewalls.
- In response to a question about the security provided by third party providers, it was explained that very thorough due diligence is done by the University before data is stored or processed by third party providers
- The University's Finance and Payroll systems sit on a cloud within Oracle to increase protection.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Update

- There are many types of AIs, not just the Generative AIs which have received a lot of media attention (e.g. Chat GPT);
- Explained that the current machine imitates intelligent and creative behaviour using software to feed into a neural network (an advanced database of information with statistical/probability values) to generate text with the most likely output (e.g., Chat GPT; Alexa and Siri) but future machines may have the ability to be smarter than humans;
- An AI short life working group has been commissioned, chaired by Michael Rovatsos, Professor of Artificial Intelligence, School of Informatics - an urgent priority is safeguarding the integrity of assessment methods. Professor Sian Bayne, Professor of Digital Education, is leading on the task force.

Edinburgh Language Model (ELM)

- Edinburgh's cost effective and supported AI platform for general use and innovation is free for all students to be able to access powerful AI models;
- A contract has been signed with MS OpenAI which guarantees zero data retention;
- University will create its own specialized Opensource AI in addition to Chat GPT;
- Ask Edhelp AI Chatbot (EDINA) – University is adhering to evolving best practice to allow students access to a human operator instead of a robot if that is preferred.

Library and Centre for Research Collections

- Hosted on the 6th floor of the main University Library in George Square for research and teaching purposes; collections are growing and includes the Lyell collection;
- The number of enquiries and access is increasing +15%;
- Partnerships also increasing giving access to other collections e.g., a memorandum of understanding is in place with the National Library of Scotland;
- A key part of the University's Strategy 2030 is its Civic and Social Responsibility and all of the University's libraries allow public access to heritage archives and documents can be made available digitally.
- GM concluded his presentation by referencing People and Money which he described as a "traumatic exercise" but the benefits of the implementation are now being seen. He said that the outcome of the P & A Consultant's review was beneficial and the 'roadmap' of agreed improvements is being shared with other institutions.

Action: -

Slides used during the presentation will be circulated to the Committee

The Convener thanked Mr. McLachlan for a fascinating and informative presentation and he left the meeting.

3. Minutes from the meeting held on 11 April 2024

Minutes from the meeting were approved.

4. Matters arising from the minutes of 11 April 2024

Item 5: General Council Prince Philip Fund

- D & A has been asked to create promotional and donation literature to be available for the June Half-Yearly Meeting which will be attended by several D&A staff, including, Neil Burns, Senior Philanthropy Officer;
- WD reported he had just received the Endowment Statement Balance Report until March 2024, but was puzzled by several of the expenditure entries and has asked Neil Burns to contact the finance team for an explanation.
- The Committee was pleased to hear that all the scholars were progressing well with their studies and noted the first two scholars appointed in 2021 would be coming to the end of their studies in the summer.
- Given the uncertainty over the funding situation due to the inadequacy of the financial reporting, it was agreed to recommend to Business Committee that only one new scholarship be awarded in autumn 2024, which would mean having a steady state of 4 scholars in place each year.

Action: -

Recommend to the Business Committee that one new scholarship be awarded in autumn 2024 to replace the two current scholars in the final year of their award.

5. Any other business

a. General Council Budget 2023-24 and 2024- 25

- Reported that the expenditure on the June Half-Yearly Meeting is still within the original budget allocation of £15K despite having to pay more due to outsourcing of tech support, much greater assistance needed from Student Ambassadors, and increased catering costs arising from the much larger attendance than normal for summer Half Yearly Meeting
- WD said that he expected the end of year underspend to be about £5K – very much less than in recent years;
- WD reported he is meeting the University Secretary, Leigh Chalmers, on 3 June and one of the topics to be discussed will be General Council budget for 2024/25, in the context of the reductions being sought for the overall USG budget.

b. University's Responsible Investment Consultation

- Noted the University's intention to issue a 3-month consultation on its Responsible Investment Policy; there was strong support within FSSC to recommend to the Business Committee that it should respond to the consultation and if so agreed, that a small working group with an appropriate range of expertise should be set up to draft a submission for approval by the Business Committee;
- the Committee was surprised and disappointed that the consultation documentation seen so far made no reference to consulting alumni or General Council members; it

was agreed the Secretary should seek clarification on this omission from the University Executive.

