

COUNCIL

Thursday 20 February 2025

Location: Council Chamber

MEETING MINUTES



7752.0 Welcome and Quorum

Purpose - For Information

The new University Secretary and Registrar, Ian Blenkharn, was welcomed to the meeting. His appointment as Secretary to Council had been approved by Council by way of circulation.

This was the last meeting of Council for the Interim Head of Governance, Andrew Browning, before his departure at the end of April. He was thanked for his work as Secretary to Council.

Huw Ford, the student representative from Senate, was welcomed to the meeting as an observer.

7753.0 Declarations of Interest

Purpose - For Information

There were no declarations of interest other than Pam Chesters for item C2425 -31iii relating to the appointment of the next Chair of Council.

7754.0 Minutes of Previous Meeting - C24/25 - 24

Purpose - For Approval

The minutes of the meeting of Council which took place on 21 November 2024 were approved.

The minutes of the extra meeting of Council which took place on 12 December 2024 were approved.

7755.0 Actions and Matters Arising - C24/25 - 25

Purpose - For Noting

There were no outstanding actions other than resolving the ongoing problems with the action log.

Council noted that there were still issues with the action log on Decision Time. It was suggested that an alternative action log be created on an Excel Spreadsheet and for this to be used instead.

Action

Creation of Action Log

Action Description - That consideration be given to the creation of a new action log or how the existing one can be improved.

Due by - 24 Apr 2025 | Assigned to - Andrew Browning

7756.0 Institutional update - C24/25 - 26

Purpose - For Discussion

REPORTED

The following from the Institutional Update was highlighted:

- There had been significant progress made in making senior appointments including the Deputy Vice-Chancellor.
- There was acknowledgement of the recent achievements of Professor Turi King and Professor Sarah Hainsworth, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise).
- The University's finances were being carefully monitored in light of the particularly tough sector environment.
- The University wanted to place particular emphasis on EDI, showing that it was committed and taking it seriously. It was clear that staff and students were concerned by what was happening in the EDI space internationally. The University now had faith space provision on campus for five world religions; had been reaccredited as a University of Sanctuary; and had integrated physical accessibility into Chapter 1.
- The Education and Student Experience Equality Act Task & Finish Group (Disability) was working to lay the foundations for widespread adoption of inclusive approaches as standard. This would be a long-term project, but changes that could be made immediately were being investigated.
- The University was excited to work closely with the Students' Union in response to their Together We Shape Tomorrow (TWST) manifesto.
- Universities were still waiting for more information about the Lifelong Learning Entitlement, which would have a wide-ranging impact on education, funding, and how Universities advise students, especially as 25/26 applicants who were looking to defer entry to 2027 do not currently know what funding environment they are applying for.

- A number of agreements had been signed with international universities. The Vice-Chancellor would be taking part in a British Council visit to the University of Macau.
- There had been key successes in the research space, including several large research grants and significant staff awards. The Chief Scientific Advisor had attended the launch of the Institute for Digital Security and Behaviour (IDSB), remarking that she was impressed by the interdisciplinary nature of research at the University.
- There was an update on student application and acceptance numbers. UG applicants remained strong, but it may be necessary to substitute international PGT students with home undergraduate students, which would have an impact on finances. PGT deposits were down 26% and modelling was being done to assess the potential impact of this. The whole sector was struggling but the University was running extensive conversion activities.
- The Chapter 1 procurement strategy had been revised after comments; sustainability would be integrated into the R7 Accommodation project; work was being done to understand the drivers on the perceived pressure on space, including modelling of space usage, which would be integral to business cases (such as 3West); and UEB was discussing the need to balance investments and build foundations for the future.

DISCUSSION

Council strongly supported the University's move to becoming a leader as an inclusive organizational environment, especially as it was likely there would be challenges to inclusivity. It may be difficult to position students to deal with a world that is changing quickly, but it was important that Council support in this area was clear.

