Council

Thursday, 20th November 2025 9:30am

Council Chamber | Council

Attendees

Members Attended

Maria Bond

Sharon Flood, Chair

Sabina Gheduzzi

Dot Griffiths

Alun Griffiths

Don McLaverty

Calum Mercer

Marcus Munafo (Joined online – *left at 13:00)*

Benjamin Orford Thompson

Esther Reeves

Jo Rhoden

Paul Shepherd

Helen Slater

Anthony Smith

Phil Taylor

In Attendance

Ghazwa Alwani-Starr, Chief Operating Officer

Manuel Barcia, PVC (Global Engagement) (*left at 13.10)*

Cath Baldwin, Director Admissions & Recruitment *(For Item 7862.0 Recruitment & Admissions Update)*

Andrew Bidwell, Risk and Compliance Manager *(For Item 7859.0 Institutional Risk Report)*

Richard Brooks, Director of Human Resources *(For Item 7865.0 Academic Career Progression Framework)*

Julian Chaudhuri, PVC (Education)

Duncan Craig, Dean Faculty of Science *(For Item 7860.b 3West Strategic Outline Case)*

Corinne Evans, Executive Director (External Relations)

Sarah Hainsworth, PVC (Research & Enterprise)

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

Cassie Wilson, PVC (Student Experience & Sport)

Deborah Wilson, Dean Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences *(For Item 7860.b 3West Strategic Outline Case)*

Secretariat

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

Elisabeth Day, Interim Head of Governance

7852.0 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.

The Chair welcomed members to her first meeting and expressed appreciation for their attendance, noting enthusiasm for a productive session. The Chair acknowledged challenges around papers and governance mechanics and invited members to share feedback. Council noted that time had been allowed for overrun, which would be rebranded as an opportunity for Council members and observers to connect should time allow.

A particular welcome was made to Clare Stevenson, Director of Legal, Governance & Compliance and Deputy University Secretary who was observing the meeting.

7853.0 Declarations of Interest

Purpose - For Information

REPORTED

No conflicts of interest were declared.

Members who were Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) members or in receipt of a USS pension were asked to tick 'yes' for a standing declaration, which would be added to the register.

ACTION

Assigned to – Elisabeth Day | **Due by** – 19 Feb 2026

Governance Team to add standing declaration of USS membership or receipt of USS pension to declaration vote on Decision Time.

7854.0 Minutes of Previous Meeting - C25/26 - 15

Purpose - For Approval

DECISION

Council **approved** the minutes of the previous meeting of Council held on 9 October 2025.

7855.0 Actions and Matters Arising - C25/26 - 16

Purpose - For Noting

REPORTED

Council **noted** the action log since its last meeting on 9 October 2025.

7782 The Vice-Chancellor had been asked to progress work on the tensions and synergies between institutional KPIs and the development of a staff wellbeing KPI. This remained ongoing, and Council agreed that the action should move to business as usual. Action closed.

7811a Cyber security training statistics and links had been provided to Council members. A short slide pack was available in the Resources section on Decision Time, and the link to mandatory training had also been included. Council noted that the link required amendment and agreed that Governance would update the list to clarify mandatory training requirements for Council members. Action closed.

7759 Council had previously agreed to reconsider the appointment of Grant Thornton as auditors after three months if issues persisted. A verbal update confirmed that the University would remain with Grant Thornton for the current financial year. Council noted that the process had improved significantly compared to last year and that the Chair of ARAC was supportive of the decision. Action closed.

7814 The previous Chair of Council had written to thank Professor Tim Mays for his leadership of I-SEE, supported by information provided by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research). Council noted that Professor Mays had expressed appreciation for the message. Action closed.

There had been no decisions taken by correspondence since its last meeting.

7856.0 Institutional update - C25/26 - 17

Purpose - For Noting

REPORTED

The Vice-Chancellor presented an update on recent developments at the University and within the wider sector.

Council noted that the University had risen 71 places to 56th in the QS World University: Sustainability Rankings, which was a significant improvement and an opportunity to enhance reputation among staff and students. This was noted alongside other strong results in recent rankings.

The Race Equality Bronze Award was celebrated, with commendation for the Race and Equality Charter Lead's leadership. The conversation focused on how to move from recognition into action and delivery.

On the theme of Artificial Intelligence (AI), it was reported that James Fern had been appointed as the University's lead for Generative AI in education. Council noted that Michael Wooldridge, a world leader in AI, would visit the University in two weeks to deliver a plenary session and lead sub-group discussions on education, research, and operations in a safe and progressive way.