- It was also noted that this consultation would be launched against the fraught background of protests by many staff and students calling for the University to disinvest promptly from companies involved in the present conflict between Israel and Gaza; these protests included occupation of the Old Quad green, with some students on hunger strike; given this sensitivity it was agreed that before recommending to the Business Committee that it should respond to the consultation, the Secretary would discuss this with the Convener-elect, Gordon Cairns, when he returns to the UK
- In response to the protests, it was reported the University is setting up a short life working group to report on whether current investments are fully consistent with University's current responsible investment policy or the values indicated in other University strategies – e.g. Strategy 2030;
- It was agreed that the Business Committee should not become involved in the work of the short life working group, but should seek to keep abreast of developments because dealing sensitively with this situation presented a considerable challenge to the University and could impact on its well-being and prosperity.

Action: -

- ***WD to consult Gordon Cairns about responding to the Consultation and if he is supportive to seek Business Committee approval to setting up a Working Group to draft a response.***
- ***WD will pursue this subject with the University Secretary***

c. Protocol for General Council involvement in University strategies

PM reported that there had been a rather negative response from the University Executive to the proposed Protocol. This may have been due to a misreading of its intent and this matter will be raised at the meeting with Leigh Chalmers on 3 June

Action: -

- ***PM and WD will discuss with the University Secretary, including the alternative of producing a less elaborate 'Practice note' rather than a Protocol.***

Response to Consultation on Digital Strategy

The Digital Strategy makes no mention of the General Council (GC) which is a body with a statutory role in the University's governance structure. Its membership includes, but is not limited to, alumni who are explicitly recognised in Strategy 2030 as integral to the University's community.

Inclusion of the needs of the General Council raises some particular issues not least a secure channel of access to such of the University's digital universe as is appropriate to their role. We are principally concerned with the digital estate and services (i.e. not research & teaching). We do seek to develop our digital capabilities, informed by data analytics and we appreciate support to learn new digital skills to operate new systems independently where appropriate.

About General Council

There is a statutory requirement for the University to maintain a Register of GC members and to appoint a Registrar responsible for this Register. Currently the GC Register is embedded in a larger database held by D&A currently being updated. The Registrar has historically been the University Secretary.

The GC Register is the basis for validating individuals' claims of GC Membership which convey the right:

- to vote in the election of the University Chancellor;
- to apply to serve on the University Court in one of three positions reserved for GC members;
- to vote for representatives to serve on the Business Committee and
- to serve on the Business Committee.

The GC Office is staffed by an appointed Secretary (pro bono volunteer, no fixed hours) and one full time University employee (Assistant to the Secretary). We rely on support for digital activities from a variety of sources.

GC members have the statutory right to engage in matters affecting "the wellbeing and prosperity" of the University.

The GC Office

- collaborates with D&A maintaining the GC Register;
- communicates with GC members twice per year to notify them of statutory meetings which are open to all members;
- maintains a website and a limited presence on social media;
- manages meetings and events and related communications;
- signposts and circulates information about/from the University to members.

The work of the GC is undertaken between open meetings by a committee structure of elected representatives who meet with senior University staff and students to remain abreast of contemporary issues throughout the academic year.

The work of the GC is archived in the University Archives.

The current arrangements could benefit from modernisation in line with the Digital Strategy. To be efficient and effective as the hub for a large global membership at the interface with the modern University the GC Office needs to be technologically sophisticated. We aspire to being an early implementer of digital developments relevant to our role.

