Council

Thursday, 30th April 2026 9:30 am

Council Chamber | Council

Attendees

Members Attended

Maria Bond

Sharon Flood, Chair

Sabina Gheduzzi

Alun Griffiths

Dot Griffiths

Don McLaverty

Calum Mercer

Marcus Munafo

Benjamin Orford Thompson

Esther Reeves

Jo Rhoden

Paul Shepherd

Helen Slater

Anthony Smith

Phil Taylor

In attendance

Ghazwa Alwani-Starr, Chief Operating Officer

Richard Brooks, Director of HR

Ian Blenkharn, University Secretary and Registrar – *Secretary to Council*

Andrew Bidwell, Risk and Compliance Manager *(For Item 7925 Institutional Risk Report Quarterly Update)*

Emma Carmel, PVC (Research)

Julian Chaudhuri, PVC (Education) *(left after item 7928)*

Gavin Edwards, Chief Digital Officer *(For Item 7921 DDaT Annual Update Report)*

Corinne Evans, Executive Director (External Relations)

Angus Gueterbock, Students' Union Sport Office *(Observer)*

Richard Jackson, Director of Sustainability & Space Management *(For Items 7923 Energy Strategy & Decarbonisation Plan and 7924 Sustainability Annual Report)*

Clare Stevenson, Director of Legal, Governance & Compliance and Deputy University Secretary

Cassie Wilson, PVC (Student Experience & Sport)

Deborah Wilson, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences *(For Item 7920 Faculty Spotlight – Humanities & Social Sciences)*

Martin Williams, Director of Finance

Jun Zang, Senate Member *(Observer)*

Secretariat

Elisabeth Day, Head of Governance

Harrison Pow-Jones, Governance Administrator

Apologies

Manuel Barcia, PVC (Global Engagement)

7911.0 Welcome and Quorum

Purpose - For Information

REPORTED

The Chair welcomed members and attendees and made a formal note of attendance to ensure that quorum was maintained throughout the meeting.

A particular welcome was made to Jun Zang, member of Senate and Angus Guerterbock, SU Officer who were observing today's meeting.

Apologies had been received from Manuel Barcia.

7912.0 Declarations of Interest

Purpose - For Information

REPORTED

No declarations of interest were declared.

7913.0 Minutes of Previous Meeting - C25/26 - 57

Purpose - For Approval

DECISION

Council approved the minutes of the previous meeting of Council held on 19 February 2026, subject to the following amends:

Item 7880 Actions and Matters Arising

7857: An update was given on one outstanding action relating to the strategic oversight, assurance, and decision-making to support Bath Riverside Innovation District (including Lewis House and Bath Quays North). The Infrastructure Working Group (IWG) had engaged with the Chief Operating Officer (COO) regarding the potential for early oversight and work was underway to ensure the group was working effectively. Action closed.

Item 7884 ARAC

ARAC remained concerned that the University was operating at a low level of digital maturity, with low levels of investment compared with the sector. ARAC recommended that Council should hold a deep dive discussion on Digital at the next available opportunity and suggested that this should also consider the University's workforce transformation activity given the close interdependencies.

ACTION

Deep dive discussion on Digital

Action Description - ARAC recommended that Council should hold a deep dive discussion on Digital at the next available opportunity and suggested that this should also consider the University's workforce transformation activity given the close interdependencies.

7914.0 Actions and Matters Arising - C25/26 - 58

Purpose - For Noting

REPORTED

Council **noted** the action log since its last meeting on 19 February 2026.

7860C - Action complete. A teach-in session had been received on the design of R7 on 29 April 2026.

7889 - Action complete. The institutional response had been sent by Council to the Academic Assembly on 26 February 2026.

7889 - Action complete. Respective items included on agendas for People & Culture Committee and Finance Committee.

7915.0 Safety Leadership & Culture - Verbal Update

Purpose - For Discussion

REPORTED

The Director of Human Resources (HR) provided a brief overview of the University's approach to safety leadership and culture, including both physical safety and psychological safety, and outlined the increasing regulatory and sector focus in this area.

Work underway to strengthen safety leadership within laboratories and other high-risk environments was outlined. This included clearer ownership by principal investigators, bespoke training, improved clarity of responsibility for maintaining safe working environments, and additional operational support from the Chief Operating Officer. These measures were intended to address systemic issues, prevent deterioration over time, and support more consistent practice.

