



Minutes: Council

Time and date: 13:00, 19 May 2025

Location: The Winslow Room, Mount Pleasant Campus, Ring Road South, Buckingham Railway Walk, Buckingham, MK18 1RY/ MS Teams

Present: Mr Mark Qualter (Chair of Council), Ms Annabel Awosika (Student' Union President), Ms Anthea Bailey (Professional Services), Ms Kristina Church (Independent Member), Mr Andy Dunkley (Independent Member), Professor Tim Evans (Independent Member), Mr Kamva Gcaza (Nominated Student), Mr Nick Hillman (Independent Member), Mr Chris Hollis (Independent Member), Mr Graham Jones (Senate Representative), Mr Martin Kersey (Independent Member – from Item 6), The Lord Peter Lilley (Independent Member), Mrs Sarah Myhill (Senate Representative), Ms Katie Nykanen (Independent), Professor Jacqueline O'Dowd (Senate Representative), Dr Adekunle Osibogun (Alumni Representative – from Item 6), Professor Göran Roos (Independent Member), Mrs Milly Soames (Vice-Chair of Council), Professor James Tooley (Vice-Chancellor)

In attendance: Mr David Cole (Chief Financial Officer), Miss Olivia Jeffs (EA to the Registrar and Chief Administrative Officer), Mr Chris Payne (Registrar and Chief Administrative Officer), Mr Laura Whitty (Head of Student Services – Item 12 only)

Secretary: Mr Sam Weston, Secretary to Council
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1 Apologies for absence

There were apologies from Professor Harriet Dunbar-Morris, Professor Göran Roos, Mr Phil Wolfenden, Ms Nadia Strone, and Mr Nitesh Magdani.

2 Declarations of interests in respect of items on the agenda

No declarations of interest were made in respect of items on the agenda.

3 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the Council meetings held on 27 January 2025 and 24 February 2025 were approved as a correct record.

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 24 March 2025 were approved as a correct record, subject to the following amendment:

- That the use of double negatives in relation to the University's Accountable Officer be removed.

4 Matters arising

All matters arising were to be addressed under the main agenda items.

5 Council member appointments

A note of thanks from Ms Josephine Mbuya, the former Alumni Representative on Council, was read out.

Mr Martin Kersey and Mr Nitesh Magdani were being recommended for appointment as independent members of Council by the Nominations and Governance Committee. Both nominations were endorsed by the chairs of the sub-committees on which Mr Kersey and Mr Magdani had served as co-opted members.

An election had been conducted to identify a nomination from among the alumni community to serve on Council. Dr Adekunle Osibogun had achieved the most votes and was duly being nominated for appointment to Council by the Nominations and Governance Committee.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the appointment of Mr Martin Kersey and Mr Nitesh Magdani as independent members of Council for the period up to May 2028 be approved; and
- (b) That the appointment of Dr Adekunle Osibogun as the Alumni member of Council for the period up to May 2028 be approved.

(Mr Martin Kersey and Dr Adekunle Osibogun joined the meeting.)

6 Chair's welcome and introduction

The Chair of Council provided the following updates:

- The meeting would be business focused, with items including the financial accounts and University risk registers, summarising the last twelve months of activity.
- It was a time for all to work together by putting the University first and working towards a more sustainable position from which it would be able to achieve its mission.

7 Vice-Chancellor's update

The Vice-Chancellor provided the following updates:

- The University's graduation ceremonies had taken place in April and were a high point for many.
- Third-year medical student Samh Jain had won the Student Athlete of the Year award in the international Keystone Awards.
- A Debating Society had been launched and had already hosted a range of speakers and events.
- The Medical School had celebrated its ten-year anniversary on 12 April 2025, with a range of attendees including staff, students and alumni gathering to remember the school's modest beginnings.
- The Medical School's 'Major Incident' event had taken place on 1 May providing Buckingham students with a unique experience. For the first time the event had also included students from a partner institution in Sarajevo and Buckinghamshire New University. Condolences were extended to the firefighter crews involved in the event who had been affected by fires in Bicester that weekend leading to a number of fatalities.