Recent developments relevant to the Post-16 Skills White Paper were noted, with the title considered slightly misleading as it encompasses more than just skills. A planned domestic undergraduate tuition fee increase is set to align with forecast inflation over the next two years, supported by legislation to automate the process. A shift in terminology from "tuition fee" to "tuition fee cap" was observed, with future increases contingent on meeting quality assurance thresholds such as Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) Bronze or higher. Government direction on research funding is expected to become more aligned with the industrial strategy, indicating a more directive approach. The reintroduction of student maintenance grants would be funded by the levy. The tuition fee increase is projected to generate £4 million, while the levy is projected to cost the University c£7 million.

Proposed reforms to research funding include higher cost recovery rates, particularly in alignment with industrial research. Council noted that the University was already specialised and intended to focus further on fewer areas delivered to a higher standard. Teaching quality and employment outcomes were highlighted as institutional strengths. Widening participation remained a priority, with recognition that further improvement was needed, alongside stronger engagement with local partners such as Bath Spa University, Bristol University, and Bath College.

DISCUSSED

Members asked whether the White Paper reinforced existing institutional plans or required changes to student number projections. It was confirmed that revised projections were being developed as part of the five-year plan.

Members agreed that the proposals aligned with the University's direction of travel but noted that research calls would become more directive, requiring alignment with government priorities to secure funding. The need to maintain competitiveness against regional institutions was emphasised.

Clarification was sought on sustainability goals in relation to AI and the potential resource implications. Concerns were also expressed about the future of curiosity-driven research if funding shifted toward strategic priorities. It was noted that the White Paper reaffirmed support for curiosity-based research but suggested this would be concentrated in a small number of research-intensive universities. The University was considered to be within this group, but members agreed to maintain a watching brief.

7857.0 Strategic Update - Lewis House and Bath Quays

North - C25/26 - 18

Purpose - For Discussion

REPORTED

Council received a strategic update from the Vice-Chancellor, supported by the Executive Director of Innovation, on progress in exploring Bath Riverside Innovation District projects at Lewis House (LH) and Bath Quays North (BQN) as opportunities to strengthen the University's presence in the city. The update was supported by a slide presentation summarising potential strategic options and alignment with institutional priorities.

Council noted that the projects were intended to deliver benefits including:

- Alignment with the University's strategy and the Government's Skills White Paper.
- Opportunities for culture change and new ways of working.
- Enhanced student employability and multidisciplinary collaboration.
- Stronger partnerships with the city and regional stakeholders.

Council noted that any decisions would need to align with the Estates Strategy, which currently spans three locations: Claverton Campus, the City, and the Bristol & Bath Science Park. LH and BQN were identified as opportunities to expand innovation and skills activity in the city, complementing existing provision and enabling scale-up at the Science Park.

Council noted that next steps would include continuing engagement with partners, growing the project team, and developing strategic business cases for LH by mid-2026 and BQN by the end of 2026, within the context of the Estates Strategy. It was noted that discussions were ongoing with major investors, and that involvement could range from partnership to consortium arrangements to manage risk.

DISCUSSED

Members emphasised the need to address capability gaps in risk transfer and pricing, particularly when partnering with major investors. It was agreed that early engagement in legal, commercial and financial analysis would be critical to avoid disadvantageous arrangements. Council supported investing in dedicated expertise and governance structures at the outset.

Members requested clarity on mechanisms for tracking progress and assurance that the right team was in place. It was suggested that a programme board to provide governance and assurance, with some Council representation could provide oversight and early warning of risks. The Vice-Chancellor agreed to take this forward.

Council discussed the importance of developing a clear public narrative to explain the strategic rationale for these projects, particularly in the context of sector uncertainty and recent cost-saving measures. Members agreed that the projects should be framed as part of a long-term strategy to diversify and strengthen the University's position, rather than short-term expansion.

It was noted that the Estates Strategy positioned city developments as foundational for future growth, given space constraints on campus and the economic regeneration of Bath. Members suggested that for each option under consideration, critical success factors should be identified and presented clearly.

Council noted that the anticipated costs of the LH and BQN projects were contained within the £1.3 billion capital framework. Members agreed that actionable comments from the discussion would inform the next phase of planning.

ACTION

Assigned to – Phil Taylor; Sharon Flood | **Due by** – 19 Feb 2026

Propose mechanism to provide governance and assurance and oversee early investment in dedicated expertise.