Council agreed that the challenges around student recruitment should not be downplayed just because the sector as a whole was having problems. The University needed to identify why it was performing less well than other institutions in the international environment.

The balance of staff and student working spaces was discussed and the importance of achieving the right balance for key university activities was emphasised by Council.

Scoping work was being done around parking on campus and the use of public transport. During the construction of R7 300 parking spaces would be lost. Currently it was cheaper to park a car on campus than get the bus. The Director of Sustainability was working with the Chief Operating Officer to identify solutions, but it was acknowledged this would not be easy.

The University confirmed that it was happy to accept Global Chairs from Top 200 QS World University Ranking institutions, as limiting this to Top 100 institutions would be too narrow, and Global Chairs from the Top 200 could still do world-class research with global impact.

Action

Chair of Council to pass Council's congratulations to the Head of the Department of Mathematical Sciences, who had been awarded the University's first Gold Athena SWAN Charter accreditation.

Due by - 1 May 2025 | Assigned to – Chair of Council

Action

The Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President (External Relations) were asked to work together to consider how the University's ongoing commitment to EDI should be communicated.

Due by - 1 May 2025 | Assigned to - Phil Taylor

7756.a Bath Riverside Innovation Quarter Placemaking Plan--C24/25 - 26i

Purpose - For Discussion

The Executive Director of Innovation, joined for this item.

REPORTED

The plan was at an early and formative stage and feedback from Council on the feasibility project and initial planning process was critical at this stage.

Work was now underway with BANES to consider an expanded geographic area beyond the original planning permission, which met the City's own wider needs for innovation and employment opportunity .

DISCUSSED

Council were advised that the space under consideration by the University would primarily be for teaching and research.

Significant investment from the University would be necessary, but it was also intended to raise grants and take advantage of philanthropic avenues. This would not be a campus, rather an innovation quarter in the city, anchored by the University, so financial impact would be lessened. There was a strong ethos that partnerships would be key and this would bring commercial benefits, particularly in relation to co-location.

External stakeholders seemed to be enthusiastic, which coupled with a trend for global organisations to headquarter themselves in the city, indicated that this could be progressed reasonably quickly. Given the challenges facing the region, there was also economic necessity, which would help build momentum.

Council stressed the need to think about the governance of this project now, as it needed to be well-equipped to make any decisions and assured that any proposals brought forward for approval were well founded .

A feasibility project was recommended, as Council wanted to know what had been learned from similar projects elsewhere, including the Vice Chancellor's prior experience in both Newcastle and

Bristol.

While other opportunities beyond the city of Bath existed, eg the iCAST facility in Swindon and at the Bristol and Bath Science Park, it was agreed that it was desirable to focus on pursuing North Quays option at the present time.

Action

The Vice-Chancellor was asked to ensure that sufficient governance approval processes were in place around the Bath Riverside Innovation Quarter and to review these in the first instance at Nominations Committee.

Due by - 1 May 2025 | Assigned to - Phil Taylor

7756.b Council KPI Update - C24/25 -26ii

Purpose - For Discussion

REPORTED

Council received the update on the Strategic Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). The paper provided an overview of the University's progress against the current strategic KPIs and proposed a set of principles to aid the development of new KPIs. Feedback was invited from Council on the principles and potential new KPIs put forward in the report.

DISCUSSION

Members noted their support for the proposal and were of the view that there should be alignment between the wider range of KPIs that UEB needed and those that were routinely reported to Council. It was felt that in the event Council felt it needed assurance on a matter that UEB did not want to track for its own purposes, then that of itself should stimulate debate in order to understand the thinking of both entities. It was suggested that links to the KPIs could be included against the reports included in the Institutional Update.

Council noted that the benchmarking numbers included in the 2030 targets for the new KPIs would need to be realistic. Assurance was provided that more work would be carried out before the KPIs were finalised to ensure that the numbers given against the targets were sensible.