Database: Efficient data flows and management

The GC Register depends on data flows from a variety of University sources. Membership is currently >250k. The membership database, which requires a relatively limited dataset based on membership criteria and contact details, would benefit from compatibility with, and interconnectivity to, other University systems.

The Ordinance defining membership criteria is currently under review. The system and processes for managing the Register would benefit from streamlining.

Data from *student systems* identify graduate members whose membership of the GC is lifelong. Graduates may go on to graduate with further qualifications or take on positions which confer 'ex officio' membership e.g. as member of academic staff. Currently, checking for duplication seems to be labour intensive. Modern programming could improve efficiency.

The 'ex officio' categories of membership depend on compatible data flows from other parts of the University, i.e. *staff data from HR; honorary staff data from Colleges; Court members from Court services.*

'Ex officio' memberships are time limited and hence need associated standard communications co-terminus with joining/leaving.

I am not yet certain how the updates to D&A's database will affect the GC Register or whether this is the moment to consider a stand-alone database for the GC Register.

If the new Ordinance defining membership criteria is approved there will be a piece of work to implement its provisions (in 2023) – adding a new category of 1000 professional staff members. The issues of management of the database could usefully be addressed at the same time.

Elections

The GC employs the Electoral Reform Society to oversee its elections which are conducted using a modified Single Transferable Vote system.

We have reluctantly had to maintain a system combining postal and electronic voting because of the difficulties regularly reported of gaining access through EASE to vote electronically.

There are difficulties in establishing the true size of the electorate.

There is a particular challenge around managing secure access for those with multiple identities e.g. staff as well as alumni.

Communications

With >250k members worldwide most GC communications would be more effective if they were targeted.

The GC Register must statutorily be inclusive of all members but the reality is that there are only live contact details for about half the membership. There are issues to be addressed in how to mitigate and manage this for the future.

The GC needs to update its communication strategy making more sophisticated and more efficient use of digital media.

It does need to ensure its identity is recognised across the University. We do understand that the GC Office is a tiny eccentric unit within a huge organisation but it was frustrating to spend a year struggling to get support to migrate an old GC website to EdWeb only now to learn the University's website is relocating.

Hybrid committee meetings

Historically the Business Committee has depended on members being able to attend meetings on campus. We are moving to hybrid meetings as the norm. This depends on the *availability of sufficient bookable rooms of appropriate size in the central area with technical resources* which can routinely be managed by our administrative staff. (GC committees meet outside normal office hours so cannot depend on tech. support being available).

This raises the question of whether it is still efficient to have administrative staff transcribing audio records into *formal minutes* or whether systems are available or emerging to assist with meeting reports for the modern era.

There is a schedule for archiving all the GC's formal records in the University archives. Work is now underway to migrate to a *digital archive*.

Hybrid events

GC have for years now livestreamed and recorded one meeting each year to capture the Principal's annual report. These meetings are always on Saturdays.

This simple format has required outside contractors for the visual material, the University's LST for the sound systems and a collaborative endeavour to secure access to the recording via our website for members in other time zones.

We have not yet been able to find a satisfactory, affordable means of capturing our multi-media events to share with remote members.

It has been disappointing to realise how relatively ill equipped the University's larger spaces still are for such events and the challenge of obtaining technical support on a Saturday.

For all such events a better more user-friendly data analytics would be helpful.

Registration issues

We would benefit from user-friendly easy registration systems for these larger events. We do understand the importance of consideration for security issues when globally dispersed members are joining online.

For some events we allow guests nominated by members which adds to the challenge. For in person events where there is catering, we need to request a payment on registration. It would be helpful if this could be integrated with registration through GC website.