To provide strategic oversight, assurance, and decision-making support to support Bath Riverside Innovation District (including Lewis House and Bath Quays North)

7858.0 Audit and Risk Committee - C25/26 - 19

Purpose - For Noting

REPORTED

Council received the summary report of the last Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) meeting held on 6 November 2025. The Chair of ARAC reported on institutional risk and risk management, with operational risk registers and starting the transition from Excel to the risk system being recommended as a next step.

The Committee had received an internal audit on Health and Safety, which was described as an excellent piece of work identifying areas of best practice and cultural improvement. It was suggested that Council might wish to hear directly from the Deputy Director, Safety & Wellbeing Services on this.

IAAPS was discussed from an audit and risk perspective, with segregation of duties highlighted as a risk that the Director of Finance was reviewing. Progress in closing internal audit points was noted, with strong momentum that the Committee hoped would continue.

It was further noted that the University did not comply with the specific Higher Education Audit Committees Code of Practice on ARAC membership and had instead adopted an "explain" position. In reducing the size of Council, the Council had agreed that it was satisfied with two lay members rather than three, given that there were also two co-opted members.

The annual Public Interest Disclosure (PID) statement was highlighted, with one case that had been closed during the year and one case which remained in progress. The Committee would review the whistleblowing policy and procedure, which would come to Council in due course.

DISCUSSED

The Chair raised the importance of safety leadership and considered the idea to open Council meetings with an item on safety. The Vice-Chancellor would take this forward and open with this at a future meeting.

When discussing the PID Statement, members considered that a cultural shift towards timely acknowledgement of cases across the University would be desirable, even if resolution took longer. This point was raised in the context of PID but was noted as relevant more broadly.

Council **noted** the update on the University's compliance with the Committee of University Chairs (CUC) Higher Education Code of Governance. The Committee's "explain" position under the Higher Education Audit Committees Code of Practice would be kept under review.

The update coincided with an internal light-touch effectiveness review with Council members, which would be taken forward by the Interim Head of Governance with the Chair and Vice-Chancellor. A broader Executive Governance Review had also begun, led by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, and an external review of Council was due later this academic year.

The CUC were reviewing the HE Code, and the University would contribute to that process. These strands would come together in 2026 with the external review to be reported to Council.

Council **noted** the summary report of the last ARAC meeting held on 6 November 2025.

Council **noted** the ARAC Annual Report, which provided assurance in line with the Committee's Terms of Reference and as detailed in the pack.

DECISION

Council **approved** the Terms of Reference and Membership. It was agreed that the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee would operate with fewer than three lay members under an "explain" approach, which would be kept under review.

Council **approved** the Conflict of Interest Policy subject to clarification within the flowchart distinction between "major" and "serious" cases before publication.

Council **approved** the Annual Public Interest Disclosure (PID) Statement.

ACTION

Assigned to – Phil Taylor | **Due by** – 19 Feb 2026

Introduce Safety Leadership Item at Future Council Meeting

Implement the suggestion to open a future Council meeting with an item on safety leadership.

7859.0 Institutional Risk Report – Quarterly Update - C25/26 - 20

Purpose - For Discussion

REPORTED

The Risk & Compliance Manager, introduced the quarterly update and the Institutional Risk Register for discussion, supported by the Vice-Chancellor.

The Risk & Compliance Manager reported that the risk register continued to be developed with improved rigour. Three new risks had been flagged: international student recruitment, health and safety, and a split-out digital transformation risk. Actions had been taken away from the

Audit & Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC), including scheduling another discussion with Council on risk appetite at the Development Day in March, to include lay members of ARAC. Greater rigour on dates and timelines was being applied to clarify when risks would be within appetite.

It was emphasised that this was an important area in which significant work had been done and input was welcomed from Council.

DISCUSSED

Members asked whether dependencies on the local council for future capital projects should be included on the risk register and also queried where broader brand and reputational risk would sit; management would take these points away for consideration.

A Council member asked about timescales and target scores, and it was confirmed that this was part of the rigour discussed at ARAC and that executive commentary would include this. It was also queried to what extent these risks were reflected in financial plans, noting that some would require more attention than others.

It was queried whether international student recruitment should be considered the highest risk. Members acknowledged its importance but cautioned against allowing this to dominate strategy, noting that focusing solely on high-fee students could detract from wider strategic priorities. Concerns were also raised about some mitigation scores, particularly for environmental and research quality risks, which were considered understated. Management would review these and consider how they would hold themselves to account.

7860.0 Finance Committee - C25/26 - 21

Purpose - For Noting

REPORTED

Council received a summary report from the Finance Committee from the Chair of the Committee, covering its meeting held on 6 November 2025.