While members noted the importance of demonstrating the University's successes in the rankings and on cited papers, some caution was advised when looking at mainstream measures of impact and quality. Reliance on these measures could lead to unintended consequences, such as by placing more emphasis on English-speaking journals or reinforcing barriers for early career researchers. It was agreed that this tension would need to be managed to ensure that the principles of the Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) were upheld.

Some tensions were present between different KPIs and the amount of investment required for these. Decisions would need to be made around the University's level of risk appetite and where it

would be willing to take more risks in the delivery of certain KPIs.

Council queried the timeline for introducing the new KPIs and whether it was UEBs intention that the new strategic plan would need to be agreed first. While there was no need to wait for the new strategy to be developed before the KPIs could be progressed, more work would be carried out to strengthen the KPIs based on the feedback given by Council and to ensure that the numbers included in the targets were robust. The amended KPIs would then be resubmitted to Council and UEB for further feedback.

Council expressed interest in understanding how UEB planned to utilize the agreed KPIs to drive the strategy forward.

7757.0 Faculty Spotlight (H&SS) - C24/25 - 27

Purpose - For Noting

Reported

Council noted the Faculty Spotlight paper from H&SS.

Discussion

Discussion covered the following areas:

- Performance of individual departments. It was confirmed that the faculty used to be seen as 6 very different departments and there was now the desire to look at how the faculty could add value across the departments. Departments brought a disparate set of contributions, with different cultural and financial perspectives, which should be recognised to work towards a collective ambition.
- Sharing of best practice, both across the faculty and University-wide. Departments needed to understand their relative contribution across the faculty to help benchmark and develop departmental strategies. An informal HoDs update group allowed for information sharing, communication and support between departments. There was a desire to share best practice more widely, across the University.
- Diversity of the departments and the potential tensions from differing objectives. Financial contributions and student: staff ratios (SSRs) differed across departments. Metrics for other departments were now shared with HoDs which enabled conversations and recognition of each department's strengths, which helped to reduce tensions. Council noted that after careful analysis, the faculty had recently taken some difficult decisions on a number of course closures.
- One of the Faculty's priorities was to focus on Health and Wellbeing research. A conversation had taken place with the R&D team at the RUH. A considerable number of initiatives had been happening across both institutions without these being pulled together into a coherent whole. The challenge was in how this collaboration could work best.

Consideration was being made to a dual approach of a senior health and wellbeing academic lead and health management support. Conversations on this were ongoing, but things were moving in a positive direction.

- Interdependencies with other University departments and the need for support with international recruitment, which underpins financial stability. The New PVC Global would be instrumental in creating better links and increasing the University's visibility internationally.

7758.a Finance Committee - C24/25 -28i

Purpose - For Decision

REPORTED

The report from the Finance Committee meeting on 27th January 2025 was received. Approval was sought for the R7 Accommodation Outline Business Case and the proposed Student Rents for 2025/2026. Updates were provided on various discussions at the meeting, such as regarding the financial sustainability of education and a possible business case for Lewis House.

It was explained that while the sum requested within the R7 Accommodation Outline Business Case was within Finance Committee's delegated authority, it was part of a larger project worth £149,920k and so Council's approval had been sought.

DISCUSSION

Council queried Finance Committee's discussions around the various options for funding the R7 accommodation project. The Committee had discussed whether the University should fund the accommodation itself or leverage external investment. The self-funding option was agreed to be preferable as it would give the University more control. Retaining flexibility, particularly of developments on campus, would be important and the University could still look to make changes to how the accommodation was funded in the future.

