

# COUNCIL

Thursday, 2nd May 2024 9:30 am

Council Chamber | Council

## Attendees

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### Attended

Jimena Alamo

Maria Bond (*attended online*)

Teslim Bukoye

Pamela Chesters – Chair of Council

Kate Ehrig-Page

Timothy Ford

Alun Griffiths

Dot Griffiths

Alan Hayes (*Partial Attendance*)

Tim Hollingsworth

Don McLaverty

Catherine Mealing-Jones

Calum Mercer

Charlotte Moar

David Moon

Andrew Ross

Paul Shepherd

Amber Snary

Ian White – Vice Chancellor

### In Attendance

Ghazwa Alwani-Starr – Chief Operating Officer

Andrew Browning – Interim Head of Governance – Secretary to Meeting

Sarah Hainsworth – Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation)

Cassie Wilson – Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience)

### **Partial Attendance**

Steve Brammer – Dean of School of Management (*To item 7662 only*)

Richard Brooks – Director of Human Resources (*Items 7677 to 7680 only*)

Gordon Cox – Director of Advancement (*Item 7676 only*)

Richard Jackson - Director of Sustainability (*Item 7678 only*)

### **Secretariat**

Katie Anderton

Helena Barrell

Ruth Robins

### **Apologies for Absence**

Ryan Bird

Julian Chaudhuri

Timothy Ford

Martin Williams

## **7671.0 Declarations of Interest**

Purpose - For Information

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### **Minute**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **7672.0 Minutes of Previous Meeting - C23/24 - 157**

Purpose - For Approval

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### **Minute**

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 February 2024 were approved by Council.

## **7673.0 Actions and Matters Arising - C23/24 - 158**

Purpose - For Noting

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### **Minute**

There were no outstanding actions from the previous meeting.

## **7674.0 Institutional update - C23/24 - 159**

Purpose - For Noting

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### **Minute**

The Vice-Chancellor highlighted how successful the past year had been and thanked everyone who had been involved with the recent events that had gone well.

The strength of feeling arising from the conflict in Israel and Gaza was acknowledged and it was noted that despite this there had been no major demonstrations on campus. The University Chaplain, along with other members of staff, had been putting in a lot of work to foster positive relationships on campus across the University community. It was reported that Jewish students had recently met with the Lord-Lieutenant of Somerset for dinner as part of an initiative that would enable both sides to have a voice with a senior but apolitical individual. The work done by the University community so far has meant that the University remained in a very positive position.

Council formally recorded its congratulations to Professor Marion Harney, who had been appointed as the new chair of the Bath World Heritage Advisory Board and Enhancement Fund.

It was reported that the University had received a £1 million endowed donation and £55,000 gift from the Yew Chung Education Foundation to fund an academic post in the University's Department of Education, which was given in honour of Emeritus Professor Jeff Thompson.

Council asked if any consideration had been given to security issues that may arise around China; and it was confirmed that the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation) had been conducting careful analysis of this general matter over the past two years. It was agreed that there was a need to be careful in identifying what would necessitate export control, but it was equally important to have a policy that identified where the University could and could not collaborate, as not doing so could have consequences in the future.

It was confirmed that each Faculty and School had a provision for missing targets and were planning financially for the possibility of planned PGT numbers not being forthcoming. There was also caution about pre-committing any spend; and assurance was given to the Finance Committee that any potential downside had been written into the budget, ensuring that the 5% surplus would still be met as planned. It was emphasized that the University was building a culture where faculties/schools took accountability for their plans and recognized their need to make good any shortfall even if that required taking difficult decisions.

It was suggested that there was potential for balanced home UG and international PGT growth. It was agreed that this was an example of how scenario mapping was useful.

It was noted that the University was signing an increasing number of memorandum of understandings with overseas institutions, which were good for the University's reputation overseas.

Council agreed that it was pleased at the robustness of the planning process and the culture around it. This would help the University to move into a position of being able to address difficult situations by being flexible and realistic.

A question was raised about the difficulties recruiting into the Digital, Data and Technology team (DDaT) and any risks or potential mitigations. It was explained that this was an ongoing sector-wide risk, which was exacerbated by the cost of living and house prices in Bath. Council was assured that HR and DDaT would meet to consider this; and that although this was a challenging area, work was ongoing to mitigate this.