It was reported that the University was forecast to be ahead of budget for the year, reflecting a prudent approach, and that investment in finance and HR systems was progressing well.

The Committee had discussed index linking of UK fees, the introduction of the international student levy, and ongoing challenges in international student recruitment. It was noted that significant risks remained within the financial plans overall. Research performance was highlighted, including the success of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in securing awards.

Three major items had been considered by the Committee:

- The Annual Report and Accounts, which remained the responsibility of Council.
- Confirmation of going concern status, with covenant monitoring considered satisfactory and USS triggers unlikely to be met.
- The IAAPS letter of financial support, with assurance that the debt was recoverable over

time and continued support would be provided.

The Committee also reviewed capital projects. It was encouraged by the quality of the paper on 3West, noting its focus on delivery and integration with the wider University. The release of budget for R7 was recommended to Council for approval, and the Committee had challenged whether the overall budget remained in line; assurance was given that it would be monitored through the Investment Working Group.

Council **noted** the report from the Finance Committee.

7860.a Annual Financial Reporting - C25/26 - 21a

Purpose - For Approval

REPORTED

Council received a summary from the Director of Finance on the annual financial reporting for 2024/25.

It was reported that there had been no adjusting events since year-end. Subject to this, the necessary documents would be signed via DocuSign by the Chair, Treasurer, and Vice-Chancellor.

Council noted that the Annual Report and Accounts appeared well written and raised no further comments.

DECISION

Council:

Approved the Annual Report and Accounts;

Approved the Letter of representation from the University to Grant Thornton;

Approved the letter of financial support for IAAPS;

Approved the going concern review and financial covenant analysis;

Approved Grant Thornton's audit findings report - University of Bath;

Approved the annual financial return.

7860.b 3West Strategic Outline Case - C25/26 - 21b

Purpose - For Approval

REPORTED

Council received the paper on the 3West Strategic Outline Case from the Chief Operating Officer, the Dean of Humanities & Social Sciences and the Dean of Science.

The paper set out the purpose of the Strategic Outline Case as the first stage of a full business case process. The proposal aimed to create a campus that was "fit for purpose and fit for the future," consolidating the Department for Health from eight dispersed locations into three, addressing constraints on student numbers, research growth, and commercial opportunities. The project would also establish a centre for drug discovery, bringing together existing strengths across the Faculty of Science and the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, and linking to digital innovation and augmented human research.

The approach represented a shift from problem, to opportunity, to vision, with strong academic engagement and enthusiasm. The collaborative approach was welcomed, and the Finance Committee expressed thanks for the renewed energy behind the proposal.

DISCUSSED

Council noted the value of the paper and accompanying site visit. Members who had not attended the tour were encouraged to arrange one, and it was suggested that similar opportunities should be considered for future projects to include all Council members and to be built into the forward plan of business to minimise travel time for non-Bath based members.

Council discussed the strategic benefits of the project and emphasised the importance of cultural change and effective communication throughout delivery. Members raised questions about space planning, connectivity, and avoiding unused areas when departments relocate. It was agreed that options appraisals should consider long-term flexibility, public-facing impact, and integration with future campus development.

Practical considerations were noted, including the appointment of an external project manager and a specialist lead consultant, which would proceed following approval. Members stressed the need for clear communications to accompany Council decisions and for assurance that freed-up space would be repurposed effectively. The potential for fundraising and external engagement was highlighted, alongside benchmarking against other institutions.

Council acknowledged that expectations had not always been met on previous major projects and emphasised the need for robust delivery and cultural alignment.

DECISION

Council **approved** the 3West Strategic Outline Case.

ACTION

Assigned to – Elisabeth Day | **Due by** – 19 Feb 2026

Inclusion of high-level communications plan in Council papers

Ensure that any Council paper which could lead to internal or external communications includes a high-level communications plan within the paper. If a Council decision or topic is likely to generate comms activity, this must be flagged and incorporated before submission.

7860.c R7 budget release - C25/26 - 21c

Purpose - For Approval

REPORTED

Council received a report from the Finance Committee recommending that Council approve an additional budget release of £942k (including VAT and 10% contingency) from the previously approved £150m budget for the R7 student accommodation project. The additional funds would cover the preparation of a Pre-Construction Services Agreement (PCSA) with the selected contractor, enabling works design fees, and costs associated with the Environmental Impact Assessment required by Bath and North East Somerset Council.