Ann Smyth
Secretary of the General Council
March 2022

**Minutes of the International Standing Committee held at 4pm
Tuesday 7 May 2024
Braid Room, Charles Stewart House**

Present: Krystyna Szumelukowa, Convener of ISC
John Clifford (online)
Ann Cormack (online)
Mary Gunn (online)
Francis McManus
William Duncan, Secretary of the General Council
Gordon Cairns, Vice-Convener of the Business Committee
Alison MacLeary, Assistant Secretary of the General Council

In attendance: Professor James Smith, Vice-Principal International
Professor David Weller, International Dean, Southeast Asia and Australasia
Bruce Nelson (FSSC – online)

1. Welcome and introductions

Krystyna Szumelukowa (KS) welcomed everyone to the meeting and led the introductions. She thanked James Smith (JS) for continuing to engage with the committee on progress with the Global Plan and he said that he welcomed the opportunity and the feedback received.

2. The Review of the Global Engagement Plan: update from Professor James Smith, VP International

- JS began by accepting that the global strategy has been in development for some time but explained that a cohesive approach is required in order to support the University's overall Strategy and align more effectively with the Research and Innovation and Teaching and Learning strategies;
- Referred to further complications and potential challenges regarding the changing global context and implications for international student recruitment;
- Reported that the draft now has approval from all three Colleges and a final draft should be complete within a month and will then commence with the formal governance process for approval;
- KS acknowledged the complicated process of synchronisation across the University and the necessary diversion of resources to other priorities;
- JS reported that an operational plan of essential services provided by Communications and Marketing, Development and Alumni, Edinburgh Global, Student Recruitment, Central Research Office and Edinburgh Innovations is being produced at the same time and the challenges of collaborating effectively across the departments and Colleges;
- In response to a question raised by AC in how the success of the Global Strategy can be measured against its objectives, JS said that the formal KPI reported to Court is about diversification in international student recruitment and how investment is translated into activity. He described a project working with the universities of Copenhagen, Toronto Helsinki and Leuven to see how these collaborative partnerships are working in practice and offered to share the outcomes with the committee;
- He added that often speculative and experimental research activity arising from smaller connections with other institutions can be more impactful than formalised relationships;
- MG offered her experience of being involved with Brown University and how alumni willingly contributed free of charge towards raising money for university projects and asked whether the University was looking to other models for inspiration;

- JS responded by saying that the funding model of Ivy League universities are based on a culture of giving which is different from the UK and where alumni are more connected to their alma mater and have different attitudes towards the provision of education;
- While the University does have the advantage of the largest US alumni community in the UK, the infrastructure is not currently available to adequately support alumni engagement and there is a need to be more realistic about existing resources and to be clear about where to focus activity in this area;
- The new global strategy differs from the previous internationalisation strategy by focussing efforts on a smaller number of key regions i.e. North America, Europe, SE Asia and Africa;
- He highlighted that a more strategic approach towards investment in alumni engagement within the international strategy is being addressed as resource capacity to pursue potential opportunities is critical;
- JS concluded by giving a brief introduction to the next presentation and stated that South East Asia is one of the key regions in the world. The University has an office based in Singapore, which also acts as a hub to connect across the region and diversify from a focus on China.