- Ms Sarah Myhill and Dr Patricia Covarrubia had travelled to Buckingham Palace by invitation of the King in recognition of their work with the Dyslexia Hub.
- The OfS had published a report on financial sustainability with the key finding being that the sector was in its third year of annual decline.
- A 'reset' deal was underway between Britain and the EU which would look at youth mobility and could lead to a reinvigoration of the EU market.
- Condition E6 would come into force on 1 August 2025 along with the latest regulations under the Higher Education Freedom of Speech Act. It was likely that tensions would arise between the two sets of requirements which would need careful consideration. The Supreme Court had also made a ruling which set out the definitions of a 'man' and 'woman'. Many universities were having to take these definitions into consideration.

8 Update reports

Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC)

- The previous meeting of the ARC had taken place on 7 May 2025. The objective of this meeting had been to review the 2024 Audit Findings, Annual Report, and Letters of Representation. A deep dive on academic quality assurance had also been requested for the meeting, along with an update on the University risk registers and compliance.
- Good progress had been seen on the University's financial processes with the report being 'clean' and delivered on time. Thanks were noted to the Chief Financial Officer, Head of Finance Operations and the Lead Financial Accountant. Only a small number of the previous year's audit findings remained in need of a resolution, and only five additional recommendations had been made. Further thanks were noted to the auditors, MHA for an efficient audit which had remained on budget. The 2024 accounts had shown a deficit of £1.2 million and an operational deficit of £650k. ARC endorsed the Annual Report and Letters of Representation.
- The University had focused internal audits on areas where it was known that action was needed as a matter of priority. Of the 112 recommendations arising from these audits, 80% had been 'completed' or were 'in progress', and the direction of travel was positive. Thanks were noted to internal auditors, KCG for their work.
- A paper had been brought forward addressing academic quality and the University's compliance with the B Conditions of Registration. A further paper had been brought forward by independent member, Professor Göran Roos with suggested improvements to ensure the Committee was provided with appropriate reassurance. The Academic Assurance Report would be updated in light of these considerations.
- No improvements had been seen in the University risk register from the previous quarter.
[Redacted]

Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee (FRC)

- The FRC had met on 1 May 2025.

- The financial challenges facing the University were reiterated. The Voluntary Severance Scheme had only achieved a quarter of its target savings and the University's deficit had grown. **[Redacted]**
- Property income was concerning, with students preferring to go to external parties for accommodation.
- A recommendation was made to appoint advisors to review the University's financial strategy and develop some options for consideration at a future Council meeting.
- Whilst a Dentistry business case had been well received and incorporated a number of the University's strategic aims, the cash outflow for the project was £8-10 million. It was therefore the view of FRC that the University could not support this investment and would not be able to go ahead without external funding.
- **[Redacted]**
- Options were being considered for the University's sites including Tingewick Road. A clear vision for the University's future was needed in order to develop property but there was not yet a clear plan in place for the next ten to fifteen years.

Arising from discussion the following points were noted:

- There were a number of occasions on which standard HR processes were not being properly followed, putting the University at risk of employment tribunal action. It was suggested that a clear strategy for addressing these matters should be brought to the next meeting and that any members of Council with a background in HR could offer support to the team. The Chair reminded trustees that whilst their involvement would be welcome in this area, though it was important that the boundaries between executive and non-executive participation should be adhered to.
- The Executive Group was in the process of reviewing proposals for cost-cutting measures. The Vice-Chancellor would consult with relevant staff in due course to determine which proposals the University should proceed with. **[Redacted]**
- Questions were posed around the Dentistry business case regarding the extent to which it could be revised at a reduced cost. Communications would go out in due course to ensure that no further resources were expended on the project until clarity could be reached on the way in which it may be delivered. There was a strong view that a conclusion needed to be reached quickly.

RESOLVED:

- (a) External advisors would be sought to look at the University's financial strategy;
- (b) Any members of Council with HR experience and capacity to assist the HR team should notify the Chief Financial Officer; and
- (c) A report would come to the next meeting of Council regarding the University's position with Dentistry.