An update was provided on physical safety arrangements, including prioritisation of fire safety capacity and increased health and safety resource. Physical safety was described as a relatively mature area, with well-established operational processes.

The discussion also covered psychological safety and work-related stress, reflecting growing regulatory attention and recent enforcement action at peer institutions. Activity in this area was being taken forward through the People and Culture Committee, with a focus on health, wellbeing and workload. Indicators supporting this work included staff surveys, workload management processes, dignity and respect reporting, and sickness absence data.

It was confirmed that postgraduate researchers and postdoctoral staff were included within the scope of this work and recognised as employees for health and safety purposes. The approach emphasised not only responding to issues but creating psychologically safe environments through leadership, culture and proactive use of data.

DISCUSSED

Discussion covered the following points:

- Early identification and intervention where stress or safety risks emerged, and the importance of having systems in place to support this.

- The link between strong safety culture and research quality and integrity, noting that rigorous safety leadership underpinned responsible and high-quality research.

- The need to set the right institutional tone, particularly in the context of financial pressures, recognising that under-investment in safety could increase risk.

- The growing complexity of risks associated with international activity and off-campus research environments, and the need to consider both physical and psychological safety in those contexts.

- The distinction between appropriate challenge and harmful pressure, and the importance of judgement in managing expectations for staff and students.

Council noted that the discussion itself contributed positively to reinforcing safety leadership and culture across the institution.

7916.0 Vice-Chancellor Institutional update - C25/26 - 59

Purpose - For Discussion

REPORTED

The Vice-Chancellor (VC) provided a strategic overview of key institutional developments, emerging opportunities and risks, and matters requiring Council awareness or reflection.

An update was provided on senior appointments. The VC advised that the Chief Operating Officer appointment was close to completion, with an announcement expected shortly. Interviews for the Dean of Engineering & Design role were due to take place, shortlisting for Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) had concluded, and longlisting was underway for an interim Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education). The VC thanked colleagues involved in these processes and expressed confidence in the outcomes.

The update highlighted a number of strategic matters, including the ongoing conflict in the Middle East and the steps being taken to support affected staff and students, both current and prospective. Attention was also being given to potential impacts on energy costs and the University's ability to mitigate these pressures. Council noted confirmation that local planning permission for the R7 development had been secured. The VC also drew attention to the recent Office for Students case involving the University of Sussex, encouraging reflection on its implications for the regulatory environment.

Further updates included the forthcoming retirement of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education), positive movement in QS subject rankings with seven subjects now in the global top 100, and recent engagement through the One Young World forum. The University's 60th anniversary programme was progressing, including recent and forthcoming Adelard Lectures and a staff, friends and family event planned for the end of May.

An overview of student recruitment was provided. Undergraduate applications from home and overseas markets remained healthy at this stage, with conversion identified as the key focus. Postgraduate applications were down significantly, particularly from overseas markets, and mitigating activity was underway. The launch of a new Foundation pathway with Study Group was noted, with encouraging early numbers.

International engagement was also highlighted. The VC and the Director of the International Relations Office had attended the General Assembly of the Young European Research Universities Network (YERUN), hosted by the University of South-Eastern Norway in March. This was the VC's first opportunity to meet with peers within the network since the University joined YERUN and to explore potential collaboration with selected member institutions. Reference was also made to a recent visit to China involving institutional meetings, recruitment activity, alumni engagement and media activity.

DISCUSSED

Discussion of the update covered the following points:

- Council discussion of application data relative to sector trends and competitors, noting that while growth remained strong, there was evidence that some institutions were accelerating more quickly. The importance of monitoring market share and maintaining competitive position was emphasised, and Council welcomed continued updates.

- Consideration of the increasing focus on defence-related research and education funding, including possible membership of a defence alliance. Council noted that no decision had yet been taken and emphasised the importance of robust processes for risk assessment, due diligence and regulatory compliance in this area.

- Recognition of the need for continued oversight of institutional risk in a changing external environment, including geopolitical uncertainty, regulatory challenge and financial pressures.

7917.0 Global Voice and Reputation Project - Presentation

Purpose - For Discussion

REPORTED

The Executive Director (External Relations) introduced the Global Voice and Reputation Project, supported by a presentation from Mammoth.