3. Presentation from Professor David Weller, International Dean, Southeast Asia and Australasia

- DW provided a brief overview of some of the University's activity currently taking place in SE Asia and Australasia;
- Historically, the University has prioritised partnerships in North America and Europe and, although there are challenges for the region such as distance, time zones and cultural differences, there are areas of fantastic opportunity, noting competition from institutions in Australia and US;
- Mentioned fantastic support from Edinburgh Global but added that resource is thinly stretched;
- The main focus of activity in South East Asia is within countries such as Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Australia and Indonesia which offer a broad range of economic development opportunities;
- In rapidly developing countries, e.g. Indonesia and Vietnam, government spending on education is 20%;
- Singapore offers opportunities for research funding, grants and schemes for product development and a facilitating environment enabling links with local industry leaders to develop;
- Metrics available from the University's relationship with Nanyang Technological University (NTU) in Singapore illustrate an impressive portfolio of activity;
- The University's formal partnership with NTU in the fields of data science and global health is progressing towards a joint Research Centre for Excellence;
- Reported a commitment to higher education in Indonesia through e.g. scholarship programmes;
- Australian universities perform well on the various international university ranking systems;
- The University's longstanding partnership with the University of Sydney includes significant collaboration in the area of environmental science;
- Alumni engagement is critical to regional development and can bring many long-term benefits such as the ability to provide corporate knowledge and networks and experience of the marketplace to inform programme development and school strategy and, crucially, funding;
- Alumni can gain from access to international research and knowledge transfer, and mutually enhance the others' reputation;
- Highlighted the importance of focus on a smaller number of significant collaborations and a careful analysis of costs vs benefits before choosing to invest in specific partnerships;

- Sustainability goals increasingly provide a framework for these discussions;
- The University attracts interest from other institutions who choose to engage within specific areas where the University excels, for example, Law, Medicine and the field of Artificial Intelligence (AI), although highlighted that because AI is an overstretched area of scientific research, any proposal to make connections with other organisations would depend on the nature of the project;
- Metrics to measure success in international partnerships involve a mixed methods approach e.g. success in research funding and industry connections, qualitative information, sustainability KPIs and the positive reputational aspect of partnering with institutions of similar status;
- BN suggested that the University is in a good position in relation to the potential over the next decade for selling its expertise in offshore energy to other markets;
- BN also raised the issue of the University's reliance on income from international student fees and the impact on international student recruitment from the UK government's proposals affecting visas and immigration rules;
- DW responded by saying that competitor institutions in Australia, Canada and the US are experiencing similar policy changes and reported that the University is leading in the UK in recruiting students from Hong Kong, US, Germany and Canada;
- Acknowledged competition from increasing global rankings of universities in SE Asia;
- The University is looking ahead to greater recruitment activity in India, Nigeria, Kenya and Pakistan via targeted scholarship provision, and flexible pathways are currently offered through transnational educational opportunities e.g. Shanghai University;
- The issue of intellectual property is addressed in specifics outlined within the Memorandum of Understanding between partner institutions, for example ownership and how much will be shared, but essentially comes down to trust and the expectation that both sides will act reasonably;
- Partnerships work because each institution can achieve more together than in isolation e.g. the University brings added value in its partnership with NTU which is predicated on collaboration in pulling together complicated health data sets.

Action:

Slides used during the presentation will be circulated to the committee

The Convener thanked Professor James Smith who left the meeting.

The Convener then thanked DW for his impressive presentation and interesting discussion and he left the meeting.

4. Apologies

Apologies were received from Philip Mawer.

5. Minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2024

The minute had been previously circulated and was approved.

6. Matters arising from the minutes of 18 January 2024

WD said that he expected a final draft of the University's Global Plan will be available at the next meeting of the Global Executive planned for the end of May, and noted that a section should now be included which will propose how alumni can be used as agents to achieve the objective of the strategy, although more resource within Development and Alumni will be required.

7. Any other competent business

KS thanked AC for her encouragement of renewed recent contacts with the University of Edinburgh London Club which will be helpful in future partnering of alumni hubs with strong international participation.

This was the Convener's final meeting before demitting office at the end of July. GC thanked KS on behalf of the committee for her valuable contribution over the last few years.

**Public Affairs Standing Committee Meeting held on Monday 13 May 2024
4.30pm in the Cheviot Room, Charles Stewart House**

Present: Ms Candice Donnelly, Convener of PASC
Mr Arron Ashton
Mr Devin Scobie (online)
Dr William Duncan, Secretary of the General Council
Alison MacLeary, Assistant Secretary of the General Council
Mr Gordon Cairns, Vice-Convener of the Business Committee

In attendance: Ms Gemma Gourlay, Head of Social Impact
Ms Ann Cormack (ISC) – online
Ms Kirsty MacGregor (FSCC) - online

1. Welcome and apologies

The Convener of PASC, Candice Donnelly (CD), welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited Gemma Gourlay, Head of Social Impact to talk to the committee about the Community Plan 2020-25 Year 3 Report.