Elected Senate Member updates

- The Senate members had taken an item to the last meeting regarding communications with Council, as requested. Views had been expressed that communications from Senate to Council were felt to be adequate, but that this was not reciprocated in the other direction. A suggestion was made for an independent member of Council to provide a regular verbal update to Senate as the Senate representatives presently did for Council. Senate did not feel this update should come from the Senate representatives themselves.
- Regarding the need for an independent review of Senate (something that had been proposed by Halpin via the governance effectiveness review they concluded at the University in 2023), the Vice-Chancellor had pointed out the present lack of resources available for this.
- There were members of Senate who did not feel that their role was respected or understood by Council.

Arising from discussion the following points were noted:

- Council's minutes were published on the University's website and had been accessible to all since late 2022. It was possible that further communication was needed with Senate to clarify the roles of Senate representatives on Council, noting that they were as much a member of Council as other members and that their role was partly to ensure cohesion between the two bodies.
- A Senate/Council communications survey had been conducted in mid-Autumn 2024 which had seen a low response rate but had raised the suggestion of the Secretary to Council delivering a written report to Senate on recent activity at Council.

RESOLVED:

That the Chair of Council and Mr Graham Jones (a Senate-elected member on Council) would follow up on the issue of Senate/Council communications offline.

9 Council Strategy and Transformation Sub-Group – Impact Report

A Strategy and Transformation Sub-Group of Council had been established to consider and propose to Council strategic and transformational approaches the University might consider taking forward as a means of securing its long-term financial sustainability and success.

An 'Impact Report' had been provided by the Chair of the committee, following its first two meetings, which had noted the following:

- The University would need to make long-term plans given the flat/negative operating margins seen since 2019, the need for investment in infrastructure, the shifting democracy, and rising competition.
- Actions to be taken included the diversification of income, baseline profitability analysis, the fixing of the portfolio, the establishment of a dedicated business development office, and a review of the University's market position.
- A number of enablers had been scoped with questions raised as to whether the University's governance could be refreshed to make it more agile to make quicker decisions and position it to respond to the ever-changing market conditions. Further questions were raised regarding

how the student voice could be brought to the fore to support decision making in the student interest.

Arising from discussion the following points were noted:

- Council members concurred with the need for greater agility and an expansion of the University's online offering.
- Concerns were raised regarding the lack of knowledge of where delays were arising from.
- The benefits of small group tutorials were acknowledged with it being suggested that an online offering would sit alongside this as opposed to replacing this.

The Council agreed that the University required urgently a cogent plan for progression to address the transformational challenge that lay before it which was exacerbated by the University's historical reliance on undergraduate recruitment, a market that was known to be shrinking. The right skills were required in the right areas of the University to support this transformation process which was considered to be of urgent importance.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

10 Recruitment and Admissions Update

Recruitment for Winter 2025 had seen a growth in the student intake by 21.7% compared with Winter 2024. Caveats were noted, including the impact of the maturing of the Medical School on the University's growth, the self-imposed loss of the Afghanistan applicant pool (see below) and the restrictions implemented on other markets.

For the September recruitment cycle, offers were down which resulted in large part from the shift in the University's applicant profile from PGT to PGR. Applications for the latter were known to take longer to process. There were additional difficulties highlighted with the University's offer letter. Applications were up 2.1%, driven largely by Education and Medicine.

The University had been contacted by UKVI earlier in the year after being flagged as an institution with a high percentage of students arriving in the UK with a University-sponsored visa and subsequently claiming asylum. The University had seen 33 of its students claim asylum in 2024, 11 of whom had come from Afghanistan. This was half of the number of students accepted from the country, another eight of whom had not shown up to register. In total, only three students from Afghanistan had commenced their studies with the University as intended. A meeting was held with representatives from the University and UKVI to discuss measures that the University would take to address the matter. It was determined that the University would no longer recruit from Afghanistan, and that a number of other high-risk countries would only be recruited from via agents.

