

COUNCIL

Thursday, 22nd February 2024 9:30 am

Council Chamber | Council

Attendees

Attended

Jimena Alamo

Maria Bond

Teslim Bukoye

Pamela Chesters – Chair of Council

Kate Ehrig-Page

Timothy Ford

Alun Griffiths

Dot Griffiths

Alan Hayes

Tim Hollingsworth

Don McLaverty

Catherine Mealing-Jones

Charlotte Moar

David Moon

Andrew Ross

Paul Shepherd

Amber Snary

Ian White – Vice Chancellor

In Attendance

Ghazwa Alwani-Starr – Chief Operating Officer

Ryan Bird – SU Chief Executive

Andrew Browning – Interim Head of Governance – Secretary to Meeting

Julian Chaudhuri – Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Global & Education)

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

Martin Williams – Director of Finance

Partial Attendance

Julie Barnett – Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research *(Item 7662 only)*)

Richard Brooks – Director of Human Resources (*Item 7653 only*)

Richard Jackson - Director of Sustainability (*Item 7661 only*)

Deborah Wilson – Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences (*to Item 7650 only*)

Secretariat

Katie Anderton

Laura Andrews

Helena Barrell

Ruth Robins

Apologies For Absence

Sarah Hainsworth -Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research)

Calum Mercer - Treasurer

7647.0 Minutes of Previous Meeting - C23/24 - 137A and B

Purpose - For Approval

The minutes of the meeting of Council held on 23 November 2023 were **approved**.

The minutes of the special meeting of Council held on 08 January 2024 were **approved**.

7648.0a Declarations of Interest

Purpose – For Noting

Andrew Ross declared an interest in Item 7651 as he was the main author of the paper..

The Chair declared an interest in Item 7663 (Nominations Committee) and confirmed that she would leave the meeting during the discussion relating to the appointment of the next Chair of Council.

7648.0b Actions and Matters Arising - C23/24 - 138

Purpose - For Noting

The Interim Head of Governance said that in relation to the action for an update to be made to the KPI on attendance at public events that a KPI update would be coming to May meeting of Council.

The Interim Head of Governance said that there were two old actions which had been assigned to his predecessor and that steps were being taken to either remove them from the log or to reassign.

The Chair took the opportunity to remind members to raise questions and comments on reports in advance of the meeting where possible.

7649.0 Institutional update - C23/24 - 139

Purpose - For Noting

The Vice-Chancellor introduced the Institutional Update.

Council were updated on the Ofsted inspection of degree apprenticeships. The Vice-Chancellor paid tribute to the hard work of all of those involved in the preparation for the visit. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education and Global) told Council that Ofsted's overall judgement, which was currently provisional and confidential within the University*, was that the University's degree apprenticeship provision was rated overall as good. Within the elements of the inspection, safeguarding was deemed effective, quality of education was considered good, behaviours & attitudes were viewed as outstanding, personal development was good, and leadership & management was good. The University's Skills Bootcamp provision was not graded as this course would not be completed for another 2-3 months.

Progress was being made towards the University achieving the Mental Health Charter. There were two conditions outstanding and the actions needed to ensure those conditions were met were underway.

Council asked what steps were being taken in the wake of the University of Bristol case. The PVC (Student Experience) said that the University was waiting for sector-wide guidance. The University had already put mechanisms in place including ensuring that alternative assessments were available to students, flagging students who were considered to be at risk, and work on learning outcomes.

Council asked if there had been any change to the brief for the Vice-President (Community & Inclusion) and the Vice-Chancellor confirmed this had remained the same.

B&NES saw this as having a transformative impact on the city, and that they considered the University as a major contributor to employment and immigration.

Any final decision regarding the lease would be considered by Finance Committee with Council giving its final approval.

Council **noted** the Institutional Update.

* Secretary's note: The Ofsted Outcome has now been published.