The presentation set out the journey to date, noting that the work had been developed in parallel with the University's emerging strategy and informed by extensive research, testing and consultation with staff, students and alumni. The project sought to address gaps between the University's strong domestic profile and its international awareness and consideration, and to respond to feedback that the current brand expression was partial and fragmented and did not consistently reflect the breadth of the University's strengths or ambition.

The proposed brand drivers and themes were described as reflecting both the University's current strengths and future aspirations, including research, student experience and graduate outcomes. Testing had informed refinements to language, tone and visual expression, with particular attention to inclusivity, accessibility and digital effectiveness.

The proposed brand expression, "University of Bath. We Make Futures.", was presented as a succinct and active statement intended to provide a consistent creative and narrative anchor across communications, design and engagement activity. The evolution of the gorgon logo and the development of a refreshed visual identity system were outlined, emphasising continuity with the University's heritage alongside improved performance in modern digital contexts.

Next steps were outlined, including finalisation of brand guidelines, further development of visual assets and photography, and continued alignment with the University strategy ahead of a planned launch later in the year.

DISCUSSED

Discussion of the presentation covered the following points:

- Strong appreciation for the quality and clarity of the proposed direction and the evidence-based and collaborative approach taken.

- Clarification that the refreshed brand would be adopted consistently across the University, with Schools and Faculties engaged in the process.

- Discussion of how themes such as excellence were reflected within the broader narrative, and the importance of ensuring that ambition and quality remained clear across different audiences.

- Interest in the evolution of the visual identity, including the balance between heritage and modernity.

Council welcomed the work to date and noted the scale of activity required ahead of implementation. Members were invited to review the materials and provide comments to the Executive Director (External Relations).

7918.0 Consideration of First Draft of New Strategy - C25/26 - 60

Purpose - For Discussion

REPORTED

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) introduced the first full draft of the University Strategy 2026-36 for Council discussion.

The draft was presented as an initial articulation of the University's strategic direction for the next decade, structured around the University's current position, future ambition, and the approach to delivery. The draft strategy's overall ambition and its four strategic pillars were outlined. The DVC emphasised that this represented a first complete draft, ahead of further refinement, including alignment with emerging brand work and supporting communications.

Council was invited to comment on any material omissions, inconsistencies or areas requiring clarification. Next steps included further iteration based on feedback, review by the University Executive Board in June, and submission to Council for approval in July 2026.

DISCUSSED

Discussion of the draft strategy covered the following points:

- Strong support for the overall direction, tone and ambition, alongside suggestions for refinements to wording to better reflect discovery, growth and existing international reach.

- Recognition that the strategy adopted a higher-level and more narrative approach than previous strategies, with supporting communications expected to play a key role in embedding understanding across the University community.

- The importance of coherence between the strategy and emerging Global Voice and Reputation work, noting that further alignment of language and framing would be required.

- Discussion of how the strategy would guide prioritisation and decision-making over time, including the interaction between institutional direction and faculty-, school- and portfolio-level delivery plans.

- Interest in how Council would engage with the next phase of development, including visibility of the planned roadmap for refinement, delivery planning and oversight through the coming year.

- Reflection on the cultural shift required to support strategy-led decision-making, including leadership role-modelling and empowering colleagues to act within a clear strategic framework.

Council welcomed the opportunity to consider the draft and encouraged continued dialogue as the strategy developed.

7919.0 Integrated Performance Monitoring - C25/26 - 61

Purpose - For Discussion

REPORTED

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) introduced the Integrated Performance Monitoring (IPM) report and outlined progress to date.

Council was reminded that Integrated Performance Monitoring sat beneath the emerging University Strategy and the five-year planning framework and had been considered recently by the University Executive Board (UEB). The framework brought together a significant volume of performance information, with an overlay of key themes identifying areas of progress, emerging risk and where intervention might be required. The intention was to embed IPM as a core management and assurance tool, supporting more focused discussion of performance and risk at executive and governance levels.

It was noted that work was ongoing to create the time and conditions within governance structures, including UEB, to use Integrated Performance Monitoring effectively and to shift from reporting to action-focused discussion. Council was invited to provide feedback on progress and on how confidently members felt IPM could provide assurance that the University was delivering its strategy and managing its risks.

DISCUSSED

Discussion of Integrated Performance Monitoring covered the following points:

- Recognition that IPM represented the start of a journey rather than a finished product, with broad support for the overall approach and its potential value as a strategic management and assurance tool.