The new Minister for Skills and Higher Education had visited and the delay to the Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE) had been noted. A letter from the Minister confirmed that the points raised by the University had been recognised and that further information would be available soon. It had been explicitly understood that the cap would adversely affect integrated Masters.

Council welcomed how the Institutional Update was presented with respect to the KPIs and agreed that they would like to see this on a regular basis and have deep dives where appropriate.

### *Estates and Capital Plans*

The Chief Operating Officer highlighted that the University had changed a lot in recent years particularly in relations to its activities off-campus. She paid tribute to those who were involved in improving the understanding of what needed to be done to keep campus buildings safe. She said that it was important that a health and safety baseline was established for the 15-year plan of work. The Chapter 1 work that had already been carried out highlighted that the buildings that are in the worst condition also presented the greatest challenges to fix. Analysis of growth at the University suggested that there would be financial pressures due to the extra cost involved in maintaining the buildings included in the Capital Projects Plan. It was noted that there were now, however, more opportunities in the city centre with discussions taking place with BANES regarding city centre sites, which could be of strategic importance and offer financial benefits.

A high-level discussion was ongoing regarding a memorandum of understanding between the University and BANES with a view to agreeing a civic agreement to create a framework for collaboration, with key institutions in Bath being aligned in a shared vision. It would set out how the University could play a part in creating a university city and allow more concentrated conversations about the possibility of a joint vision that addressed the need for jobs, housing and the University's desire for a presence in the city. The COO said that BANES was increasingly seeing the advantages of viewing Bath as a University City and were becoming more amenable to the idea of there being more student accommodation in the city. Council recognised that this important change in attitude to the University owed much to the improved working relationships developed by the Vice Chancellor throughout his tenure.

The Council noted the Institutional Update.

# 7675.0 Faculty Presentation - C23/24 - 160

Purpose - For Discussion

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## Minute

The Dean of the School of Management presented an update on the work of the School. Discussion covered the following points:

- One of the aims of the School for the coming years was to see an increase in the national rankings of its MBA programmes. It was noted that the School currently had low enrolment on the courses and so while improving quality was a priority and would hopefully lead to an increase in numbers, the School may be required to review their strategy to balance the financial needs of the University.
- It was noted there was currently work underway looking at a number of the School's courses which were not being delivered as intended, with the necessary focus on quality. There were some challenges in relation to this work due to the School's relationship with Wiley for programme provision. This was being looked at both institutionally and within the School to ensure that any steps taken were beneficial for both the University and prospective students.
- It was questioned what the School were doing to improve their performance in the next REF. The Dean of the School of management confirmed that focus had been turned to adding to the research environment and culture of the School, including issuing a number of 0.3FTE contracts for international academics. This allowed both the School and the individual academics to increase their research networks and their international exposure, as well as giving some of the academics the opportunity to supervise PhD students which may not be possible within their home institutions. It was noted that recruiting to these contracts was difficult to secure as there were a small number of academics searching for this type of additional role and a lot of choice was available, however; it was felt that the benefits of these contracts were considerable and the School would continue offering these, as well as encouraging members of their own academic community to explore similar options.

While noting the positive impact and wondering if this strategy could or should be mirrored in the other Faculties, Council also felt that this approach could leave the University vulnerable if the REF criteria for inclusion were adjusted.

- It was confirmed that the School was benchmarking itself against not only Warwick University but a number of international institutions including the Rotterdam School of Business. The focus of the School when benchmarking was to look at institutions which considered both research and teaching in tandem.
- The Dean of the School of Management confirmed that the School currently did not have plans to pursue Executive Education as a new business work stream. This was linked with the lack of regional corporations to which the work would be able to feed into. While it was noted that Executive Education could complement some of the broader core activities within the School, it was important to look at both the School's progress and that of the wider University which includes regional business relationships.

Council noted the presentation.