7650.0 Faculty Spotlight (H&SS)

Purpose - For Discussion

Minute

The Dean of Humanities & Social Sciences delivered the presentation, which included an update on the H&SS Faculty's strategic plan and the proposed goals underpinning this. Discussion covered the following points:

Measuring the experiences of international students - It was explained that student experience is one of the Faculty's proposed strategic KPIs. The Faculty will need to reflect on how best

student experience can be measured and would like to move beyond relying just on the NSS. Improving on the feedback provided in the NSS will be difficult, especially as the H&SS Faculty's performance has not been helped by the Marking and Assessment Boycott.

REF performance and research culture - One of the Faculty's goals is to embed a culture of impact and knowledge exchange. It is hoped that doing this will lead to an improved research environment. The department is reflecting on its research culture, while knowing that the boundaries set by REF are likely to change.

Staff wellbeing - It was acknowledged that measuring staff wellbeing is difficult to do effectively and the H&SS Faculty is considering how best to do this. Staff surveys provide a useful starting point from which to monitor progress in this area. It was highlighted that if the Faculty moves certain activities, consideration should be given to staff welfare. It was agreed that providing an exciting narrative for the move would be crucial in ensuring staff support.

Council **noted** the Faculty Spotlight.

7651.0 Access and Participation Plan Assurance C23/24 - 140A and B

Purpose - For Approval

Minute

The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education & Global) and the Head of Widening Participation presented the Access and Participation Plan (APP) Update and the variations to the 2024 - 2028 APP. It was clarified that while Council had approved the initial APP for 2024 - 2028, following a review by the Office for Students (OfS) it was requested a variation be submitted with more ambitious targets and increased narrative. Discussion covered the following points:

- The context of the institution was noted as a key factor when considering the APP. Bath had a high tariff intake and the city itself was relatively small and expensive with the University being sited on the edge of a rural area. The University therefore had to be tactical in where resource was focused in order to meet the targets and remove access barriers.
- It was noted the new APP was approaching the access targets differently to the previous APP, looking closely at the barriers to opportunity as well as taking in a wider contextual look at the University culture and how the city and institution can be viewed by some students.
- The Students' Union brought to Council's attention some of the concerns they had received surrounding changes to bursaries which would likely impact on the same demographics of students targeted within the APP. The Pro- Vice Chancellor (Student Experience) advised that she was happy to meet with the Students' Union to discuss this but noted that the recent changes had been agreed with the previous sabbatical team as a better method of allocating a finite resource.
- It was confirmed at the meeting that the proposed variation would be delivered within the existing financial allocation and would not require additional resource. It was requested that future papers to Council should make clear whether there are financial consequences arising from the approval being sought.

Decision

Council **approved** the APP 2024-28 variations and **noted** the update.

7653.0 Council Workforce Report : Academic Talent Initiative Update - C23/24 - 141

Purpose - For Noting

Minute

The Director of HR introduced Council Workforce Report which was an update on the Academic Talent Initiative. The Director of HR said that the initiative was not a quick fix and it was aiming to create a longer-term cultural change. The University had been in the first year of a multi-year programme which concentrated on behaviours and prioritising work. The focus had now moved onto data and looking at structures. The Director of HR said that the Head of Department role was very different 20 years ago compared with today. He told Council that pilots of the initiative were underway with a few departments before it would be rolled out more widely.

Discussion of this report covered the following points:

- Aims for a 5-year plan. It was difficult to predict what the workforce would look like in 5 years. The aim was to free up time for HoDs to anticipate what capability was needed within their departments and the type of people needed to achieve this.
- The need to create a pipeline of talent to help develop the capability to deliver the new models of departmental leadership.
- Recruiting externally for experts in leadership. This had been more common in Professional Services compared to the academic column of the University, bringing in skills from other areas. The challenge was in reinforcing academic leadership as a fulfilling career path and identifying and developing that talent.
- Opportunities to improve the WAM system.
- Different career path opportunities (e.g. research, education, management leadership) and structuring departments to bring into balance the capabilities needed to deal with business challenges in the future. There was currently a very clear technical leadership path, which was very different to a business leadership path.
- Having the right demographic workforce to meet the University's strategic direction. The initiative was working to the current strategic plan. It was acknowledged that this could evolve over the next 5-10 years.

