



**Minutes:** Council

**Time and date:** 13:00, Monday 8 December 2025

**Location:** Hybrid: Chandos Road Building, First Floor, Room 118, Station Road, Buckingham, MK18 1DL / MS Teams

**Present:** Mr Mark Qualter (Chair of Council), Ms Annabel Awosika (Students' Union President), Ms Anthea Bailey (Professional Services), Ms Kristina Church (Independent Member), Mr David Cole (delegated Vice-Chancellor), Mr Andy Dunkley (Independent Member), Professor Tim Evans (Independent), Mr Nick Hillman (Independent Member), Mr Chris Hollis (Independent Member), Mr Graham Jones (Senate Representative), Mr Martin Kersey (Independent Member), The Lord Peter Lilley (Independent Member), Mr Nitesh Magdani (Independent Member), Mrs Sarah Myhill (Senate Representative), Ms Katie Nykanen (Independent Member), Dr Adekunle Osibogun (Nominated Alumnus), Professor Mrs Milly Soames (Vice-Chair of Council), Mr Phil Wolfenden (Independent Member)

**In attendance:** Professor Debarpita Bardhan-Correia (Dean of the Faculty of Business, Humanities and Social Sciences), Mr Gary Cattermole (The Survey Initiative – for minute 38), Mr David Cole (Chief Financial Officer), Ms Katie Gunn (Governance Manager), Professor Aida Hajdarpasic (Executive Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and Health Science), Ms Diane Jackson-Gould (Director of HR – for minute 38 and 39), Mr Chris Payne (Registrar and Chief Administrative Officer) Professor Harin Sellahewa (Dean of the Faculty of Computing, Law and Psychology), Mr Robert Tailby (Financial Consultant – for minute 37)

**Secretary:** Mr Sam Weston, Secretary to Council  
Tel: +44 (0)1280 820166 (Internal Ext 2166)  
Email address: [Samuel.weston@buckingham.ac.uk](mailto:Samuel.weston@buckingham.ac.uk)

## 29 Apologies for absence

Apologies were sent on behalf of Professor Harriet Dunbar-Morris, Mr Kamva Gcaza, Professor Göran Roos and Ms Nadia Strone.

The Vice-Chancellor, Professor James Tooley, was not present due to ill health.

## 30 Declaration of any pecuniary, family or other personal interests in relation to items on the agenda

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

## 31 Minutes of the previous meeting on 30 October 2025

The minutes of the Council meeting held on the 30 October 2025 were approved as a correct record.

## 32 Matters arising

It was confirmed that individuals with an academic background would be considered in the next Council recruitment process.

### **33 Decisions taken via correspondence**

It was noted that approval had been given to the University's Prevent Accountability Return following consideration at the Audit and Risk Committee's meeting on 20 November 2025. The Prevent Accountability Return was therefore submitted on 28 November 2025 ahead of the deadline of 1 December 2025.

### **34 Chair's welcome and introduction**

The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting and noted that it was Council's last meeting of 2025.

Thanks were extended to all members of Council for their commitment and input after what had been a challenging year for the University.

The Chair confirmed that there were plans in place to complete annual development reviews with all Council members early in 2026. The review process had been designed to be a positive and collaborative experience, allowing feedback to be shared and development needs addressed.

#### Office for Students - Emerging Sector Risks

It was noted that Professor Edward Peck, Chair of the Office for Students (OfS) had sent a letter to governing body Chairs regarding 'Emerging Sector Risks' and it was highlighted that there were five key potential issues facing providers. The issues were noted in the letter as financial pressures, significant change programmes, third-party and off-campus delivery, misuse of public funding and legal compliance following commencement of the new free speech duties. It was emphasised that Council should be aware of these issues and monitor them closely. A copy of Professor Peck's letter had been included with the papers for the meeting.

In addition, it was noted that the OfS had updated their strategy and the Chair highlighted that the key word taken from the strategy had been 'collaboration'.