- The importance of accessibility and clarity, including the need to avoid reliance on colour-based indicators without explanation, and to ensure transparency around how RAG ratings were determined.

- The need to sharpen focus on what mattered most for Council and UEB, including clearer identification of lead indicators, milestones, emerging risks and the actions being taken in response.

- Discussion of the balance between comprehensiveness and usability, noting that IPM would only be effective if actively used by UEB as a management tool rather than solely as a reporting mechanism.

- Consideration of how performance relating to belonging, access and student success was presented, including the importance of contextual narrative alongside headline metrics.

- Clarification of governance arrangements, including how IPM would cycle through UEB, Finance Committee and Council, and the frequency with which Council would receive assurance updates.

- Recognition of the significant progress made to date and the importance of continuing to communicate and embed the framework across the institution.

The Chair noted broad support for the direction of travel and the value of continuing to refine and embed Integrated Performance Monitoring as a core element of strategy delivery and risk oversight.

7920.0 Faculty Spotlight Humanities & Social Sciences - C25/26 - 62

Purpose - For Discussion

REPORTED

The Dean of the Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences (HSS) introduced the Faculty Spotlight and provided an overview of the Faculty's current position, opportunities and challenges.

The update highlighted recent performance and achievements across education, research and culture, emphasising the Faculty's approach to working collectively across a diverse set of disciplines. The Dean reflected that the Faculty's success was increasingly more than the sum of its individual departments, supported by deliberate investment in Faculty-level culture, collaboration and leadership.

Key areas of focus included continued improvement in subject rankings, progress on equality, diversity and inclusion initiatives, and strong performance against research income targets. It was noted that a minor correction would be made to the paper to clarify that almost all, rather than all, HSS subjects had improved their QS rankings.

The Dean also highlighted strategic priorities looking forward, including education portfolio review, addressing challenges in postgraduate taught recruitment, diversification of delivery models (including transnational and online provision), and the development of shared approaches to space, including the emerging '3 West' co-location project involving multiple Faculties.

DISCUSSED

Discussion of the Faculty Spotlight covered the following points:

- Appreciation for the Faculty's direction of travel and the clarity of its ambition, alongside recognition of the challenging external environment for HSS.

- From a Council perspective, the importance of clearer alignment between Faculty reporting and the University strategy, including greater use of consistent metrics, benchmarks and dashboards to enable comparison over time and across Faculties.

- Interest in how Faculty-level performance against priorities such as equality, student employability and postgraduate recruitment could be more explicitly positioned relative to expectations, targets or sector benchmarks.

- Discussion of the balance between Faculty autonomy and institutional agility, including opportunities to support more flexible decision-making and resource use across departments in pursuit of shared strategic objectives.

- Recognition of good practice within the Faculty, including approaches to culture and staff engagement, and discussion of how such practice might be shared more widely across the University.

Council welcomed the update and noted the value of Faculty Spotlights, while suggesting that future reports would benefit from greater consistency of format and clearer linkage to University-level strategic priorities and performance indicators.

ACTION

Faculty Spotlight Format

Action Description - The Deputy Vice-Chancellor, working with Faculty Deans and the Head of Governance to develop a standardised Faculty Spotlight format, including a dashboard of core performance measures, to support consistent Council-level assurance and reduce reliance on descriptive narrative.

Action Status – Not started | Due by – 15 October 2026 | Assigned to – Marcus Munafo

7921.0 DDaT Annual Update Report - C25/26 - 63

Purpose - For Discussion

REPORTED

The Chief Digital Officer introduced the annual update on Digital, Data and Technology (DDaT), outlining progress achieved over the past year and the proposed direction of digital activity for the period ahead.

The update described 2025/26 as a foundational year for DDaT, focused on establishing leadership, strengthening functional capability, and putting in place the core conditions required for sustainable digital delivery. Emphasis had been placed on addressing long-standing structural and capability gaps and on improving the resilience and security of the University's digital environment.

Significant progress had been made in strengthening digital foundations, including improvements in cyber security, information governance, core infrastructure and enabling platforms. These underpinning investments were intended to stabilise services, reduce institutional risk and provide a robust basis for future transformation, rather than to deliver immediate user-facing change.

Looking ahead, the Chief Digital Officer highlighted clear priorities for the coming period, including education infrastructure, customer relationship management and the continued delivery of the Digital Foundations portfolio. It was noted that the University was at an important point in its digital maturity journey, with growing ambition and opportunity but also substantial demands on capacity, capability and resources.