Council noted the workforce update.

7654.0 Financial matters - C23/24 - 142A

Purpose - For Noting

Minute

Charlotte Moar and Don McLaverty gave the update on the meeting of the Finance Committee

which took place on 7 February 2024.

Council were informed that the University is currently running at a smaller deficit than was originally forecast. The Committee had been assured that the University was making good progress in meeting its targets for the revised budget for 2023/2024. In relation to the planning round the Committee strongly supported the plan for the University to achieve a 5% per annum surplus by 2029. The plan for 2024/2025 had been moved from planning to break even to having a Strawperson target of a £3m surplus.

The risks relating to International PGT recruitment had highlighted the need to drive cost efficiencies and the Committee had been pleased to receive assurances on these from the COO. The Committee did however want to better understand the workforce assumption around staffing.

The Director of Finance highlighted that the 3% savings for professional services were a 3% saving on the plan from last year.

On the issue of risks relating to PGT expansion it was asked how feasible it would be to have an intake in the second semester. The PVC (Education and Global) said that this had previously been considered; however, at the time the academic management of the University were not convinced by the feasibility of this as an option. There were concerns as to the impact that it may have on research. It was also the case that the PGT courses and in particular the Wiley courses were not designed for a January intake. He said that there may be a desire to re-open the debate on this issue; however, it was necessary for there to be evidence which would show that a January intake would be of benefit.

The Vice-Chancellor said that the right time to consider the issue of International PGT would be when the planning cycle was coming to its end. He said that there was a risk of a further caps on the rights of students to remain in the UK and that trying to find an answer to this issue would be counter-productive. He said that it could even be the case that May would be too early to come to a firm conclusion. He said that a January intake was not this year's biggest issue. He said that next year's CT PGT launch would include the introduction of a carousel model and this may be able to facilitate a January intake more easily.

Council asked about the approach being taken in the planning process. The Vice-Chancellor said that the planning process had changed. The University was looking to improve its cash position while there were strategic decisions being taken at faculty level, the consideration of what should be resourced was taking place at a course level.

Council asked what the financial risks were to the University due to the ongoing UCL test case. The PVC (Global Engagement) said that this was still being monitored and discussed.

Council noted the update from Finance Committee.

7654.a Approval of Capital Works - John Wood building - C23/24 - 142B

Purpose - For Approval

Decision

On the recommendation of Finance Committee Council **approved** the following:-

- i) The Summer Capital Works of £2.13m for phase 1 of the John Wood Building Works, and

ii) A total capital budget of £7.22m to cover phases 1 to 3 of John Wood Building Refurbishments which will be undertaken each summer from 2024-2026.

7655.0 Governance Framework Review Project Board Update - C23/24 - 143

Purpose - For Discussion

Minute

This was presented by Chair of Council and the Interim Head of Governance. It was explained to Council that due to changes in the management of the Governance team the work on overhauling the statutes of the University had stalled significantly.

There was however a need for changes to be made to reflect the wish of Council to reduce its size as approved at its meeting in November 2022. There was also a need to make consequential amendments to Statutes and Ordinances following the amendments to Charter which had been made the previous year.

Council agreed that the Interim Head of Governance would draft amendments to Statutes and Ordinances reflecting the changes that had been made to the Charter the previous year, Council's wish to reduce its size and to reflect the latest student disciplinary policy and remove references to the now defunct appeals committees. These amended statutes would be circulated to Council members for comment before a final version is provided for approval by circulation. The proposed changes would then be forwarded to Senate for consideration at its next meeting on 17 April 2024.

7656.0 Audit and Risk Assurance Committee - C23/24 - 144

Purpose - For Noting

Minute

The Senior Independent Director presented Paper C23/24 - 144 in his capacity as Chair of ARAC.