Approving the proposed R7 Accommodation Outline Business Case would enable the project to progress to an advanced stage of the design route. Assurance was provided that Council had discussed the project previously and it had been included in the financial plan. It was recognised however that in approving this further expenditure the University was effectively committing itself to the principle of the development (subject to the work continuing to progress as anticipated and in line with previous budgetary estimates, and the necessary further financial approvals)

Members noted the challenges in ensuring effective governance oversight of the different actions taken across the University to improve the financial sustainability of education through the closure of courses. Ensuring effective governance would help Council members to assess what had been achieved already and the reasons behind actions taken. This was noted to be further complicated by the delay that usually occurred between when a decision was taken to close a course and when the course could be closed because of the necessity to teach out on prior commitments given to students.

With respect to student rents, the student governors noted the points that they had made at the finance committee and reminded Council of the cost of living pressures that students were currently experiencing.

Decision

Council approved the following:

- R7 Accommodation Outline Business Case
- Student Rents Proposal 2025/26.

7758.b Presentation - Financial Plan Refresh - 28ii

Purpose - For Noting

Reported

The Director of Finance gave a presentation outlining the current financial position of the University and its financial plan. In his presentation he highlighted the following:-

- The financial position of the University is positive; however, there is a need to increase its surplus levels in order to support investment in capital expenditure.
- The 2024 five-year plan aims to achieve a 5% surplus target to generate the level of cash that the University needs.
- The improvement in surplus is expected to come from improved contribution from the faculties, slower growth in central costs, additional income from the Institutes and commercial activities.

The Director of Finance also highlighted where savings had already been made/in progress as well as future plans.

Discussion

Council noted that there was no mention of Bath Quays North in the plans for future capital investment. The Director of Finance confirmed that new funding would have to be found for this or monies diverted from elsewhere.

Council asked whether work on resilience of the plans had been completed. The Director of Finance said that the planning process included a sensitivity analysis.

Council said that when it came to the planning process it was necessary for it to be clearly defined where savings were to be made. It also asked that it should be given the information to enable it to track these savings as well.

7759.0 Audit and Risk - C24/25 - 29

Purpose - For Noting

Tim Ford, Chair of ARAC, presented the ARAC report.

Reported

The first ARAC Away Day had taken place, with a lot of discussion around risk management, risk appetite, and linking risk to strategy, which would be built upon at the upcoming Council Development Day.

There was an update on the review of the external auditors.

7760.0 Remuneration Committee - C24/25 - 30

Purpose - For Approval

Reported

This paper was withdrawn.

7761.a Governance Framework Review Project Board Update - C24/25 - 31i

Purpose - For Discussion

Reported

An update on the work of the Governance Framework Review Project Board was given to Council. Council had also been provided with the draft statutes and ordinances. The Chair of Council requested that contributions at the meeting should be restricted to any points of principle and that Council members should communicate any suggestions as to minor amendments to the Interim Head of Governance by 28 February 2025. These would then be considered for incorporation ahead of the draft statutes and ordinances being sent to Senate for its consideration. Once Senate had considered these then Council could then approve the final version of the Statutes and Ordinances ahead of them being sent to the Privy Council for final approval.

Council asked whether there was any conflict between the powers of the Vice-Chancellor as described in the Statutes and wider statutory duties placed on the University. The Interim Head of Governance said that he did not believe that there was a conflict and that statutory and regulatory provisions provided constraints on the Vice-Chancellor exercising his powers rather than

conflicting with them. It was normal practice in the sector for these powers to be set out in the Statutes.

No other points of principle were raised

Action

Comments on Statutes and Ordinance

Action Description - That Council members provide comments on the statutes and ordinances by 28 February.

| Action Completed Date – 28 February 2025 | Assigned to - Andrew Browning

7761.b Elections Framework - C24/25 - 31ii

Purpose - For Discussion

Council noted the draft Elections and Appointments framework. No points of principle were raised. The Chair of Council asked for any points of detail/ clarification to be directed to the Interim Head of Governance by “8th February 2025

Action

Comments on Elections Framework

Action Description - That Council members provide comments on the elections framework by 28 February.

| Action Completed Date – 28 February 2025 | Assigned to - Andrew Browning

7761.c Chair Recruitment Update - C24/25 - 31iii

The Chair of Council handed the chair to Tim Ford and left the room for this item.