DISCUSSED

Discussion of the update covered the following points:

- Concern about digital resourcing, capability and reward, including the competitiveness of pay levels relative to both the higher education sector and wider digital labour market, and the reliance on short-term contractor support.

- Recognition of a potential mismatch between the level of digital ambition set out in the strategy and the resources currently available to deliver it, with emphasis on the need to address both capacity and capability.

- Discussion of the balance between business-as-usual services and delivery of major transformation programmes, including the need for clearer assurance that BAU performance was being sustained alongside large projects.

- Consideration of digital risk governance, including visibility of major projects and interdependencies, the management of delivery risk, and how assurance was provided to Council and its Committees.

- Discussion of cyber security maturity, noting significant improvements over the past year, including enhanced detection and recovery capability and progress towards ISO 27001 certification, while recognising that cyber remained an area of minimal risk appetite requiring sustained focus.

- Clarification that cyber security represented a subset of wider digital maturity, and that further work was required to uplift digital infrastructure, user experience and organisational capability more broadly.

Council recognised the progress made to date and the scale of the challenge ahead, and welcomed continued engagement as digital capability, governance and assurance arrangements continued to mature.

7922.0 Annual Advancement Office Update - C25/26 - 64

Purpose - For Noting

REPORTED

Council noted the Annual Advancement Office Update and requested that positive feedback be conveyed to the Advancement Office.

ACTION

Advancement Office Communication

Action Description – The Head of Governance would write to the Advancement Office team to feedback on the annual update.

Action Status – Not started | Due by – 9 July 2026 | Assigned to – Elisabeth Day

7923.0 Energy Strategy & Decarbonisation Plan - C25/26 - 65

Purpose - For Discussion

REPORTED

The Director of Sustainability and Space Management introduced the Energy Strategy and Decarbonisation Plan (ESDP), setting out the University's proposed approach to managing and decarbonising its energy use over the next 5-15 years.

The Plan replaced the previous building-by-building decarbonisation approach with a more resilient, clustered model, designed to reflect the scale and configuration of the campus and its existing heat and power networks. The ESDP identified a phased pipeline of priority projects, indicative capital costs, potential impacts on operating expenditure, and options for funding and delivery. Internal and external financing models had been explored, alongside options for risk sharing and retained ownership.

Development of the ESDP had involved significant engagement across the University, including Campus Infrastructure, academic stakeholders and alignment with the emerging Estates Strategy. The Director noted that further work would be required to refine project sequencing and align fully with the wider estates programme as it developed later in the year.

DISCUSSED

Council discussed the implications of operating cost increases associated with the Plan and emphasised the importance of presenting a balanced narrative that recognised both cost pressures and the efficiency and resilience benefits of decarbonisation. Members highlighted the need to avoid leaving the impression that the transition was unaffordable and noted the importance of continued work to align the ESDP with the wider Estates Strategy.

Council **noted** the Energy Strategy and Decarbonisation Plan.

7924.0 Sustainability Annual Report - C25/26 - 66

Purpose - For Approval

REPORTED

Council received the Sustainability Annual Report for 2025/26, which summarised the University's progress against its sustainability commitments over the past year.

Key points highlighted included the move to a digital-first reporting format, developed in collaboration with the External Relations team, with the aim of increasing accessibility and engagement. The report noted the University's position in the QS World Sustainability Rankings, reductions in reported carbon footprint alongside transparent explanation of the impact of changes to carbon conversion factors, progress on a new Travel Plan, and growing engagement with sustainability initiatives across departments.

It was noted that the Annual Sustainability Report had been considered by the Sustainability Steering Group, the University Executive Board, and Finance Committee. A further Sustainability Plan would be brought forward later in the year to set out future priorities and targets.

Council discussed matters of assurance, including the methodologies used to calculate and report sustainability metrics, internal verification processes, and the potential role of external assurance in due course. It was noted that national methodologies were used, and that sustainability reporting was subject to internal review, including engagement with Internal Audit.

Council **approved** the publication of the Sustainability Annual Report.

7925.0 Institutional Risk Report Quarterly Update - C25/26 - 67

Purpose - For Discussion

REPORTED

The Risk & Compliance Manager introduced the quarterly update to the Institutional Risk Register (IRR) and provided an overview of recent developments in the University's risk management approach.