Council welcomed the discussion around the cultural response to risk and limited assurance and how it could lead to positive improvements across the institution.

There had been two audits by internal audit which had come back with limited assurance. The first related to space management and the second related to the policy framework.

Council raised concerns as to whether the limited assurance for the policy framework had an effect on whether policies were legally compliant. The Interim Head of Governance said that it was not the case that policies were not legally compliant but that the framework within which policies were approved and sited needed to be developed. He said that it was important that such a framework was in place so that policies could be monitored and that procedures could be developed from those policies.

Decision

Council **approved** the Operational Risk Register.

7657.0 Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023 - C23/24 - 145

Purpose - For Approval

Minute

The Interim Head of Governance presented the paper. The Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023 had received Royal Assent and the paper set out the obligation of universities and colleges under the Act. These obligations including the requirement for universities to have a Code of Practice for freedom of speech.

A task and finish group led by the Chief Compliance Officer had been set up to manage the University's implementation of its new responsibilities. A timetable for the preparation and approval of the Code of Practice had been included in the paper with Council being asked to give final approval on 11 July 2024.

Council members asked whether any measures were in place to ensure that when the Chief Compliance Officer retired that the necessary actions would be completed. The Vice-Chancellor confirmed the plans were in place to cover her departure.

Council members also raised concerns regarding the impact that this legislation would have on academic staff. The Interim Head of Governance said that academic freedom for academic staff would continue and that this legislation was more directed at ensuring visiting speakers or similar were not prevented from coming onto campus.

Council **noted** the paper.

7658.0 Remuneration Committee - C23/24 - 146

Purpose - For Noting

Minute

Council noted the report.

7659.0 Academic Staff Committee - C23/24 - 147

Purpose - For Approval

Minute

Council highlighted that it had concerns regarding the current approval process for academic promotions as the draft terms of reference for ASC did not take into account Council's responsibilities under statute 17.7. It was agreed that the Terms of Reference which had been submitted for Council's approval would therefore be withdrawn pending further consideration of the issue.

7660.0 Student Appeals - C23/24 - 148

Purpose - For Approval

Minute

The Interim Head of Governance Secretariat presented the papers which had been recommended by Senate. Discussion covered the following points:

It was noted that for Council members who were involved in the Appeals Process that the overall process and support has improved since the introduction of the new Student Appeals Process.

It was noted that it was positive that more students felt able to raise their concerns through the Appeals Process; however, it was recognised that the majority of cases were either not upheld or, having been taken forward to a Panel, were subsequently dismissed. It was felt that it would be beneficial to receive an update on the number of cases which were then progressed to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for review and the outcome of these cases. It was requested that the communications sent to students signposting external routes for review be provided to the Students' Union for comment and any necessary edits.

It was noted that there existed some inequity in the outcome for Student Discipline cases for international students as outcomes such as suspension would make a greater impact than for home students.

There had recently been some cases referred to the process where issues outside of the remit of the Appeals Panel had been flagged. It was confirmed that learning had been raised within the relevant departments and the team were looking at the best way of relaying feedback to departments and would be including this information within the Appeals Annual Reports moving forward.

Decision

Council **noted** the Annual Report and **approved** the proposed Terms of Reference.

7661.0 Sustainability Update (CAF) - C23/24 - 149

Minute

The Director of Sustainability presented Paper C23/24 - 149, and was asked for his view of how the University is doing given that he had started work at the University relatively recently.

The Director of Sustainability said that the QS World University and People & Planet rankings showed progress for the University, and that there was an immense wealth of activity around sustainability in the broadest sense across all areas of campus, some of which was fragmented, which would be brought together to help the overall plan. A lot of data was being collected but more thought needed to be given to how that data could be used to create and drive change, as it was currently being used reactively. Engagement and activity at Faculty level and Professional Services level could be capitalized upon to drive the institutional direction of travel.