#### **[Redacted]**

It was confirmed that the Chair, Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and the Registrar and Chief Administrative Officer were due to meet with the OfS on 9 December 2025. It was expected that the meeting would include a discussion regarding the Council's implementation of the recommendations made in the Halpin Governance Effectiveness Review and the aforementioned issue of financial sustainability.

### **35 Vice-Chancellor update**

The CFO provided this update to Council.

The CFO had participated in a round-table discussion with Wonkhe, Mills and Reeve and nine other Vice-Chancellors. Discussion focused on university governance and boards, and it was noted that some individuals in the discussion felt that they were engaged and valuable and others noted that they were not understanding or engaged in the sector. This highlighted the diversity of experiences that were present within the group.

In addition, recruitment of unpaid roles was discussed as well as governance involvement in significant change projects and it was questioned why governing bodies appeared not to have been actively engaged in strategic projects. The CFO highlighted how Council had worked together to resolve the issues at Crewe which was noted as being a strong example of how effective governance engagement could be without overstepping boundaries, and how it appeared that the Cornerstone project was moving in the same direction.

The CFO confirmed that the University's governance was in a good position in respect of the array of skills and experience it now had, and that it appeared to be in a stronger position than the Executive Team. A 'team building' day had recently been carried out for the Executive Team which was noted as having a positive impact on all individuals involved.

**[Redacted]**

The CFO positively acknowledged the attendance of the Faculty Deans at Council's meeting.

## **36 Update reports**

### Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC)

The following update was provided by the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC):

- At the Committee's meeting on 20 November 2025, it was confirmed that the 2025 external audit approach and the 2026 internal audit plan had been approved. In addition, it was confirmed that the University's Prevent Accountability Return had been considered and recommended to Council for approval by written correspondence (this had subsequently been approved by Council as set out in Minute 33).
- An update had been received on the progress that had been made on the following:
  - Outstanding external audit matters
  - Internal audit recommendations
  - Risk Registers
  - Regulatory Compliance reporting
- The main risk areas on the external audit were revenue recognition, management override and related party transactions. It was confirmed that 'going concern' issues would be monitored closely.
- Medical Property Management Limited (MPML) was due to be dissolved imminently, following the sale of properties. Therefore, one less audit would be required and subsequently fees were estimated to be lower than the previous year. It was confirmed that there were some changes to the accounting for income recognition and the treatment of leases which would have implications for reporting of the 2026 figures.
- The Internal Audit Plan would proceed in 2026 with an Academic Governance Audit, which would essentially cover the Senate's effectiveness, a similar review to that undertaken by Council via Halpin which reported in August 2023. It was confirmed that this would be priority resulting in other planned internal audits being postponed to 2027.
- The Internal Audit Progress Report demonstrated that progress was being made in addressing recommendations. There were thirteen actions that were considered 'overdue', but this was felt to be manageable.
- The Student Recruitment and Marketing Audit had received a 'satisfactory assurance' assessment which was noted as being a good outcome for the University particularly in the current environment.
- It was confirmed that the Annual Internal Audit Opinion would be presented to ARC at its next meeting on 11 February 2026.
- There had been no significant change to the Risk Register since Council's last meeting on 30 October 2025. It was confirmed that sixteen of the gross risks remained as red and eleven of

the net risks remained as amber. It was noted that the main risks related to the Strategic Framework, partnerships and market performance.

- The risk of employment dispute had risen but there was hope that this would improve in 2026.
- Compliance risk was noted as being manageable however, there was concern in relation to visa refusals. It was again confirmed that the University was no longer accepting applicants from Afghanistan which meant that the University's position was expected to improve.
- The Committee of University Chairs' (CUC) Higher Education Audit Committees Code of Practice (May 2020) required the Audit and Risk Committee to submit an annual report to the Governing Body to set out its opinion in respect of key areas falling within the Committee's remit. It was noted that a draft report had been produced and following a detailed discussion at ARC's meeting, the report would be submitted to Council at its next meeting on 25 February 2026 prior to onward consideration at Council in support of the end of year audit and accounting process.
- It was noted that the Director of Digital Transformation and Technology had provided ARC with a 'reassuring' presentation on the University's cyber security and IT position along with a detailed action plan. The challenges facing the University in this area were, however, significant.

#### Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee (FRC)

The following update was provided by the Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee (FRC):

- The Committee's last meeting had been held on the 18 November 2025.
- It was noted that the independent and externally facilitated Staff Survey had been completed but that the results had not been shared during FRC's meeting as it was confirmed that they would initially be shared with the Executive Group.
- The importance of confidentiality was noted as well as the importance of effective challenge and scrutiny.
- The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the University was acknowledged with celebrations due to begin in February 2026. It was felt that a strong communication stream would be required to ensure that the University was being positively portrayed, and that the University utilised the opportunity to appeal to donors.
- The University's strategy was noted as requiring a refresh. The importance of striking the right balance between the roles of the Executive (operational) and Council (governance) was noted and that the strategy should align with, and be owned by, the University as a whole. It was felt that the ideas and expertise from the Executive and Operational Management should be developed into a new strategy which should then be positively scrutinised by Council.
- It was noted that the Director of Digital Transformation and Technology had provided FRC with an update in relation to his findings since joining the University in the summer of 2025. It was confirmed that the transition to CyberEssentials+ was on track with servers and software due to be updated to ensure renewal would be achieved by January 2026. This was felt to be a significant step forward for the University.
- There had not been an update in relation to the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS), although it was confirmed that the CFO was due to have a meeting with them on 12 December 2025. An update was therefore likely to be provided at FRC's next meeting in February 2026.

- It was noted that, in relation to the University's bank covenants, the University had chosen to delay confirmation of renewing its loan in the expectation that interest rates would decrease. The interest rate on the loan had previously been at 1% but base rates were now at 6%.
- At FRC's previous meeting, the Chair of the Inclusion Committee had provided an update and advised that there was currently no Council representation on the Committee. It was noted that Mr Martin Kersey had subsequently volunteered to serve on the Committee and this had been proposed by the NGC to Council for approval.
- It was noted that the University was trialling a more targeted approach to bursaries and renewals.
- Human Resources (HR) and Finance were recognised as potentially requiring separation at Committee level, as the material from both areas was confirmed as being substantial for a single Committee to manage. Some discussions had taken place regarding the potential for an additional 'People' Committee of Council, at which the people elements of the FRC's current remit could be given more focus.

**[Redacted]**

- The 2025 Annual Health and Safety Report had been reviewed by FRC and submitted to this meeting for approval.
- It was recognised that there was a need to increase the security presence at the University. Currently, only one contracted security officer was noted as being on duty during out of hours and so, it was felt that it was required to strengthen the University's security provision for students and staff across all campuses. FRC had approved a decision to commission a third party to run this service going forward and the paperwork relating to this decision had been included for Council's awareness as per the requirements of the Scheme of Delegation.
- It was acknowledged that the University was unable to encourage students to reside in the accommodation on campus. To address this, the quality of the accommodation must be improved, as the current standard had been negatively affecting the overall student experience. This, in turn had impacted University income.
- A leak had occurred from the roof of the Vinson Building, and it was confirmed that the roof had not been constructed in accordance with regulations. As a result, the roof was required to be removed and reconstructed costing c.£400k. The warranty cover for the original works was being pursued by the University with that provider.

President of the Students' Union

The following update was provided by the President of the Students' Union:

- The Students' Union had experienced a busy but productive year.
- Collaborations within the student voice initiatives had been acknowledged which allowed students to express themselves through pop-up events and Town Hall meetings which were proving to be well attended.
- 'Culture Fest', a collaboration between the Desi, Afro-Caribbean and Punjab societies and the Students' Union, had been organised to celebrate students' culture and diversification. The event proved popular with high engagement numbers.
- Student partnerships had not fully met the expected standards, and it was confirmed that engagement would be undertaken to improve and enhance the process going forward.