Apologies received from Philip Mawer and Kate Hawley

2. Presentation from Gemma Gourlay, Head of Social Impact

- Still focused on making progress on the Community Plan, which runs from 2020-2025 and has 32 commitments to local communities based on the following 5 themes:
 1. Support Social Impact
 2. Share knowledge and experience
 3. Build close connections
 4. Provide services to communities
 5. Open the University estate
- Reported that 19 commitments have made great progress and 12 are on track for completion;
- 7 of the activities would benefit from greater engagement, with 1 requiring a boost; 11 – Work more closely with our alumni in Edinburgh and the wider region as a source of expertise, volunteers and a vital link to local communities;
- Rebecca Jones, Director, Alumni Relations, sits on the Community Board but as she will be demitting role in June, there will be a period of time before a successor can be appointed to ensure active dialogue can continue;
- GG shared a video of the progress made in the third year since publishing the Community Plan (CP), from the period November 2022 until October 2023:
- <https://www.ed.ac.uk/local/our-community-plan/what-we-did-in-year-three> which illustrates how the University and local communities are enriching each other:
- Examples include:
 - Vet students who are giving free care to the pets of people experiencing homelessness;

- University funding has supported 176 local projects, including surf therapy for women;
- Communities are using University rooms for free – 40 unique organisations have so far signed up
- The video was hosted on the Edinburgh Local website and newsletter and was circulated more widely with assistance from the university's central comms team via Bulletin and social media channels with a great response (around 60k hits); hard copies of the CP report were also sent to the Senior Leadership Team;
- GG will follow up with D & A comms team to enquire if the video had also been sent to alumni groups;
- Already turning attention to what comes next, to provide plenty of time to engage with local communities and internally ahead of a new plan in 2025;
- This will be an opportunity to reflect and reframe while acknowledging the importance of the 4th pillar of the University's 2030 Strategy – Civic and Social Sustainability;
- Looking at how success can be measured more effectively i.e., which of the 5 themed areas in the CP have worked well and how many of the 32 deliverables have been achievable;
- Recognising a changing landscape within communities e.g., the impact of the cost-of-living crisis, and availability of resources;
- Learning also from other institutions and attending civic focused conferences with universities including Manchester, Birmingham, Hull and some international;
- Lynn McMath, Deputy Director of Stakeholder Relations, is leading on work relating to student housing in collaboration with the other four universities in the City;
- The University held a housing summit at the Edinburgh Futures Institute which was attended by the Leader of Edinburgh City Council and representatives from various sectors, to discuss and debate the current housing crisis;
- A letter was sent to the First Minister, a response has been received and is being followed up;
- Invited the committee to provide their thoughts on what the University should be doing, in collaboration with local communities via the following voting link:
<https://app.wooclap.com/ZHZGFU?from=instruction-slide>
- Possible themes for consideration include: Housing (including homelessness; Inclusive Sport and Exercise; Ecology and Nature; Learning, research and collaboration; Just Transition; The post-Covid world; The ageing population;
- Three priority themes will be selected as part of a consultation process including workshops and local community meetings;
- Stuart Tooley, Head of Public Affairs, Communications and Marketing, regularly attends relevant group and Council meetings to look at priorities within the themes;
- WD said that a focused agenda of topics to discuss with Councillor Day, Leader of Edinburgh City Council, would be useful;
- GG highlighted sufficient resources will need to be in place in order to deliver objectives but the CP acts as an enabler to spotlight important themes of today that the local community feels should be addressed;
- WD suggested looking at the impact of AI on society as this topic is generating huge interest within communities and the University is world leading in its expertise.

