

Meeting Minutes
Court
5 February 2025, 2.15-4.15pm

Location: 10 East (School of Management) 0.13

Introductory items

36 - Welcome and Quorum

REPORTED

Pro-Chancellor, Ruth Foreman, welcomed members and attendees and confirmed that the meeting was quorate.

A particular welcome was made to the following new members of Court in attendance: The Right Worshipful The Mayor of Bath, Councillor Michelle O’Doherty, Professor David Bird, Max Brown, Dr Zoe Burke, George Cooper, Professor Carolyn Emery, Professor Adrian Evans, Huw Ford, Jocelyn Foster, Professor Gary Hawley, Katie Head, Saskia Heijltjes, Professor Roland Jones, Zuber Lakhani, Penn Mackintosh, Emily McManus, Jackson Peace, Isobel Shone, Professor Anthony Smith, Dani Stec, Professor Phil Taylor, Benji Orford Thompson, Dr Jennifer Thomson, Olivia Warner and Professor Sue Wonnacott.

37 - Declarations of Interest

REPORTED

There were no conflicts of interest declared.

38 – Membership and Terms of Reference - Paper CT24/25 – 01

REPORTED

Court noted the membership and Terms of Reference for Court.

39 - Minutes of the Previous Meeting - Paper CT24/25 – 02

REPORTED

Court approved the minutes of the previous meeting of Court held on 7 February 2024.

Part I: Main Business

40 – Update from the Vice-Chancellor and Annual Accounts

REPORTED

Pursuant to Statute 15.2(b), Professor Phil Taylor, Vice-Chancellor, gave an update on the outlook for the Higher Education sector and the University's strategic activities, based on the [University Strategy 2021-2026](#). A copy of the presentation slides can be found in Appendix 1.

DISCUSSION

Discussion following the presentation covered the following key points:

- How the University was sector leading around the issue of contracts for early career academics, with support from the unions. Trials had taken place to change fixed term contracts to open ended contracts which had received positive feedback so far. Plans were underway to extend this approach more widely across the University.
- Widening participation and reaching out to students who could not afford to live in Bath. It was acknowledged that scholarships were a positive support mechanism, but that more could be done. Since the new Vice-Chancellor had been in post, the contextual offer had been changed to allow a lower grade entry for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Students applying this year would see a significant drop in the entry grade. It was a complex piece of work, but an area that the University was aiming to improve.
- The importance of ensuring a local as well as a global impact. Opening a world-class innovation quarter in Bath would have global impact whilst being powerful for the region.

REPORTED

Court received the University's [Annual Accounts](#) for the year ended 31 July 2024, as formally approved by the University Council on 12 December 2024. A copy of the presentation slides can be found in Appendix 2.

DISCUSSION

Discussion following the presentation covered the following key points:

- The surplus/deficit figure has fluctuated in recent years as a result of USS pension changes. Valuations are typically every three years and are sensitive to movements in interest rates. Rates have moved sharply upwards in recent years and whilst no major change is anticipated in the next few years the possibility can not be ruled out.
- The National Insurance (NI) increase which was affecting employers and whether this would impact staffing levels. The net cost of tuition fees and the NI increase led to a loss of £1.5 million, though there was more concern around student recruitment, which would have a greater impact on the University's overall financial position. The University's relatively good financial performance gave time to address these potential issues.

41 – Sustainability at the University of Bath

REPORTED

Director of Sustainability, Richard Jackson, gave Court members an update regarding why sustainability was relevant and important to the University, how the University was achieving against its sustainability agenda and plans for the future. A copy of the presentation slides can be found in Appendix 3.