Purpose - For Discussion

Council noted the update and progress report on the appointment of a new Chair of Council.

7762.0 Workforce Report - C24/25 - 32

Purpose - For Noting

Reported

The Workforce Report was received, which provided an overview of the operational casework load within the workforce. The University was aiming to delve deeper into its culture and to encourage staff to take more accountability for it. The ways in which complaints and issues were dealt with were reported to have a significant impact on culture.

Discussion

Council discussed whether underperformance was being actively managed and the potential for the capability gap to be addressed in the short term. There was noted to be variation in how these issues were addressed across the University. While some managers already recognised and dealt with poor performance, other managers were more accepting of it or less confident in dealing with it effectively and this was increasingly being challenged. The importance of treating all staff consistently and fairly was recognised.

The connection between workforce performance and business performance was noted. Improving workforce performance would be an important lever in accelerating business achievements.

The benefits of improving colleagues' understanding of the University's wider goals and the areas they could focus on to help achieve these were noted. There had already been a positive step-change in how goals were being communicated.

7763.0 Sustainability Update CAF - C24/25 - 33

Purpose - For Discussion

The Director of Sustainability, joined for this item.

Reported

Work was being done with UEB to model scenarios to address Scope 1 and 2 emission reduction. In all scenarios the University would need to offset carbon. The University was considering how best to revise the 2030 targets given the clear downsides of carbon offsetting.

The University wanted to tap into the academic expertise resident here in this area.

Discussion

Council agreed that it welcomed the reality check and the sensible plan for achieving targets, and supported the idea of tapping into knowledge at the University.

Although Council had agreed the 2030 targets it would not have been possible to foresee all the issues that had impeded progress.

It was recognised that while this could be a difficult message to communicate, it also an opportunity for the University to be open in engaging on this topic, and sharing expertise on this common dilemma could actually attract potential students.

Tab 13 of the UN sustainable development goal in the Research Portal showed some of the current expertise on campus that could be mobilised.

Council welcomed the intention of the Director of Sustainability to return at a future date with more fully worked up options and plans.

7764.0 Senate Update - C24/25 - 34

Purpose - For Noting

Council noted the report of the last meeting of Senate which took place on 29 January 2025.

7765.0 PGR Independent Advisor Report - USDC Response - C24/25 - 35

Purpose - For Noting

Reported

Council noted the PGR Independent Advisors report and the USDC Response.

Discussion

It was acknowledged that the papers had been discussed at Senate as well as at Leadership Forum where Dr Emma Denham, Independent Advisor, and Professor Joe Devine, Chair of UDSC, presented the findings. Senate members of Council present at today's meeting were happy to provide assurance to Council that the issues were being appropriately addressed.

7766.0 Student Appeals - C24/25 - 36

Purpose - For Noting

Reported

The Interim Head of Governance presented the annual report of student appeals for academic year 2023/2024. He told Council that the number of appeals overall had gone down slightly; however; the number of disciplinary appeals had increased by a small amount. The external review of the student disciplinary process reported in the paper as being currently carried out had

just been completed and shared with its findings being considered.

Council noted the report.

7767.0 Intellectual Property Policy - Approval of changes to Ordinances - C2425 - 37

Purpose - For Decision

Reported

Council were being asked to approve changes to Ordinance 22.7 and 22.8 relating to Intellectual Property. These changes had been recommended to Council by Senate.

The Interim Head of Governance said that it was the intention that the majority of the provisions relating to Intellectual Property would be moved out of ordinances and into policy.

Decision

Council approved the changes to Ordinances 22.7 and 22.8 as set out in appendix 2 relating to intellectual property.