It was highlighted that this would be the final meeting attended by the current Students' Union (SU) President before her tenure ended on 31 December 2025. Thanks were expressed to her for her significant contribution to Council during her year on the board.

### Elected Senate Representatives

The following update was provided by the Elected Senate Representatives:

- Mr Graham Jones had attended the University Town Hall meeting on 26 November 2025, together with other members of Council, to respond to questions from staff. It was noted that some negative feedback had been received regarding the answers provided. It was emphasised that, in future, it would be important to consider how matters are communicated, in addition to what is communicated.
- Concern had been expressed for the Vice-Chancellor who was currently on sick leave. It was noted that some individuals felt that a public expression of thanks or a presentation on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor would be appropriate.

RESOLVED:

That the updates of Chairs, the SU President and Senate members be noted.

## **37 Financial matters**

The CFO provided an update to Council.

### 2026 Annual Budget

Despite the sector challenges, the CFO confirmed that it was expected for the University to make a small surplus in the 2025 and 2026 budget which was positive considering that many universities in the sector were in a deficit position.

It was noted that the income growth of the University had been fuelled by the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences (FMHS). Undergraduate cohort sizes had increased in 2023 but in 2027, it was expected that they would plateau. In 2026, cohort sizes were expected to be lower with income growth expected to tail off towards the end of the year and into 2027.

Although the budget for 2026 looked sufficient, it was noted that a substantial amount of work would be required in various areas to secure the University's ongoing financial sustainability.

It was confirmed that the Faculty of Education (FEDU) had continued to grow in student numbers however it did not generate a considerable contribution.

The Faculty of Business, Humanities and Social Science (FBHS) and the Faculty of Computing, Law and Psychology (FCLP) were both anticipated to be continuously declining year-on-year with lower student recruitment numbers in 2024 and 2025, but it was noted that there were contingencies in place to improve student numbers.

The CFO confirmed that the focus for 2026 should be on resetting and considering the University's future.

Following the Chancellor's recent budget statement, it was noted that an International Student Levy of £925 per international student beyond the first 220 registered per year would be imposed from September 2028. It was noted that this would cost the University between £1.2m and £1.4m. Fees for September 2028 are due to be approved in February 2027 and the University will need to take a decision at this time whether to absorb or pass on the cost of the levy to students.

## [Redacted]

The level of stress amongst staff remained a risk across the organisation. It was noted that there were numerous ongoing activities across the University and this included the Faculty of Education which had expanded significantly while operating with the same level of resource. Within the Digital Transformation team, it was confirmed that there was a substantial demand on staff. It was highlighted that it was important to determine an appropriate approach to manage the strain that workload was having on staff.

Questions were raised in relation to the cost of living and dominance over people's day-to-day lives. It was noted that the University had been under financial constraint, however, it was noted that in the peak of the 'cost of living crisis' in April 2024, staff members received a pay increase of £1,000 to £1,500 (depending on their band) and in 2025, staff members had again received a pay increase, albeit one slightly lower than the previous year. As the minimum wage was due to increase by 4%, it was noted that the University planned to proceed similarly to 2025.

Staff promotions had been postponed until there was clarity on the September and January intakes, on the basis that the University could only implement such promotions if there were the funds in place to do so. It was noted that this was reflected in the risk register and highlighted as red.

A question was raised in relation to the TechnologyOne system and the opportunity to carry out a sensitivity analysis. It was confirmed that this would need to be completed for modelling in relation to the audit which would be completed in 2026. It was noted that student management had not been implemented but it was highlighted that this would be key for data and for a more analytical approach to decision making.

It was confirmed that there were a lot of processes that were being reconciled in the new system and that there were many legacy processes which were being discarded however, the University was making good progress.

Regarding the University's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations that were scheduled to commence in February 2026, concern was raised specifically in relation to the University's lack of a fundraising strategy to leverage the planned celebrations. However, it was confirmed that although it would take a considerable amount of time to fix the current strategic issues around fundraising, a short-term plan would be developed to recognise the anniversary. The Vice-Chair of Council offered support to the CFO if required.