It was reported that the planning application had been submitted, with determination expected in January 2026. The current estimated total project cost was £157m, against the approved budget of £150m, and value engineering was ongoing to bring costs within budget. The project was considered essential to support planned growth in non-regulated fee income.

DISCUSSED

Council noted that Sport England had objected to the planning application, triggering an automatic referral to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, which would only be considered after the local planning committee decision. Mitigation measures were in place to address concerns. It was also noted that the campus fell within the sightlines of the Bath World Heritage Site, though this was not expected to affect the scheme; mitigation options, such as reducing building height, were available if required.

Members emphasised the importance of stakeholder engagement and communications, including clarity on political and planning risks. Questions were raised about the potential impact of planning objections and the need for proactive engagement with central government stakeholders. Council also discussed the importance of design flexibility and sustainability, and requested a future session on the design and strategic business case, including sustainability considerations.

The project team was in the final stages of contractor selection through the Southern Construction Framework, with a special meeting of the Investment Working Group scheduled to stress-test decision-making. It was confirmed that the appointment of an external project manager and specialist lead consultant would follow approval.

It was noted that local housing pressures, including restrictions on Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), reinforced the strategic need for additional student accommodation. Council welcomed assurance that financial sustainability remained central to the project.

DECISION

Council **approved** the additional budget release of £942k (including VAT and contingency).

ACTION

Assigned to – Ghazwa Alwani-Starr | **Due by** – 30 Apr 2026

R7 - Schedule Design "Teach-In" Session Before Stage 3/4

Action Description - Before progressing to Stage 3 or 4, schedule a session to brief stakeholders on the proposed design and what the future state will look like. This should include a “teach-in” style overview and incorporate sustainability considerations. Align timing with the early briefing on the strategic business case planned for the new year. Doesn't necessarily need to be one of the standing teach-ins, dependent on timing.

7861.0 Strategy Development Update - Vision, Mission, Values - C25/26 - 22

Purpose - For Discussion

REPORTED

Council received a presentation from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Executive Director (External Relations) on the development of the University's strategy, including vision, mission, and values.

It was reported that the emerging strategy was designed to interface seamlessly with other major initiatives, including the Estates Masterplan and the Mammoth project, to ensure coherence. The strategy was being shaped through extensive internal engagement, including a UEB retreat, and centred on three strategic priorities intended to provide competitive advantage over the next decade:

- **Foundations for the Future:** creating an environment that enables people to work effectively and collaboratively.

- **Building from our Strengths:** ensuring that people leave having gained something of lasting value from their time at Bath.

- **Global Excellence with Impact:** achieving internationally recognised research, innovation, and education excellence that delivers transformative outcomes.

These priorities were supported by the University's vision "**to advance knowledge, drive progress and nurture talent, for a better tomorrow**" and mission "**to forge partnerships of collaboration and learning, pursuing deep understanding through research, innovation and education, to inspire, inform and drive meaningful progress in service of society**."

Council noted that the strategy aimed to be distinctive to Bath, embedding values of innovation, curiosity, collaboration, and progressiveness. Over 450 staff and students had participated in engagement sessions, and the approach was intended to be embedded and alive, rather than a static document.

DISCUSSED

Members welcomed the clarity of the three pillars and their alignment with the University's ambitions. It was noted that the strategy would be transformational if implemented effectively and that its focus on environment and people was distinctive compared to other sector strategies.

Council discussed the importance of governance structures, high-performance culture, and international insight as key enablers, identified through recent strategy sprints. Members emphasised the need for continued engagement and clear communication to ensure the strategy was widely understood and owned across the University.

Council **noted** the strategy development update.

7861.a Integrated Performance Monitoring (Goals and KPI Lead Indicators) - C25/26 - 22a

Purpose - For Discussion

REPORTED

Council was invited by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor to discuss the proposed approach for developing lead indicators and to endorse the approach to managing interdependencies among the seven emerging strategic goals.

It was reported that key performance indicators (KPIs) were evolving to align with the three strategic pillars and that lead indicators would be developed to provide upstream insight into downstream KPIs. An example was provided using TRAC cost recovery, which would remain an institutional KPI for some time. Members noted that TRAC cost recovery could be manipulated and stressed the importance of focusing on actions that matter to the institution rather than chasing the KPI itself.

Lead indicators should be causally upstream of the KPI and may sit within different functional units, requiring goal owners to work collaboratively. Using TRAC cost recovery as an example, potential lead indicators noted included:

- Number of University-funded studentships
- Supervisor time allocation (WAMS)
- Volume of unfunded research (WAMS)
- Project costing viability percentage
- Compound measures for PhD studentships

This approach would help identify drivers of performance rather than focusing solely on lagging indicators. Goal owners would need to work collaboratively across domains to ensure interdependencies were managed effectively.