The Government's recent Immigration White Paper had raised the possibility of an international student levy which would cost the University around £1.5 million if it were implemented.

In general, the University had performed well in its UKVI Basic Compliance Assessment and proposed changes to thresholds would be managed in the coming years. Thanks were noted to the University's Visa Compliance team.

An internal audit of Admissions had identified two key issues, with seven recommendations made in total. One of the key issues was the University's systems, in particular the fact that different systems

were in operation across the University to manage such processes. To respond to the internal audit, workshops had been carried out with Admissions staff, as well as a roundtable session with Deans and Faculty Registrars. The response was constructive with actions focused on centralisation, however increased challenge of those actions had been faced in the succeeding months suggesting that the culture of devolution had not been fully resolved.

A new offer letter had been signed off at FRC in 2024 and was now operational across the University, though delays had been experienced in regard to its implementation.

Issues had been raised regarding the effectiveness of the University's marketing function, however there was a further need to address issues with the University's offer making in order to ensure success. Consultations during the creation of the University's Strategic Plan had highlighted a desire to expand UG home market penetration and move into new directions, both in terms of the growth of apprenticeships and the curriculum itself (i.e. assessment methodology). Other issues with the University's offer included a complex pricing structure and an inability for students to access loans which represented a significant blocker for those from lower income backgrounds.

Arising from discussion the following points were noted:

- In January 2026, all FMHS students would be based in Buckingham and the UG Medicine programme would reach its full capacity. The School was looking at alternative methods of delivery in order to expand clinical capacity, as well as looking at other offerings such as PG programmes. Whilst the General Medical Council appeared sympathetic to the idea of allowing International medical students to undertake placements in their home country, there would be significant resourcing requirements for this. As such, it was not a solution in the pipeline for 2026.
- Questions were raised regarding the cost-effectiveness of the University's London campus. It was noted that this was being considered as part of the cost review that was underway.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

11 University Fundraising

The Vice-Chancellor noted the following updates regarding University Fundraising:

- An OfS report noted that 1.7% of universities' income came from donations and endowments, a level which The University of Buckingham had met. Buckingham had a small fundraising team of three, including one Director and two administration support staff divided between fundraising and alumni relations.
- Conversations with Suzanne Klatten regarding a £5 million grant had unfortunately fallen through.
- An internal audit of fundraising had returned an assessment of 'limited assurance'. The recommendations of the report would be taken into account and addressed, where there was capacity to do so.
- Further conversations were due to take place on the University's strategic approach to fundraising at an upcoming Away Day meeting of Council, Senate, Executive and the Students' Union.

Arising from discussion the following points were noted:

- The University continued to lack a coherent Fundraising Strategy and this was urgently required. Potential donors needed clarity on what projects the University required support for, what funds were needed, and what the timeline was for these projects. The Fundraising Strategy would be an iterative document as a result of input from all relevant stakeholders, with the Vice-Chancellor leading this work. It was noted that an implicit strategy for fundraising did exist at the University, and that an explicit version of the kind being discussed would not allow for flexibility in cases where donors came forward seeking to fund projects which may not be in the University's immediate plans.
- All donors, whether corporate, high-net worth individuals, or charities usually wished to meet the Vice-Chancellor and build a trusting relationship with them. Furthermore, it was noted that common sense should be exercised when making arrangements for visits from potential donors to ensure that they were given the best impression of the University. As example was given of a high worth donor who was invited to lunch in the University's refectory/canteen area, which was not felt to be an appropriate way of treating potential University donors. Visits may include the involvement of members of Council or the Chancellor, where deemed appropriate.
- Costs associated with the department were being reviewed as part of the wider cost-saving work being conducted at the University.
- A local foundation had expressed a lack of confidence in the Director of Fundraising leading to a significant amount of work being required to save the relationship with the University.
- Council member, Professor Tim Evans was in contact with a fundraiser able to raise significant sums of money, however a clear strategy and project plans would be needed before approaching this individual.