DISCUSSION

Discussion following the presentation covered the following key points:

- The alignment of sustainability with the University's Capital Building Programme. It was noted that the University was developing a sustainable building standard to ensure that sustainability was built into all building projects.
- The challenge of net zero targets and the need to re-think the University's approach to deliver its commitment to climate change whilst aligning with its financial position.
- The Climate Action Framework, launched in 2020, which took an institutional approach to climate, giving every student the opportunity to learn more, with some topical programmes. There was a desire to scale up education around sustainability to reach a wider number of people and there had been some progress on this through the Curriculum Transformation Project, with expected results in 1-2 years time.
- Consideration regarding which organisations the University partnered with for student career opportunities and research funding, to ensure that there was a sufficient fit with the University's sustainability values.
- Energy consumption on campus and the possibility to generate more renewable energy on campus. The University had solar panels on four roofs and was looking at the potential to install more, but was faced with potential structural issues to some buildings. Wind turbines would be tricky to install due to Bath being a world heritage city. The University had been looking at alternatives such as heat pumps to heat buildings and was prioritising alternative technologies to decarbonise its gas supply.
- The University's ecology masterplan to maintain biodiversity on campus with building developments, as well as maintaining biodiversity through supply chains.
- Feeding sustainability into existing processes for annual planning and resource allocation.
- Travel to the University and the challenges with public transport, particularly the need to work with local providers to improve bus performance, timetables and costs.

Part 2: Closing items

42 – Next meeting

REPORTED

Court noted that the date of the next scheduled meeting of Court would be Wednesday 4 February 2026 at 2.15pm.

43 – Any Other Business

REPORTED

The Chair confirmed that the term for Pam Chesters in her role as Chair of Council was due to come to an end in October 2025 and that recruitment for a new Chair of Council was now underway, with details available on the University's [website](#). Members of Court were encouraged to share this opportunity with anyone who may have been interested in applying. As this was Pam's last meeting of Court, the Chair acknowledged and thanked Pam for her involvement and wisdom, from which the whole University community had benefitted.

The unconfirmed minutes to the meeting would be circulated within one month of the meeting and posted on the University's website.

The Chair thanked the attendees for their proactive and well-informed input to today's discussion.

The meeting closed at 3.40pm

Attendance

Members attended

Jamie Agombar
Jimena Alamo
Ghazwa Alwani-Starr
David Bird
Robert Brain
Alam Bramley
Derek Brewer
Judith Brown
Max Brown
Teslim Bukoye
Zoe Burke
Pete Capener (Online)
Julian Chaudhuri (Online)
Pamela Chesters
George Cooper
James Davenport (Online)
Kate Ehrig-Page (Online)
Trevor Elworthy (Online)
Carolyn Emery (Online)
Adrian Evans
Antonio Ferrer-Montiel
(Online)
Huw Ford
Tim Ford
Ruth Foreman
Jocelyn Foster
Sabina Gheduzzi
Felix Goni (Online)
Geoff Hammond (Online)
Gary Hawley
Katie Head
Saskia Heijltjes
Roland Jones
David Kelly
Zuber Lakhani
David Lam
Hartmut Logemann
Penn Mackintosh
Annie Maw
Emily McManus
Calum Mercer (Online)
Jane Millar
Bernie Morley
Michelle O'Doherty

Benji Orford Thompson
Jackson Peace
Adrian Price
Ben Rhodes (Online)
Drew Ritchie
Chris Roche (Online)
Isobel Shone
Anthony Smith (Online)
Amber Snary
Dani Stec
Michael Storey
Phil Taylor
Jennifer Thompson
Olivia Warner
Cassie Wilson
Sue Wonnacott
Geof Wood

In attendance

Katie Anderton
Laura Andrews
Helena Barrell
Ian Blenkarn
Andrew Browning
Lauren Howells
Richard Jackson
Ruth Robins
Martin Williams

Apologies

Georgina Andrews
Kimberley Bingham
Penny Jane Burke
Vivian Ching
Kevin Guy
Sarah Hainsworth
Wera Hobhouse
Jonathan Knight
Sara Russell
Chris Watt
Alun Williams

Absent

Richard Bonner
Jayne Davis

Gary Davis
Chris Eldridge
Lynne Fernquest
Dan Norris
Dayo Olukoshi
Emma Reynolds
Karen Walker
Gehan Wanduragala
Snow Wu