The Convener thanked GG for coming along to update the committee on current and future plans and she left the meeting.

Action: -

- ***Slides used during the presentation will be circulated to the committee.***

3. Minutes from the meeting held on 5 February 2024

The minutes had been previously circulated and were approved.

4. Matters arising from the meeting held on 5 February 2024

- WD reported that a new contract with Lane has been agreed which will cover both the Summer 2024 and Winter 2025 editions of Billet;
- A conversation with the University's web development team in relation to a new digital version of Billet will be pursued at a later date;
- Summer Billet has been well received with positive feedback on the professional design and layout;
- [post meeting]: opening stats for Summer Billet were provided by the D & A comms team and are as follows:
 - Emails sent: 144,346
 - Opened: 61,157

 - Total clicks: 2,698
 - Unsubscribers: 205

 - Individual clicks:
 - Billet: 1,740
 - Meeting: 147
 - GC homepage: 107
 - GC News: 96
 - Publications: 73
 - Elections: 64
- Invited feedback from the committee which will be useful in the preparation for Billet Winter 2025.

5. Future Events

- HYM, Saturday 15 June 2024, Edinburgh Futures Institute (EFI)
- Reconnaissance visits to EFI are planned in the coming week to review the complex catering and tech arrangements;
- Due to the popularity of this event, the registration process will have to be carefully managed;
- There will be two separate registration points within the EFI building for the morning business meeting and the event on AI which comes after;
- There is capacity for 135 in the room which is being used for the business meeting; a positive response regarding attendance has been received from recent graduates who have not yet taken part in a General Council statutory meeting;

- Capacity within the conference area being used for the AI sessions is 375; the Eventbrite registration system was set at a maximum figure of 300 which has already sold out and the waiting list of 100 is quickly filling up;
- The event will be livestreamed for those who are unable to attend in-person and a recording will also be available to view on the General Council website post event;
- WD highlighted that this is a showcase event for the University and will do much to raise the profile of the General Council;
- Because of the scale of this event, WD will meet with the University Secretary, Leigh Chalmers, to discuss the need for co-operation from other departments in order to deal with the various operational and logistical challenges;
- WD described his proposal to commission an event booklet which will include biographies of the speakers and other information on the theme of AI and which would be distributed to delegates on the day as an aide-memoire.

6. Any other business

- WD referred to the recent meeting with Chris Cox, VP Philanthropy and Advancement, and Professor James Smith, VP International about support for more effective engagement with the University's alumni groups and acknowledged that this area is currently under-resourced and should be viewed as a beneficial investment opportunity for the University;
- Development and Alumni would be best placed to support and develop engagement with alumni groups which could lead to positive philanthropic outcomes;
- The General Council would contribute by encouraging engagement in the University's governance processes i.e., attendance at Half-Yearly meetings;
- Noted also the potential opportunities for discussion between the University and Edinburgh City Council members who have expressed a willingness to better engage in the "Town and Gown" relationship;
- DS indicated that the Lord Provost, who currently sits ex-officio on the University Court, may wish to attend a future meeting of the Business Committee.

The committee warmly thanked CD for her much appreciated contribution as she steps down from her role as Convener of PASC due to work commitments but who will continue to take part as a valued member of the committee.

1. Dates for the diary

a. Business Committee meetings for 2024/5

Thursday 10th October 2024 – presentation on Research and Innovation Strategy

Thursday 5 December 2024

Thursday 27 February 2025

Thursday 1 May 2025

Thursday 26 June 2025

All at 5.15pm in the Raeburn Room unless otherwise advised

b. Christmas Reception

10 December 2024 at Talbot Rice Centre

c. Half Yearly Meeting

Saturday 15 February 2025 at 10.30 followed by lunch at the Playfair Library

Saturday 14 June 2025 – venue to be arranged

2. King's Birthday Honours

Details of General Council members who were awarded with national honours will appear shortly on the General Council website.