# 7676.0 Advancement Office Annual Report - C23/24 - 161

Purpose - For Approval

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## Minute

The Director of Advancement presented the annual report of the Advancement Office. The following points were raised in discussion:

- Council noted the report's focus on financial targets and queried how other non-philanthropic targets could be progressed. The Director of Advancement said that the Advancement Office is carrying out a piece of work to increase alumnae engagement metrics and the report contains KPIs on this. Approximately 90% of alumnae have said that they would recommend the University to friends and family, so there is an opportunity to build on this.
- It was asked if the University has or is developing a Unique Selling Point (USP) that could encourage high-net-worth individuals to support the institution, or if such support usually depends on these individuals having personal links with the University. The Director of Advancement said that the Advancement Office approaches this question both by looking at the University's major strengths and selling points and finding donors who support these, while at the same time looking at the interests of high-net-worth individuals and seeing if the University can map on to these. He also said that the city of Bath's status as a World UNESCO Heritage city resonates with some donors.
- In response to a query on the consistency of the stewardship in the Advancement Office, it was noted that this is very important. One of the easiest ways to prepare for future gifts is to be thankful for a past one. The Office has relaunched the Donor Impact Magazine and it aims to send thank you letters for donations within three days of receiving them. Alumnae engagement is also very important and one of the best ways to encourage legacy pledges.
- Council asked if the Advancement Office has a network of ambassadors who can be used, as receiving a thank you from one of these may have more impact. The Director of Advancement agreed that peer-to-peer engagement is useful, together with holding thank you events. The Advancement Office is planning far ahead on how to choreograph such activities. A long-running issue of the sector is how to diversify donor demographics.
- The Chair reminded Council members of the University's charitable status and that as charity trustees, they have a responsibility towards supporting the University and encouraged them to reflect on how they can best do this in a personal capacity.

## Decision

The Council noted the report and agreed to the principle of using a formula for projecting future income targets for the Advancement Office.

## **7677.0 Health & Safety Annual Report - C23/24 - 162**

Purpose - For Discussion

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### **Minute**

The Health and Safety Annual report was presented by the Director of Human Resources. Its contents were noted by Council.

## **7678.0 Climate Action Annual Report 2023/24 - C23/24 - 163**

Purpose - For Approval

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### **Minute**

The Director of Sustainability presented the Climate Action Report. He said that he was seeking Council approval for its publication.

The Council were told that due to changes to the carbon factors applied and other issues, both internal and external, there had been a 25% increase in the University's carbon footprint. Business activity at the University had now returned to pre-Covid levels. The University was now trialing the Laboratory Efficiency Assessment Framework (LEAF) and this was showing good carbon and financial savings. More work was needed to embed climate action and sustainable learning into the curriculum.

The Director of Sustainability said that while there were good communications relating to the work being done by the University, for it to be more sustainable there was still a need for greater awareness particularly in relation to Scope 3 (indirect emissions). He said that changes would be made to the report next year to include an executive summary and a greater emphasis on ensuring that there are more links to illustrative examples of change on the website.

Council noted the work that had been done on Scope 3 and asked what was being done to improve procurement processes. The Director of Sustainability said that the University was looking to break this down into the areas which had the most impact on its carbon footprint which were construction, IT, and furniture.

Council asked what considerations were being given in relation to lowering the carbon footprint of the University's capital programme. The Director of Sustainability said that different options were being considered such as "green" concrete, he also added that BANES were looking for low carbon buildings when considering planning applications.

### **Decision**

Council noted the Climate Action Report and approved its publication.

## **7679.0 Freedom of Speech - C23/24 - 164**

Purpose - For Approval

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### **Minute**

The Interim Head of Governance told Council that the Code of Practice for Freedom of Speech was currently being drafted and would be considered at a meeting of UEB and then Senate before coming to Council for final approval. He said that there was a need for consultation on the Code with both the wider academic community and the Students Union.

Council was asked to nominate the Vice-President (Community & Inclusion) to act on its behalf to ensure compliance with the Code on Freedom of Expression under student Regulation 18. Currently this role was assigned to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, but this role was vacant at present.