RESOLVED:

That the Away Day meeting being organised in the Autumns include an opportunity for widespread input into the formulation of a new University fundraising strategy.

(The Head of Student Services joined the meeting)

12 Students' Union Presentation

The Student's Union President and the Student Union-nominated member of Council delivered a presentation to Council on activity at the SU over the past 12 months. The Head of Student Services provided support with the presentation.

A number of developments had taken place within the Students' Union over the last twelve months. This included a new team structure, with the Head of Student Services now providing leadership and ensuring alignment of the SU's work with University objectives. The Head of Student Services further ensured connectivity with Careers and the Wellbeing, Skills and Diversity team. The department operated with a condensed team following the departure of a member of staff in Crewe, the change which moved the Bar into the Estates team, and further staff cuts. A new role had been created for a Student Services Administration Assistant split across these services. The new team was working cohesively across its three core areas: the SU President, the SU Manager, and the Administrative Assistant. This allowed student-facing Sabbatical Officers to focus on delivery, with Mr Kamva Gcaza focusing on the Student Voice and welfare matters, and Miss Maneeka Bhujun focusing on societies

and campus cohesion. There were twelve members of the SU Executive team in total covering areas such as LGBTQ+ matters, mental health support, and period poverty support.

A growth in the number of student groups had been seen with a total of 249 students engaged in sports clubs and 570 in society groups. A number of events had taken place including parties, 'crafternoons', karaoke, and a Valentines and Freshers Ball which saw over 200 students in attendance.

The SU's Strategy had been reshaped in October 2024 to reduce the document in length and focus on key areas. The vision and mission remained the same and the team was heading towards delivering a high-quality service. KPIs were in place which included increasing student satisfaction from 33% to 55%, group membership from 11 to 25, a financial target to break even, and an NSS score of 75%. One of the key areas of focus for the Head of Student Services had been the creation of systems and collation of data to measure success.

The SU's areas of success were highlighted as follows:

- Strong student engagement
- Inclusive and flexible delivery
- Operational excellence
- Effective advocacy
- Digital reach

Arising from discussion the following points were noted:

- The department was in the process of identifying what was working well and what could be improved. In a further six months they would be better able to identify what Council could do to support their work, vision and mission.
- The SU would put on trips to Oxford and Milton Keynes as it had previously should uptake justify these trips. Collaborations with local businesses had meant that more activities had been organised and were now available in Buckingham.
- Thanks were noted to the Sabbatical Officer and Head of Student Services for their excellent work at the SU.

RESOLVED:

That the SU be thanked for their informative presentation and the good work that had taken place over the preceding 12 months.

(The Head of Student Services left the meeting)

13 Office for Students (OfS) - Condition of Registration E6: Harassment and Sexual Misconduct

The OfS Condition E6 would come into force on 1 August 2025. The condition was broader than originally intended covering harassment as well as sexual misconduct. A mapping document had been completed which covered all criteria and how these were to be covered by the University. Work was underway to build on the existing framework and re-position elements as a single point of information as required by the OfS.

There was an intersection between Condition E6 and requirements coming into force around freedom of speech. The Pro Vice-Chancellor and Secretary to Council would review the work completed

previously on the University's Freedom of Speech Code of Practice to ensure that this aligned with new guidance on the subject and requirements relating to Condition E6.

An individual policy for sexual misconduct would be drafted for approval by the Executive Group in June. The Bullying and Harassment and Non-Academic Misconduct Policy would be reviewed, as would the Staff and Student Relationship Policy, which had to make a significant and credible difference to protect students. The policy would either move to implement a full ban on these relationships, unless the relationship was pre-existing or could be a less severe approach discourage these relationships. The OfS appeared to favour an outright ban, however a survey would be taken of key stakeholders to determine the most appropriate course of action for the University.