It was queried whether there was sufficient accountability at a senior level for departmental/faculty budgets. The CFO confirmed that, historically, this had not been the case; however, as part of the plan for 2026, it was noted that accountability would be a key focus within the Executive Group and that the University's objectives would be defined across specific areas. It was also noted that this would begin with a team building day as collaborative working was acknowledged as being important.

The Faculty Dean of Business, Humanities and Social Sciences stated that, for this year, work had been undertaken with the Finance Business Partners to ensure that individuals were managing and being responsible for their budgets. It was confirmed that conversations had taken place to acknowledge when numbers had not been reached and questions had been asked regarding what could be done to improve.

*(The Financial Consultant joined the meeting at this point)*

## Modern Slavery Statement

Council was asked to approve the Modern Slavery Statement for the year ending 31 December 2025 which would subsequently be published to the University's website.

**[Redacted]**

There had been ongoing frustration due to the absence of a clear fundraising strategy for the University for approximately three years. Such concerns had been aired on multiple occasions at meetings of Council and committees. It was hoped that the issues relating to the University's fundraising could be resolved early in the new year.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the 2026 Annual Budget and financial forecasts be approved; and
- (b) That the Modern Slavery Statement be approved.

*(The Financial Consultant left the meeting at this point)*

*(The Director of HR joined the meeting at this point)*

*(Mr Gary Cattermole joined the meeting remotely at this point)*

### **38 Staff Survey 2025 feedback**

The Director of HR introduced Mr Gary Cattermole from The Survey Initiative to Council.

Mr Cattermole shared a presentation with Council concerning the recently run Staff Survey.

The Survey Initiative had worked collaboratively with the University, to develop the Staff Survey and to ensure that the relevant questions were asked of staff. It was confirmed that, in October 2025, the survey had been completed by 60% of staff members which was acknowledged as being approximately eight percent below the sector average.

It was noted that the rationale behind the survey was to understand the engagement within the organisation. It was highlighted that engagement trends, not just in the UK, had been decreasing since 2023 and the education sector was facing challenges. However, it was noted that the engagement levels were higher than had been anticipated for the University given the turbulent period it had been through.

The gap between the highest and lowest engagement levels within various departments was acknowledged, as it was wider than would typically be expected. While the Estates Team were generally amongst the lowest in terms of engagement in the sector, at the University, they had demonstrated a notably high engagement level. It was felt important to identify what actions could be taken to better support the areas that recorded lower engagement levels.

A graph was presented to Council to highlight potential blockers of engagement. It was advised that the University should be strategic in its response and select a few key areas for development. It was highlighted that communication, University leadership and staff well-being should be identified for improvement as all were the most frequently referenced.

Positively, it was noted that the University had received high scoring feedback on its line management and feedback clearly showed that the University was student focused.

It was advised that staff should be informed clearly about the actions planned regarding their feedback, for example, completing a 'You Said, We Did' project to highlight that staff had been listened to.

The number of staff members that intended to stay working for the University had been higher than individuals on Council had expected and this was questioned. Mr Cattermole advised that this feedback was not unusual and that it showed that many staff members potentially felt frustrated but that they enjoyed the work that their job entailed. In addition, given that the sector had faced numerous challenges, individuals may have been too apprehensive to leave the University.

Following the next Staff Survey, it was questioned whether the feedback could be distributed to Council members prior to the meeting to allow time for members to read the information. In addition, it was queried whether there had been a question relating to staff pay and it was advised that this had not featured in the 2025 survey but would be considered going forward.

Thanks were expressed to Mr Cattermole for his presentation.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the 2025 Staff Survey results be noted; and
- (b) That the presentation from The Survey Initiative on the headlines emerging from the 2025 Staff Survey be noted.

*(Mr Gary Cattermole left the meeting at this point)*

*(The Council adjourned for a short break)*

### **39 HR Matters**

The Director of HR provided an update to Council.