The Vice-Chancellor was asked whether there was a need for additional resources to help the University to fulfil its obligations in relation to Freedom of Speech. The Vice-Chancellor said that he did not believe that at the moment there was a rationale for such a resource. He gave the recent example of differing views with the student community of the Gaza conflict which at its heart was a Freedom of Speech issue. He said that the then Vice-President (Community & Inclusion) had been able to build trust and confidence on both sides. The Vice-Chancellor said that as a university there had been a conscious decision to reach out to both sides and give them room to express their views while respecting others of a different opinion.

### **Decision**

Council approved the nomination of the Vice-President (Community & Inclusion) to act on its behalf to ensure that staff, students, and external speakers comply with the current code of practice for Freedom of Expression.

## **7680.0 Workforce Report - C23/24 - 165**

Purpose - For Discussion

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### **Minute**

The Director of Human Resources presented the report. Discussion covered the following points:

- It was noted that the updated format of the report was beneficial to Council members to aid them in better understanding resources.
- There was some uncertainty around the institutional KPIs as they related to the number of female Professors. The initial target set in 2021 of 20% female Professors had been exceeded and the current aim in relation to the Athena Swan award was 25%. However, there was question as to whether the focus should be kept on increasing the percentage of female Professors or if there were broader KPIs which could be introduced in relation to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.
- There was likely to be a piece of work emerging looking at efficiency within the workforce to ensure that this was in line with the University strategy. An integral part of this was knowing

how many staff members were within departments and the type of people in these roles. Within the Faculties and School the Deans had a good idea of this information, however more needed to be done within Professional Services to look at this strategically.

- It was noted that there were a number of UK universities who had started looking at voluntary redundancy schemes and it was questioned whether the University would follow suit. It was confirmed that this was currently not within the institution's plans however it was difficult to know at this stage. The challenge for the institution over the coming years would be to look at work allocation and efficiencies and not reduce the workforce where possible.
- It was noted that there was considerable discussion within the workforce in relation to workload. The workforce survey run in February and March 2024 had looked at this in relation to the HSE management standards. Based on this looking forward the challenge would be to look at workload balance across departments rather than the workload itself. There was inequity in how workloads were distributed within departments before recruitment and as such increased recruitment would not necessarily reduce the workload for specific individuals.

Council noted the report.

## **7681.0 Committee on the Office of Vice-Chancellor - Lessons Learned - C23/24 - 166**

Purpose - For Discussion

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### **Minute**

Council noted the report on the process of appointing the new Vice-Chancellor and the lessons learned.

It was commented that while Council members were invited to take part in a discussion on what the Committee would be looking for in a new Vice-Chancellor, their involvement in the decision-making that took place later in the process was limited as responsibility thereafter was devolved to the COVC prior to final approval coming back to Council .

Council asked that the valuable contributions made to the process by Sir Peter Gregson, who sadly passed away earlier in the year be recorded.

## **7682.0 Governance Framework Review Project Update - C23/23 - 167**

Purpose - For Approval

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### **Minute**

The Interim Head of Governance gave an update on the Governance Framework Review Project. He told Council that the amended Statutes would be going to the Privy Council that

week. This would be for the initial informal consultation stage following which they would then be considered by the Privy Council. It was hoped that this would be concluded by the end of July 2024

The amended ordinances had been considered by Senate and no comment had been offered regarding these. Council was therefore asked to give final approval of the amended ordinances.

### **Decision**

Council approved the amendments to the Ordinances as set out in appendices 1 and 2 of the paper. The provisions of Ordinance 7 would not come into force unless and until the Privy Council had approved the changes to the Statutes.

## **7683.0 Finance Committee - C23/24 - 168**

Purpose - For Noting

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### **Minute**

The Chair of the Finance Committee said that at the main meeting of the Committee there had been an update on the planning round which included a presentation on campus infrastructure. The Committee had been given assurance that the planning process was well advanced.

The Finance Committee had considered the numbers relating to longer term student growth and there was a risk that the targeted numbers for international recruitment may not be hit meaning that solutions would need to be found to mitigate for this. The importance of scenario modelling was recognised.

The management accounts and financial forecasts for the current year were looking positive with results potentially going to be better than the deficit that the University had currently budgeted for.