All staff and those working for the University were in scope of the training requirements brought about by the new Condition E6. This included contractors, which would have ramifications for the Faculty of Education in particular. There were several levels of training which included a general training module for staff and a more specialised training for those in support roles or those likely to engage in an investigation process. Student training was expected to be mandatory for them to complete their course which would entail changes to the University's Academic Regulations. There was an existing consent course which would be repurposed and made mandatory to satisfy the requirements of the new Condition. Students at collaborative partners and distance students would also be required to complete this training. As such, a significant amount of work was required to communicate with the various groups affected. Exemptions were in place only for students who had been victims of sexual assault.

The webpage would likely be ready sooner than expected as a number of materials had already been prepared. The materials would be replicated on the Student and Staff Gateway also.

A working group would soon be established, including representatives from the Collaborations department, to ensure that all work was completed by the deadline.

Arising from discussion, the following points were noted:

- The Learning and Development Manager was working on a 'passport' system for those who had undertaken this type of training elsewhere.
- Whilst the University had a number of mature students which may reduce its need for a ban on relationships between staff and students, its courses were mostly only two years making it easier for staff and students to wait until the student's studies were complete before commencing a personal relationship.
- The Registrar and Chief Administrative Officer would develop the 'Equality and Diversity Implications' section of the paper ahead of seeking final approval, along with including details on costs of contractor training.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Registrar and Chief Administrative Officer and the Director of HR be thanked for their work in preparing the University for the new Condition of Registration E6;
- (b) That the Registrar and Chief Administrative Officer liaise with the Director of HR regarding the facilitation of protected time for staff to complete training; and
- (c) That a survey regarding the approach to staff and student relationships be sent to relevant stakeholders.

14 2024 Financial Statements

Council be being asked to consider for approval the University's 2024 Financial Statements, Letter of Representation and Audit Findings Report following consideration at the recent meetings of the Audit and Risk Committee and the Finance and Resources Committee.

There were no issues to note, with the audit and Letter of Representation was given in its standard format. Thanks were noted to the Secretary to Council for the work done to improve the Trustees' Report. Further thanks were noted to the Marketing and Finance teams.

The University's March 2025 Management Accounts had shown that the University was off budget with similar themes occurring as they had in previous years.

The Chief Financial Officer delivered a presentation concerning the University's financial position. The OfS report on financial sustainability had highlighted the difficulties facing the sector and suggested that larger, teaching-intensive universities were more effected than some others. Impacts of the sector-wide issues were expected to vary depending on the type of institution and their areas of focus. The University of Buckingham was part of the smaller HE group, the other institutions within which were seeing increasing surpluses rather than declining ones, as was unfortunately the case with Buckingham. There were 55 institutions in this category and data on these institutions from the last two years of actuals was available. These figures showed the following:

- On average, the total income of institutions in this category was £59 million. The University of Buckingham had an income of £58.1 million
- On average, the group had a £1 million surplus. The University of Buckingham at present had a £1.4 million deficit
- The average net liquidity days was 102 versus 88 for Buckingham
- The average amount of external borrowing was £15 million versus £5 million for Buckingham
- The average total net assets were £64 million versus £25.8 million for Buckingham, which highlighted the relatively low level of unrestricted, restricted and endowment reserves the University had relative to the average of the group.

For the University, the growth and contribution from FMHS had driven the University's performance masking relative underperformance in other areas and significant growth in cost. This in turn had hampered the University's ability to invest.

The University was heavily reliant on tuition fee income, with only 1% of income coming from donations and endowments. 48% of the University's tuition fee income was from full-time UG international students, a further 31% from UG home students, 14% from PG home students, and 7% from PG international students. The income and expenditure incurred per student varied significantly per area of study which had to be taken into account when looking at student numbers.

Of the University's total donated fund balances, £6.8 million was in permanent endowments, £3.7 million was in 'restricted' funds of which £2.4 million related to scholarships and bursaries and £1 million academic chair positions, the balance of £0.3m being other small funds. These figures were included in the University's net assets, for which the University was significantly lower than the average in the group of smaller institutions. Of the total fund balances, £2.1m had been new receipts over the 5-year period since 2020, £1.8m being in restricted funds of which £1.2m related to academic chair positions.