Council noted that the IRR had been considered by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) in the preceding week and that the paper had not yet been updated to reflect that discussion. Work was underway to improve the clarity, usability and effectiveness of the register, including clearer ownership of each institutional risk at UEB level and stronger alignment with the University's strategic objectives.

The Risk & Compliance Manager outlined how activity on risk was being taken forward alongside the governance review, including consideration of the future structure of risk oversight and architecture. This included work to clarify the relationship between the Institutional Risk Register and tier-2 and sub-registers, and to reduce duplication and over-complexity.

It was reported that proposals were being developed to strengthen executive-level engagement with risk, including the introduction of more structured and dedicated discussion of risk at UEB, effectively operating as an executive risk management forum. This was intended to improve escalation, prioritisation and collective ownership of risk, and to support more consistent integration of risk into decision-making and performance discussions.

Further developments included plans to integrate risk management more closely with Integrated Performance Monitoring, revisit research-related risks, and progress implementation of risk management software, supported by a business case for additional resource.

DISCUSSED

Discussion of the quarterly update covered the following points:

- The need for the Institutional Risk Register to be clearer, more concise and decision-ready, with reduced narrative and explicit, time-bound mitigating actions.

- The importance of clear accountability and ownership of risks at executive level, and of ensuring that risk registers cascaded appropriately across the institution.

- Concern about delays in implementing risk management software and the risks associated with continued reliance on spreadsheet-based registers.

- Support for the direction of travel set out through the governance review, including clearer executive ownership of risk and more effective escalation and assurance routes.

- Clarification of the relationship between risk appetite and individual risks, including the importance of consistent understanding and application, particularly in relation to international activity.

Council welcomed the direction of travel and emphasised the importance of visible progress and improved assurance at future updates.

Council **noted** the update provided by ARAC and the ongoing work to strengthen risk governance and management arrangements and looked forward to receiving further updates as proposals under the governance review were developed and implemented.

7926.0 Independent Insight: PGR Experience (Advisor Report & UDSC Response) - C25/25 - 68

Purpose - For Discussion

REPORTED

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience & Sport) introduced the Annual Report from the Independent Advisors (IAs) on postgraduate research experience, together with the response from the University Doctoral Studies Committee (UDSC).

Council was reminded that the Independent Advisor role provided an important mechanism for surfacing concerns relating to postgraduate research supervision and experience. While most doctoral supervision across the University was reported to be of a high standard, including positive evidence from PGR survey data, the report highlighted recurring issues in a small number of cases, particularly where students felt unable to raise concerns for fear of adverse consequences.

Council noted that UEB, at its meeting on 24 March 2026, had agreed to support the recommendations contained in the Independent Advisor Report and the UDSC response. UEB had further agreed that the Pro-Vice-Chancellors for Research and Student Experience would jointly lead a group, including the Director of Human Resources, to clarify and strengthen processes for addressing poor doctoral supervision. This work was being taken forward with active involvement from UDSC.

It was also noted that Senate had considered the report at its meeting on 15 April 2026 and that an additional appendix providing an update on actions taken in response to the 2023/24 report had been included for Council's consideration.

DISCUSSED

Discussion of the report covered the following points:

- Recognition of the value of the Independent Advisor role in making concerns visible and enabling earlier intervention, alongside acknowledgement that addressing poor supervisory behaviour remained complex and sensitive.

- The importance of developing clearer and more confident mechanisms to address unacceptable supervision practice, including where students were reluctant to report concerns directly.

- Discussion of the range of responses available, including targeted support and development for supervisors, limits on supervising activity where appropriate, and requirements for regular supervisor training.

- Acknowledgement of the progress made over the past year in responding to previous recommendations and improving coordination across relevant groups, coupled with recognition that further work was required to embed consistent and effective practice.

Council welcomed the focus on strengthening both process and culture and noted the importance of continued oversight and assurance in this area.

Council **noted** the Independent Advisor Annual Report and the UDSC response, and noted the actions underway to strengthen mechanisms for addressing poor doctoral supervision.

7927.0 Health & Safety Annual Report - C25/26 - 69

Purpose - For Noting

REPORTED

Council received the Annual Health & Safety Report, which provided an overview of health and safety performance, incidents and compliance across the University over the past year.

The report was presented for assurance.