There had been further discussion on the governance of IAAPS and concerns had been expressed regarding the risk of insufficient commercial expertise. The PVC (Research & Innovation) said that active management of this risk was happening. She also said that the proportion of commercial and grant income coming into the pipeline is growing.

Council was told that it was likely that the strategic financial risk relating to Financial Performance may be increased due to the University's intention to generate higher operating cashflows from higher numbers of international students.

The Chair of the Finance Committee also told Council of the plans of the Investment Sub-Committee to divest from its current endowment fund and move to another fund with better returns. This would need to come to the Finance Committee for final approval.

Council noted the update from the Finance Committee.

## **7684.0 Audit and Risk Assurance Committee - C23/24 - 169**

Purpose - For Noting

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### **Minute**

The Chair of ARAC presented the report of the meeting of ARAC which was held on 11 April. He said that a considerable amount of discussion at the meeting had centred around the limited assurance that had been given in the audit of payroll.

Council noted the report.

## **7685.0 Remuneration Committee - C23/24 - 170**

Purpose - For Approval

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### **Minute**

The Chair of the Remuneration Committee presented the report. He told Council that the last meeting had been reflective and had included a teaching session on the use of benchmarking. Council noted the report.

## **7686.0 Report from Senate - C23/24 - 172**

Purpose - For Approval

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### **Minute**

The report from Senate was noted by Council.

## **7687.0 Undergraduate and PGT Assurance - C23/24 - 173**

Purpose - For Discussion

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### **Minute**

Council noted the report.

It was explained that a second report with corrected data would be submitted to the next meeting of Council, so further consideration would be given to the paper then.

## **7688.0 SU Top 10 Update and 4-year Review - C23/24 - 171A and B**

Purpose - For Noting

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### **Minute**

The Students' Union President and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) presented the reports. Alongside the scheduled SU Top Ten Report an additional four-year review of the Top Ten had been presented at the request of the Council. It was noted that it had been positive to look back and see what had been achieved recognising that under the leadership of the Vice Chancellor there had been a radical transformation in University / SU relations.

Discussion covered the following points:

- The Council felt it was positive that there was now a process through which progress could be reviewed both in the short term and over time however there may be some changes made to how the review was presented which would make it more beneficial for Council members.
- It was noted that it was not practical to consistently create and maintain additional working groups and it needed to be clear within the standard business of the University and the Students' Union how the Top Ten are met and maintained.
- It was questioned how the results of the review would be communicated to staff and students. Currently there were no plans to distribute the findings of the four-year plan. However, the Students' Union President and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) had created a video for students about the current SU Top Ten, what they are and how this affects students.

Council noted the reports.

## **7689.0 Calendar of Meetings 2024/25 and 2025/26 - C23/24 - 174**

Purpose - For Approval

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### **Decision**

The calendar of meetings for academic year 2024/2025 were approved by Council.

## **7690.0 Honorary Degrees Committee - C23/24 - 175**

Purpose - For Approval

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### **Minute**

The report of the Honorary Degrees Committee was noted by Council.

### **Decision**

Council approved the awards to be made to the recommended individuals as set out in the paper.

## **7691.0 Redundancy Committee - C23/24 - 176**

Purpose - For Approval

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### **Decision**

Council approved the case for redundancy referred to it by the Committee.

## **7692.0 Outcome of SU Elections C23/24 - 177**

Purpose - For Noting

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### **Minute**

The outcome of the Students' Union elections was noted by Council.

## **7693.0 Urgent Business/Decisions taken between meetings - C23/24 - 178**

Purpose - For Noting

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### **Minute**

The summary of decisions taken between meetings was noted by Council.

## **7694.0 13 March 2024 Students' Union “Speed Dating” Outcomes - C23/24 - 179**

Purpose - For Noting

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### **Minute**

The summary of the SU/Council "speed-dating" exercise was noted by Council.

## **7695.0 Programme of Meetings for 2023/24 - C23/24 - 180**

Purpose - For Noting

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### **Minute** by Andrew Browning

The programme of meetings of Council was noted, including that the next meeting of Council would now be held on 8 July 2024.

## **7696.0 Any Other Business**

Purpose - For Noting

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### **Minute**

There was no other business.