The Director of Sustainability was asked if the team was resourced sufficiently. He told Council that this was being looked at closely with a focus of prioritisation, while being clear about the role of the team and what was expected from partners around the University. He said that he was able to have open conversations with the Chief Operating Officer which were very helpful.

It was noted that the areas of concern in the report were similar to the previous year, and Council sought assurance that there was focus on the correct areas. It was explained that a combination of experience at similar institutions and data analysis would drive the main targets.

Council noted that it was helpful for the University to have the view that sustainability was the responsibility of the whole institution, and that it would like to focus in the future on how Council could support this work.

7662.0 Establishment of Research Institutes - C23/24 - 150

Purpose - For Approval

Minute

The Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research introduced the report and highlighted the potential for all three institutes to be global leading.

A question was raised about the financial business cases for the institutes. The Director of Finance explained that financial targets had been set for a period of 5 years and that some QR funding had been ringfenced to help fund the institutes. Costs were limited to the administration/staffing costs associated with running the institutes. The financial model for these institutes was to grow grants and other income to cover running costs. He confirmed that in agreeing to the establishment of the Institute, Council was not being asked to agree to additional funding as this was included within the current business plan.

Research Institutes were considered different to other institutes as 'disciplinary enabling' enterprises.

Decision

Council **approved**:

- a) The merger of the Institute for Sustainability and the Institute for Climate Change Resilience to become the new Institute of Sustainability and Climate Change
- b) The establishment of the Institute for the Augmented Human
- c) The establishment of the Institute for Digital Security and Behaviour

7663.0 Nominations Committee - C23/24 - 151

Purpose - For Approval

Minute

Council considered the Council Skills Matrix for 2023/24 and noted the approval by correspondence of the nomination of senior office-bearers to Court.

The Chair of Council left the meeting

Tim Ford also made Council aware of the pending end to the Chair of Council's term of office, due April 2025. It was confirmed that a short-term extension to the Chair's term was possible, if deemed appropriate, with the induction of the new Vice-Chancellor. Nominations Committee

would bring a paper with a suggested way forward for recruiting a new Chair to the May 2024 meeting of Council.

The Chair of Council returned to the meeting

Catherine Mealing-Jones and Charlotte Moar left the meeting

Decision

Council noted that the current terms of office for Catherine Mealing-Jones and Charlotte Moar ended in July 2024. Nominations Committee recommended that Council moved towards a reduced council size with the make-up of skills as previously discussed. Consequently, Council agreed to the recruitment of two new Council members from 1st August 2024: one to become ARAC Chair Designate (nominally replacing Catherine Mealing-Jones, and with the intention that they became ARAC chair in August 2025) and an HE experienced member of Council (to replace the seat vacated by Charlotte Moar).

Catherine Mealing-Jones and Charlotte Moar rejoined the meeting

Decision

Council **approved** the proposed staggered approach for Court membership and to defer the review of Court effectiveness to 2026.

Decision

Council **approved** the appointment of Mrs Annie Maw as Pro-Chancellor for an initial three-year term, until 31 July 2026.

7664.0 Senate Update - C23/24 - 152

Purpose - For Noting

Minute

The report of the last meeting of Senate held on 31 January 2024 was **noted** by Council.

7665.0 Council decision by circulation: Settlement Agreements - C23/24 - 153

Purpose - For Noting

Minute

Council **noted** the decisions made by way of circulation.

7666.0 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee - C23/24 - 154

Purpose - For Noting

Minute

Council **noted** the report from the meeting of the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee which took place on 8 February 2024.

7667.0 Programme of Meetings for 2023/24 - C23/24 - 155

Purpose - For Noting

Minute

Council **noted** the programme of meetings for the remainder of the academic year 2023/2024

7668.0 Any Other Business

Purpose - For Noting

Minute

The Governance Team will be carrying out the biennial Committee Effectiveness exercise in the Spring with a view to the review coming to the July meeting of Council.

END