The University's Strategic Plan set an aim of having a 10% sustainable annual surplus which would mean a surplus of £5.8 million based on 2024 income levels. There was a £9 million gap between this target and the University's 2025 budgeted cost base should income not grow in the future. Some decisions and action had already been taken to make future savings that would help close this gap,

such as the closure of the Crewe campus and the Voluntary Severance Scheme. Further discussions were underway with the Executive Group to identify further cost savings. Each member of the group had reviewed their budgets and made proposals for action. Further meetings would take place to determine which proposals were accepted and could be taken forward, in consultation with the Finance and Resources Committee where appropriate.

Arising from discussion the following points were noted:

- The University required both cost-saving and income-generating measures to be taken forward. The need for this was increasing in urgency.
- The data on the University's peer group could not be broken down any further, but it was possible that there were similarly 'specialist' institutions in the group.
- The University at times operated as 'four different universities', but its size did not allow for this and, in terms of administration of such an approach, was costing the University an unnecessarily large amount of money.

(Mr Nick Hillman left the meeting)

- A financial review would give better visibility of the options regarding financial structures.
- A change of attitude and mindset was needed to accept the reality of the issues facing the University and the wider sector. A stronger message was needed on the measures that needed to be taken.
- Leaks from the Executive Group's cost-savings discussions had led to widespread discontent among staff and further leaks had been seen from within Council in the last few months. Action was required to address such breaches of confidentiality.
- Elevating the transformation plan was at the forefront of work to be done. Council could review what they do to contribute to, and move forward, this plan given the urgency with which this now needed to be moved forward.
- Courses running at a loss for a substantial amount of time without generating a surplus should be reviewed as a matter of priority and difficult decisions would need to be tackled head-on.
- The University could look at opportunities to generate revenue from collaborations work.
- Three key solutions being explored by the sector were the utilisation of shared services on a regional/mission group basis, multi-university trusts, and mergers and acquisitions.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the 2024 Audit Findings Report, 2024 Financial Statements and Annual Report, and Letter of Representation be approved; and
- (b) That the Executive Group take forward plans to address the known cultural issues at the University, with Council to provide support as required.

15 Risk Register

The report provided had been updated to reflect conversations at the recent meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee and highlighted that the University was facing a number of risks. Despite the

Strategic Plan having been agreed in July 2023, there was a lack of ownership of the plan across the University and implementation plans for its core areas.

University governance continued to face significant pressures, which spoke to the leaks and behaviours previously discussed at the meeting. It was noted that it was behaviours and attitudes and not governing instruments which were the problem and why difficulties were persisting at the University.

Data protection risks were of a high level of concern, however plans were in place to address this matter. Nevertheless, the bandwidth of the Legal Services team had been largely taken up by a large volume of Data Subject Access Requests, which had hampered their ability to address data protection matters. Frequent excuses by staff for failure to follow HR procedures included references to different structures across the University requiring different processes to manage their data. There were numerous pieces of work ongoing to address IT infrastructure issues.

The risks surrounding the culture and behaviours at the University would need to be added to the register.

RESOLVED:

That the University Risk Register and the wider concerns as reported be noted.

16 Date of the next meeting

The date of the next meeting was to be moved to early August due to scheduling conflicts. The Secretary to Council would be in contact with trustees following the meeting to establish a new date for this meeting.

17 Any other business

The Chancellor's term had commenced in 2020 and was due to expire on 24 February 2026. Dame Mary Archer had indicated that she hoped to continue in the role, but wished to receive feedback from University stakeholders on her contributions so far, ahead of making her decision. The proposed survey questions had been reviewed and approved by Dame Mary and would be sent to key stakeholders imminently. Further updates would be provided in due course regarding the decisions surrounding the Chancellor's term.

RESOLVED:

The Registrar and Chief Administrative Officer would send a survey to key stakeholders, including Council, Senate and the Executive Group, in the coming weeks regarding Dame Mary's contributions.

Start time of meeting: 13:00

End time of meeting: 17:30