DISCUSSED

Council discussed the importance of including staff wellbeing as a KPI, noting that it remained part of the framework and was coming into focus. On KPI 6 (Student Life Satisfaction), members suggested using Be Well survey results as a lead indicator; it was noted that these data reflected belonging rather than life satisfaction, and the KPI might evolve over time.

Members highlighted the need to measure digital and data infrastructure under "Foundations for the Future" to avoid underinvestment. It was agreed that KPIs should not be limited to what is easy to measure but should capture what matters strategically.

The importance of postgraduate research (PGR) students as a strategic priority was emphasised, suggesting that KPIs should reflect both funded numbers and growth in specialist areas, linking to PGR experience and cohort development.

7862.0 Recruitment and Admissions Update - C25/26 - 23

Purpose - For Noting

REPORTED

Council received an update from the Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions on the current admissions position and the international recruitment intervention plans for the cycle. It was reported that the year had been challenging, with international enrolments below target and early indications that the next cycle would also be difficult, particularly at postgraduate-taught (PGT) level.

Overall enrolments for 2025 had fallen short of Overseas targets at both undergraduate (UG) and PGT levels, despite some growth in smaller markets. Declines in key markets had the greatest impact on intake numbers, and the loss of a previous Foundation pathway had not been fully mitigated. Sector data indicated similar trends across UK universities, with updated figures expected in December.

A Semester 2 start had been piloted in the School of Management, with applications received and enrolments projected for January. Admissions data and insights were informing student intake planning for the next five years. International Student Recruitment had been identified as a new risk on the Institutional Risk Register.

DISCUSSED

Applicant behaviour and market trends were discussed by members. Undergraduate applications for 2026 entry were slightly down overall, with Bath underperforming relative to competitors who were seeing growth across all markets. It was noted that, while Bath had been outperformed by competitors in the current cycle, those institutions had generally experienced slower growth over recent years. The decline was driven by the Faculty of Science, while other faculties and the School of Management were up.

PGT applications for 2026 were significantly down overall, with the largest drop from China. Some modest increases were noted in smaller markets, but declines in major markets remained a concern.

Council considered mitigation measures, which included:

- Waiving PGT application fees.

- Expanding scholarships and conversion awards, including Bath Global Excellence Scholarships (£10,000) and Bath International UG Scholarships (£8,000 per year).

- Reviewing entry requirements, including adjustments to China criteria.

- Enhancing visa and immigration support for international applicants.

- Expediting admissions decision-making through automation and AI.

- Increasing overseas visits and establishing an office in Malaysia.
- Strengthening engagement with agents and alumni networks.
- Expanding Foundation pathways and embedding an on-campus route for 2026, with first intake to degree courses in 2027.
- Exploring new sponsorship opportunities and articulation agreements.

Council noted that tactics would be informed by data and tailored to market needs. Admissions and recruitment data were being shared with Deans as part of the five-year student number planning process.

It was confirmed that discounts were offered to existing undergraduate students progressing to postgraduate study and that these were publicised through faculties, schools and alumni networks.

Council **noted** the report.

7863.0 Widening Access and Participation Update - C25/26 - 24

Purpose - For Noting

REPORTED

Council received the update on the University's Access and Participation Plan (APP) from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education).

The paper summarised progress against four main areas of activity: access, continuation, completion, and degree outcomes for underrepresented UK student groups. The APP, approved by Council and OfS in July 2023, runs from 2024/25 to 2027/28 and includes targets for socio-economic disadvantage (Free School Meals and Index of Multiple Deprivation), ethnic minority groups, and declared disability.

For 2025/26 entry, milestones for entrants eligible for free school meals and those from areas of deprivation had been met. Activity in recent years had focused on recruitment and outreach, and in the current cycle, headroom had been created to admit students from underrepresented groups. Spaces had been reserved for these groups, supported by contextual offers set two grades below the standard offer. Data on degree outcomes targets were not yet available.

DISCUSSED

Members discussed the effectiveness of contextual offers and whether a two-grade reduction was sufficient, noting that other institutions were adopting more aggressive approaches. It was agreed that any further changes should be evidence-based and maintain quality to ensure student success. The need to review early how the University engages with widening participation students earlier in the admissions cycle, including consideration of predicted grades and flexibility in offers.

Members considered examples from other institutions, noting that Oxford and Cambridge had made significant cultural and operational changes, including foundation programmes, adjustment processes and targeted outreach initiatives.