#### 2024 Annual Remuneration Report

It was confirmed that in November 2021, the Committee of University Chairs (CUC) reissued “*The Higher Education Senior Staff Remuneration Code*” which was situated within the context of the overarching Higher Education Code of Governance. This set out the values that good governance was based on, including integrity, sustainability, inclusivity, excellence, innovation and community. The values, together with the ‘Nolan Principles of Public Life’ would provide an ethical framework for the determination of the remuneration of all staff, including those at a senior level.

Council was therefore asked to approve the content of the 2024 Annual Remuneration Report and to approve the publication of the report to the University website to ensure that it would be readily accessible.

RESOLVED:

That the content of the 2024 Annual Remuneration Report be approved for publication on the University website.

### **40 Academic Framework and Calendar**

The Registrar and Chief Administrative Officer provided an update to Council.

It was noted that, for a number of years, the University had been interested in amending its academic calendar. A formalised version had been developed to detail the undergraduate and postgraduate calendars for the Senate’s approval.

It was noted that the development of the process would entail a substantial amount of work, but it was confirmed that it should be transformational.

It was questioned whether the TechnologyOne system would be able to assist the transition and it was confirmed that, although it had originally been planned for both programmes to align for implementation at the same time, the risks would be too high as it was noted that, if a problem was to occur with the TechnologyOne system on the day that the calendar was due to go live, it could potentially mean that the project would get delayed to the following year.

It was questioned whether staff had been informed of the change and it was confirmed that there had been widespread discussion of this. The Registrar and Chief Administrative Officer confirmed that he would be hosting a webinar to explain the project drivers and how processes would look post implementation. It was noted that relevant Faculty Deans had been consulted and were in broad support of the proposals. They would also be involved in the implementation discussions. In addition, students, including the SU President, had been consulted and concerns had been addressed.

It was confirmed that a survey, which had received the Senate's approval, had been prepared in order to gather feedback from staff and it was confirmed that the results would be shared with Council.

It was queried whether there would be implications for the graduations that were due to occur in 2028/2029. It was confirmed that the graduation dates would remain broadly as they were, but the cohorts would change so that the graduation in autumn would be bigger than the graduation in July.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the three term academic calendar structure be noted for launch in autumn 2027; and
- (b) That the revised Academic Framework be noted.

#### **41 Student recruitment and admissions update**

The Registrar and Chief Administrative Officer shared a presentation with Council.

It was noted that acceptances for January 2026 were currently down by 6.6% although there had been an increase of 124% for postgraduate research acceptances.

In relation to offers in January 2026, it was confirmed that they were down by 9.7% in comparison to January 2025.

##### UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI)

It was confirmed that the University had attended two informal meetings with UKVI. It was noted that one of the meetings had been held to discuss the number of applicants to the University that had subsequently claimed asylum. It was confirmed that when individuals had claimed asylum, they were unable to enrol at the University. This had therefore affected the University's enrolment and completion rates. It was confirmed that in 2024, there had been 23 asylum claims out of around 240 individuals.

It was noted that the University was not currently compliant with the metrics in the 'Immigration White Paper'. It was confirmed that, out of the 11 refusals in September 2025, 7 of them were in relation to Pakistani applicants. A discussion was due to be held with the Executive Group to highlight the potential of refusing applications from Pakistan.

The University was responsible for using a third party and AI system for financial checking and it was noted that there would be opportunity to extend this in order to complete credibility checks. It was confirmed that, once the conversation with the Executive Group had taken place, it would be important to acknowledge a plan moving forward as this could leave the University in a position of being non-compliant with the metrics in 2026. Although it was noted that the 'Immigration White Paper' had been stringent, the UKVI required a plan moving forward. It was highlighted that there could be major implications pushing for a more dynamic relationship between the UKVI and institutions.

It was questioned whether the 'Education Export Strategy', which was due to be published prior to the end of December 2025, had been considered due to the Home Office's changes to

applications. It was confirmed that the University was aware but that there had not been any indication whether there would be positive changes.