DISCUSSED

Although the item was for noting, Council raised a number of observations and concerns, including:

- Surprise at the absence of specific reference to John Wood Court, with a request for greater visibility of oversight arrangements in relation to high-profile or complex buildings.

- Concern that the relatively low number of reported near-misses might indicate under-reporting, prompting discussion about health and safety culture and whether staff and students felt confident to report issues.

- Recognition that themes of culture and potential under-reporting aligned closely with earlier discussion on safety leadership and psychological safety.

- A view that additional information on mandatory training completion rates would have strengthened assurance.

- Reflection that the report, while comprehensive, did not fully surface areas of highest risk or concern in a way that enabled clear Council-level oversight.

Council noted that health and safety had been the subject of a constructive discussion at ARAC, including in relation to integrated reporting and escalation, and welcomed continued focus on strengthening visibility, assurance and governance.

Council **noted** the Health & Safety Annual Report and underscored the importance of continuing to enhance the prominence and integration of health and safety reporting, linking culture, assurance and delivery through appropriate governance routes, including ARAC.

7928.0 SU Top 10: Update - C25/26 - 70

Purpose - For Discussion

REPORTED

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience & Sport) and the Students' Union President introduced an update on progress against the Students' Union (SU) Top Ten priorities for 2025/26.

The update outlined strong progress, with several priorities delivered or well advanced. It was noted that the amber rating applied to one priority reflected a more measured and realistic assessment of progress, rather than concerns about delivery.

Positive progress on sport-related priorities was highlighted, including agreement on improvements to facilities at Sulis, which had now been fully achieved.

DISCUSSED

Council discussed the update and noted:

- The strength of partnership working between the University and the SU over the year.

- That the approach to setting, tracking and delivering the SU Top Ten was regarded positively and as an example of good practice within the sector.

Council welcomed the update and recognised the success of the collaborative approach taken.

7929.0 Governance Review Sprint 1 - Presentation

Purpose - For Discussion

REPORTED

The University Secretary and Registrar introduced the first phase of the Governance Review Sprint, outlining the objectives, emerging themes and early thinking arising from the work.

It was emphasised that Sprint 1 had focused predominantly on the executive arm of the University, with the primary aim of clarifying executive accountability, decision-making authority and assurance routes, and reducing duplication and unnecessary layers within executive and committee structures. This work was intended to create clearer conditions for effective delegation and to strengthen the interface between executive decision-making and governance oversight, rather than to propose changes to Council's responsibilities or Senate's academic assurance role at this stage.

The presentation highlighted the intention to improve the effectiveness and agility of institutional decision-making, strengthen accountability, and simplify arrangements where issues currently passed repeatedly through multiple forums. Early thinking included rationalising executive-level structures, clarifying ownership of thematic portfolios, and distinguishing more clearly between executive decision-making, assurance and engagement.

These proposals were described as being actively progressed, with the intention to seek approval through UEB, followed by consideration by Senate, and to return to Council for assurance as the arrangements were implemented.

DISCUSSED

Discussion of the Governance Review Sprint covered the following points:

- The importance of achieving greater clarity between executive accountability and governance assurance, particularly where responsibilities currently appeared blurred between UEB, Senate and committee structures.

- Questions about how executive-focused changes would improve decision-making pace, escalation and clarity of accountability, without creating new forms of complexity or duplication.

- Interest in how clearer executive ownership of areas such as innovation and enterprise, student experience, digital infrastructure and estates would strengthen assurance to Council.

- Recognition that governance reform required cultural as well as structural change, including clearer expectations of executive leaders and greater confidence in delegated authority.

- The need to ensure that revised arrangements reflected the impact of executive decision-making on professional services staff and that assurance pathways were clear end-to-end.

Council welcomed the focus on the executive arm as a necessary first step, acknowledged the complexity of the work, and emphasised the importance of careful development, clarity and engagement as arrangements progressed.

7930.0 Disabled Students Policy - 25/26 - 71

Purpose - For Approval

DECISION

Council **approved** the revised Disabled Student Policy.

7931.0 Senate Summary Report - C25/26 - 72

Purpose - For Noting

REPORTED

Council **noted** the summary report from the last meeting of Senate on 15 April 2026.

7932.0 Secretary's Report to Council - C25/26 - 73

Purpose - For Approval

REPORTED

The University Secretary and Registrar introduced the Secretary's Report to Council, which brought together governance, constitutional and compliance matters for Council's oversight, approval and assurance.