The timing of Open Days was noted and that moving them from September to October had been operationally challenging but had resulted in a 14% increase in prospective students from underrepresented backgrounds. While progress was acknowledged, further improvements were needed.

Council **noted** the update on the University's Access and Participation Plan.

7864.0 NSS & PTES Analysis - C25/26 - 25

Purpose - For Noting

REPORTED

Council received the National Student Survey (NSS) and Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) results for 2025 from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education), together with the actions in place and associated monitoring procedures. The papers provided detailed analysis of performance across key themes, including assessment and feedback, and outlined institutional and departmental action plans. It was confirmed that the University continued to perform strongly overall, with areas for improvement identified in assessment and feedback.

DISCUSSED

Members considered the approach to assessment and feedback, noting that actions had become more directive and mandatory for Heads of Department and Directors of Teaching. Internal audit findings and the assessment and feedback action plan were referenced, with emphasis on addressing inconsistency and ensuring compliance with agreed standards.

Members highlighted the importance of both timeliness and quality of feedback, and the need for clarity on what constitutes feedback. While the University outperformed some Russell Group institutions in assessment and feedback scores, cultural and structural challenges remained, particularly in exam-heavy courses where feedback was limited. Departments that had implemented guidance had seen significant improvements, and best practice continued to be shared.

It was noted that targeted interventions were underway in the lowest-performing areas, including Electronic and Electrical Engineering, where senior leadership had engaged directly. Council agreed that maintaining momentum and consistency across departments was essential.

Council discussed the presentation of the papers and agreed that future reporting should be more concise and integrated, avoiding duplication across multiple documents.

7865.0 Academic Career Progression Framework - C25/26 - 26

Purpose - For Approval

REPORTED

Council received an update from the Director of Human Resources and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor on the revised Academic Career Progression Framework. Council noted that the framework had undergone extensive governance review and consultation, including engagement with Academic Assembly. Feedback from earlier consultations had informed significant revisions, and the framework had been redesigned with support from senior leadership. It aims to provide a transparent and equitable process for career progression, enabling departments to review staffing profiles and support individuals to progress through the system. A transition plan would be communicated to staff.

Council **noted** that the Academic Staff Committee would move from a "quality control" to a "quality assurance" model and would monitor implementation of the framework.

DISCUSSED

The importance of consultation and engagement in shaping the framework was noted and members acknowledged that concerns raised during initial discussions had been addressed. Members highlighted the need to ensure accessibility and inclusivity, noting that self-nomination processes could present equality, diversity and inclusion challenges. Council agreed that the framework should support departments in identifying and developing talent across all staff groups.

Council emphasised the role of democratic processes in progressing the framework and noted the alignment with the principles of Academic Assembly.

Council **noted** that a transition plan would be communicated post-approval.

DECISION

Council **approved** the implementation of the career progression framework and associated procedures.

7866.0 Students' Union (SU) Top 10: Executive Plan - C25/26 - 27

Purpose - For Noting

REPORTED

Council received an update presented by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience & Sport), the Students' Union President, and the Students' Union Education Officer on the SU's Top Ten priorities for 2025/26 and the high-level plans to progress them. The paper outlined actions and monitoring arrangements, noting that the SU priorities evolve annually and continue to align with the University's approach to partnership working.

DISCUSSED

Council commended the process and noted the strength of the SU's engagement model, which was considered sector-leading. Members discussed facilities at Sulis and expressed concern about the likelihood of delivery against planned actions. It was noted that decisions taken last year had changed the scope of works, with revised plans for changing rooms and interim solutions such as temporary facilities at the new 3G pitch. Further discussions on permanent facilities would continue, with consideration of financial constraints.

Council highlighted the importance of resourcing and accountability for delivering the Top Ten priorities, noting that there was no dedicated budget holder. It was agreed that the Student Experience Fund could support delivery where appropriate. A paper would return to Council in May to report on progress, achievements, and any priorities transitioning to business-as-usual.

Council **noted** the SU's Top Ten for 2025/26.

7867.0 Be Well and Student Minds' Annual Reports - C25/26 - 28

Purpose - For Noting

REPORTED

Council **noted** the University's annual report to Student Minds and the internal Be Well at Bath annual report for 2024/25.

7868.0 Annual Prevent Report - C25/26 - 29

Purpose - For Approval

REPORTED

Council was asked to note that the Prevent and Protect Standing Group had assessed the University's Prevent Policy as operating effectively, with no outstanding compliance issues. Council was also asked to agree the report enabling the Chair to sign the annual declaration and to approve the Office for Students (OfS) Prevent Monitoring Annual Accountability and Data Return 2025.