7768.0 Research Income - C24/25 - 38

Purpose - For Discussion

REPORTED

The paper on the Research Income Key Performance Indicator (KPI) was received. It was reported that the University was intending to shift its focus from growing research income towards £75 million, to maintaining research income at 18-22% of turnover per year and increasing cost recovery of research. As this would require a deviation from the agreed Council KPIs, approval was sought for this deviation to take place.

DISCUSSION

Council expressed support for the shift in focus. It was asked how the University would be able to forecast future research recovery rates. It was explained that work was taking place within Research & Innovation Services (RIS) to look at forecasting research recovery from grants. There was also a need to consider how the amount of time that academics would spend on research is assessed and whether this needed to be changed.

Council noted that maintaining research income at 18-22% of turnover per year was a relatively

broad range, and advised that this would need to be revisited if there were significant changes to the University's income or turnover. Staying within this range was expected to be manageable and would allow the University to remain within the definition of a research intensive university. The range could be tightened or amended as necessary in the future.

Decision

Council approved the proposal for a deviation from the agreed metrics included in the Council's KPI on Research Income, to enable the University to focus on maintaining research income at 18-22% of turnover per year and increasing cost recovery of research.

7769.0 Equality Diversity & Inclusion Committee - C24/25 - 39

Purpose - For Noting

The summary of the meeting of EDIC held on 6 February 2025 was noted by the Committee.

7770.0 Nominations Committee - C24/25 - 40

Purpose - For Noting

Council noted the report of the meeting of Nominations Committee which took place on 23 January 2025.

Decision

Council approved the appointment of the Deputy Vice Chancellor to Council with effect from 1st May 2025.

Council agreed to extend the term of office of Maria Bond to 31st July 2026 and to extend the term of office of Dot Griffiths to 31st July 2028.

7771.0 Decisions taken by circulation since last meeting - C2425 - 41

Purpose - For Noting

Council noted the decisions taken by circulation since its last meeting. These related to approval of :

The appointments of:-

- i) the Deputy Vice Chancellor;
- ii) the Pro Vice Chancellor (Global);
- iii) Secretary to Council;
- iv) candidates to fill vacancies on Court.

7772.0 Programme of Meetings for 2024/25 - C24/25 - 42

Purpose - For Noting

Minute

Council noted the programme of meetings for 2024/2025.

The next meeting with Council members would be the Development Day on 12 March 2025. The next full meeting of Council would be on 1 May 2025.

7774.0 Dean of Management - Renewal of Term - R1

Purpose - For Decision

Minute

Council approved the renewal of the Professor Steve Brammer as Dean of the School of Management for a further five years.

Attendees

Members Attended

Jimena Alamo
Maria Bond
Teslim Bukoye (*arrived item 7757*)
Pamela Chesters – Chair
Kate Ehrig-Page
Timothy Ford
Sabina Gheduzzi
Alun Griffiths
Dot Griffiths
Tim Hollingsworth
Don McLaverty
Calum Mercer – Treasurer
David Moon (*left at item 7757*)
Jo Rhoden
Paul Shepherd

Anthony Smith
Amber Snary
Phil Taylor – Vice-Chancellor

In Attendance

Ghazwa Alwani-Starr – Chief Operating Officer
Richard Brooks – Director of Human Resources (*Item 7762 only*)
Ian Blenkarn – University Secretary & Registrar (*Secretary to Council*)
Andrew Browning – Interim Head of Governance
Sarah Hainsworth – PVC (Research & Enterprise) (*Item 7738 only*)
Jon Hunt, Executive Director of Innovation (*Item 7756 only*)
Richard Jackson – Director of Sustainability (*Item 7763 only*)
Cassie Wilson – PVC (Student Experience)(*Left at item 7765*)
Martin Williams – Director of Finance

Apologies

Julian Chaudhuri – PVC (Education & Global)

One item of business has been redacted in line with the framework for the publication of Council minutes, either because they pertain to individuals or because they contain matters which are commercially sensitive.