Council noted upcoming regulatory engagement, including an Office for Students consultation, which was under consideration as part of the University's institutional response.

Council also congratulated the newly elected Students' Union officers following the recent SU elections.

Council noted the updates and assurances contained within the Secretary's Report.

DECISION

Council agreed to:

- **Approve** the amended Export Control Policy; and

- **Approve** the change in name of the Honorary Degrees Committee to the Honorary Awards Committee.

7933.0 Audit and Risk Assurance Committee - C25/26 - 74

Purpose - For Noting

REPORTED

Council received the summary report of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) meeting held on 23 April 2026, together with a verbal update from the Chair of ARAC, noting that there were some amendments to the summary report that had not been made due to the tight turnaround times.

The Chair clarified that the review of the CLEAR programme had been undertaken by an external assurance provider (Enfuse) rather than the external auditor, correcting an inaccuracy in the summary report. ARAC had held a robust discussion on the CLEAR programme, including lessons learned in relation to supplier management, cost implications, governance and post-implementation support. The importance of ensuring adequate resourcing for post-implementation activity was emphasised. ARAC noted the value that independent external assurance had brought to the discussion and the potential for relevant lessons to be applied more generally to the design and governance of major change programmes.

Council was updated on ARAC's consideration of the Internal Audit report on Campus Infrastructure Compliance, which had provided reasonable assurance but identified gaps in the documentation and articulation of legal and regulatory responsibilities. ARAC had noted the need for a more holistic view of health and safety and compliance across the University, beyond campus infrastructure alone, and had requested further work to bring clarity to governance responsibilities and assurance routes.

The Chair also reported on ARAC's continued oversight of issues relating to John Wood Court, including fire safety. ARAC had been assured that an appropriate schedule of remedial work was in place and progressing and looked forward to continued reporting on outcomes.

It was noted that ARAC had agreed to strengthen its oversight of health and safety by ensuring it remained a standing priority item, with clearer joining-up of assurance across committees and governance routes.

Council **noted** the ARAC Committee summary report and the verbal update provided, and took assurance from the work underway to strengthen programme oversight, risk management, health and safety assurance and compliance governance.

7934.0 Finance Committee - C25/26 - 75

REPORTED

Council received the summary report of the Finance Committee meeting held on 16 April 2026 and a verbal update from the Chair of the Committee.

The update highlighted the context of ongoing strategic and financial planning, noting that the University's financial position remained challenging and that achieving the required 5% operating surplus at pace was critical to restoring financial resilience.

Council considered the Finance Committee's recommendation to approve the revised Investment Policy. It was noted that further responses had been received from staff and student groups shortly before the meeting and that these would be considered by the Investment Group and Finance Committee. The policy was recommended for approval as presented, with a commitment that amendments would be brought back to Council if required.

Council also considered the Finance Committee's recommendation relating to the CLEAR Programme. It was noted that the Committee had held a detailed discussion on programme delays, resourcing pressures and ongoing delivery risks, informed by external assurance input. The importance of appropriate mobilisation, resourcing and access to specialist support was emphasised, recognising the scale and complexity of the programme and the risks associated with transitioning from a highly customised system to a more standardised solution. Council noted reassurance that oversight arrangements were in place and that regular updates would continue.

Council **noted** the Finance Committee summary report and emphasised the importance of continued transparency, regular reporting and assurance as delivery of major programmes progressed.

DECISION

Council agreed to:

- **approve** the Investment Policy; and

- **approve** an additional budget of £1,914k for the CLEAR Programme, together with an additional £1m contingency, to be held and released by the Finance Committee if required.

7935.0 Honorary Degrees Committee - C25/26 - 76

Purpose - For Noting

REPORTED

Council **noted** the summary report from the last meeting of the Honorary Degrees Committee on 4 March 2026.

7936.0 People & Culture Committee - C25/26 - 77

REPORTED

Council **noted** the summary report from the last meeting of the People & Culture Committee on 10 March 2026.

7937.0 Remuneration Committee - C25/26 - 78

Purpose - For Noting

REPORTED

Council **noted** the summary report from the last meeting of the Remuneration Committee on 10 March 2026.

7938.0 Any Other Business

Purpose - For Discussion

REPORTED

No other items of business were discussed.