It was reported that compliance with Prevent training for 2024/25 had not been achieved. Emails would be sent to those who had not completed the training. It was noted that compliance levels were expected to improve for the next return with improved training monitoring now in place. The timing of the previous deadline had coincided with changes in approach, but assurance was given that the position was now stronger.

Council **noted** the assessment of the Prevent Policy as operating effectively.

Council **agreed** the Annual Prevent Report and Chair's declaration.

DECISION

Council **approved** the OfS Prevent Monitoring Annual Accountability and Data Return 2025.

The Chair of Council would sign the return, ahead of submission to the OfS.

ACTION

Assigned to – Elisabeth Day | **Due by** – 26 Nov 2025

Prevent training reminders to be sent

Email from Governance Team to be sent to any members where their Prevent training is incomplete.

7869.0 Modern Slavery Statement - C25/26 - 30

Purpose - For Approval

DECISION

Council **approved** the content and publishing of the proposed modern slavery and human trafficking statement for 2024/25 in accordance with the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

The Chair of Council would sign the statement, ahead of publication on the University's web pages.

7870.0 Honorary Degrees Committee - C25/26 - 31

Purpose - For Approval

REPORTED

The Honorary Degrees Committee summary report included details of nominees considered by the Committee. It was noted that the reference in the report stating "2.1.7 Discussed nominations for the award of honorary degrees, with X nominees recommended to Senate for approval" should be corrected to reflect 7 nominees.

Members noted eligibility considerations for a proposed nominee and noted that, if the individual currently held an elected position, the award would need to be deferred in line with the nomination criteria. Council **noted** the summary report of the last Honorary Degrees Committee meeting on 8 October 2025.

DECISION

Council **approved** the Terms of Reference for the Honorary Degrees Committee for the 2025/26 academic year.

Council **approved** the recommended individuals for the award of President's Awards.

7871.0 Senate Update - C25/26 - 32a-b

Purpose - For Noting

REPORTED

Council **noted** [without discussion] summary reports of the meetings of Senate on 1 October 2025 and 5 November 2025.

7872.0 Sustainability Update - C25/26 - 33

Purpose - For Noting

DISCUSSED

Members asked how emissions, particularly Scope 3, would be aligned with sustainability goals. It was noted that Scope 3 presented a greater challenge than investment-related emissions. Questions were raised about whether the revised Investment Policy would provide clearer definitions of permitted investments; it was confirmed that this was the intention. This process was ongoing and would include student involvement, which was considered essential. It was acknowledged that the policy could not address every expectation but that engagement would be key.

It was noted that the Chair and Vice-Chancellor remained committed to sustainability and to maintaining momentum in this area, drawing on significant experience..

Council **noted** the Sustainability Update Report.

7873.0 Remuneration Committee - C25/26 - 34

Purpose - For Noting

REPORTED

Council **noted** [without discussion] the summary report of the last Remuneration Committee meeting on 8 October 2025, as well as the Vice-Chancellor's objectives 2025/26 approved by the Remuneration Committee.

7874.0 People & Culture Committee - C25/26 - 35

Purpose - For Noting

REPORTED

Council **noted** [without discussion] the summary report of the last People & Culture Committee meeting on 8 October 2025.

7875.0 Programme of Meetings for 2025/26 - C25/26 - 36

Purpose - For Noting

REPORTED

Council **noted** the programme of meetings of Council for the 2025/26 academic year.

7876.0 Any Other Business

Purpose - For Noting

REPORTED

Council noted that under the existing governance framework, any exit agreement for an individual earning over £100,000 per annum required Council approval on the recommendation of the Remuneration Committee. It was proposed that, as delegations and procedures are reviewed following recent changes to the Statutes, full authority for these decisions should be delegated to the Remuneration Committee to ensure proportionality and efficiency.

The proposal was raised in the context of the recently closed voluntary exit scheme for academic staff, to streamline decision-making and avoid unnecessary delays. Oversight and reporting on the scheme would continue through the People & Culture Committee. Further proposals to refine governance arrangements and clarify Council's strategic role would be brought to the next meeting.

DECISION

Council **approved** the delegation of authority for voluntary exit agreements for individuals earning over £100,000 per annum to the Remuneration Committee.

REPORTED

Council recorded its congratulations and thanks to Professor Sarah Hainsworth, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) and wished her success in her new role at Durham University.