RESOLVED:

That the Student Recruitment and Admissions update be noted.

## **42 University key performance monthly update report**

The CFO and Registrar and Chief Administrative Officer provided an update to consider the proposed format of a University key performance monthly update report. The report was intended for monthly circulation to Council which had been a proposed action that had emerged following consideration of the Gillies Report.

It was confirmed that the report had been a work in progress and was being presented to Council for thoughts and comments to enable the format to be taken forward from January 2026.

It was questioned whether a target for recruitment could be added to the report to clearly show the comparison figures with those of 2024. It was also questioned whether a headcount could be added to highlight the number of permanent and temporary vacancies at the University; however, it was confirmed that this had been avoided until there was a clear understanding and maturity had been reached.

It was also noted that it would be useful to include compliance issues and 'reportable events' to identify what was outstanding and whether the University continued to progress as planned.

In relation to casework, the figure of 1 formal complaint was fairly typical with the University handling approximately 10-15 per year on average which, according to the OIA, was typical for the size of university.

It was confirmed that the total of 16 listed against 'conduct' was typical for the University as this included both major and minor issues. It was noted that the University regularly won cases that progressed to the Ombudsman, but it was confirmed that, in general, where it lost cases it had been because internal processes had not been followed. Fitness to Practise cases (16 in progress currently) were becoming more prevalent and were often complex and time-consuming requiring expert medical and legal support.

It was acknowledged that current workload was high which subsequently placed a burden on Senior Academics and Senior Administrators to conduct investigations. It was noted that for 2026, a total of £50k had been budgeted for external legal support in this area.

RESOLVED:

That, with the additions as noted, the proposed format and data within the University key performance monthly update report be approved for future circulation to Council via email.

## **43 Regulatory compliance update**

[Redacted]

RESOLVED:

That the Regulatory Compliance update be noted.

## **44-49 Supporting Papers**

It was RESOLVED that the following supporting papers be noted:

- (a) The Council Register of Interest
- (b) The Executive Register of Interest
- (c) The unconfirmed minutes of the Finance and Resources Committee held on 18 November 2025
- (d) The decision of the Finance and Resources Committee to approve a contract for University Security Management
- (e) The update report of the President of the Students' Union
- (f) An update report of the Registrar and Chief Administrative Officer concerning:
  - i. Regulatory Compliance
  - ii. Student and Academic Services
- (g) The October 2025 Management Packs and Commentary

It was RESOLVED that the following supporting papers be approved:

- (a) The University's Annual Health and Safety Report 2025

## **50 Date of next meeting and schedule of meetings in 2026**

The next ordinary meeting of Council had been scheduled for 10:00 on Wednesday 25 February 2026 (on campus/MS Teams).

*(The CFO, The Executive Dean from the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences and The Registrar and Chief Administrative Officer left the meeting at this point)*

## **51 Any other business**

### Staff Survey

A discussion raised the question of what actions would be taken subsequent to the results of the staff survey. It was confirmed that a series of meetings would be scheduled to discuss the results with the Executive Group and it was noted that actions were currently in progress within certain faculties.

Overall, it was noted that many staff members were unhappy and that a happy and respected workforce was the foundation of an organisation and so, it was considered important to focus on this. It was noted that many staff members felt that they were not appreciated for their contribution to the University, even after many years of service and it was highlighted that, if the University wished to succeed, then it was essential to ensure staff members felt valued.

Certain members of Council highlighted the principal weakness within the University as being communication. It was noted that consideration should be given to achieving the right balance between pro-active communication and respecting confidential and commercially sensitive information. It was acknowledged that this had been covered at the most recent Town Hall meeting, but it was confirmed that it was difficult to ensure all issues were responded to. It was noted that the University required a senior strategic individual to manage communication, strategy and PR related issues to ensure key messages were communicated in the right way.

**[Redacted]**

Start time of meeting: 13:00

End time of meeting: 17:10