Council

25/20 A meeting of the Council was held on Monday 10 March 2025, in Room 201 Carrington Building Whiteknights.

Present at the meeting on Tuesday 19 November:

The President	(In the Chair)
The Vice Presidents	(Mr Kevin Corrigan & Ms Kate Owen)
The Vice-Chancellor	
The Deputy Vice-Chancellor	(Professor P Yaqoob)
The Pro-Vice-Chancellor	(Dr C Baylon)
The Pro-Vice-Chancellor	(Professor E McCrum)
The Pro-Vice Chancellor	(Professor D Zaum)

Mr S. Alexander
Mr S Ali
Mrs S. Butler
Professor. E Beleska-Spasova
Professor R. Frazier
Mr. S Gandhi
Mr. J Haxell
Mr. J Jack
Mr. J Liu
Mrs S. Maple
Mr. A. McCallum
Mr P. Milhofer
Mr P Milner
Mrs S Peck
Professor K Strohfeldt
Dr Janet Young

In attendance:

The Chief Strategy Officer and University Secretary
The Director of Finance
Ms E Ashley, Deputy Director of Finance
Mrs E Murphy-Boyce (minute secretary)

Apologies had been received from Professor Gibbins, Mrs. S Plank and Dr. C Shaw. Mr. J Liu left the meeting at 3pm.

25/21 President's opening remarks (item 1)

The President welcomed Council members and noted that as always, there were some important matters on the agenda.

She welcomed Cat Redding, Reading Students' Union CEO, to the meeting and noted that Council would be hearing a presentation from Ms. Redding alongside Mr Haxell and Mr Gandhi, on the 'Life of a Student' project that RSU had being carrying out.

The President acknowledged that it was the Director of Finance's last Council meeting before he retired in April, and thanked him sincerely for the work he had done for the University. She noted that the Director of Finance had bought shape and clarity to reporting and engagement on the analysis of the University's financial position, which had been welcomed by Council members. The President noted that the Director of Finance was hugely respected by his colleagues and wished him well for his retirement.

The President acknowledged that the Chief Strategy Officer and University Secretary, Dr Messer, had confirmed his intention to retire from the University in November 2025. The President noted that Dr Messer had served the University diligently for decades and that he would be greatly missed. It was acknowledged that work was being undertaken by the Vice-Chancellor to determine what the future of the role might look like, considering the need to ensure all elements of the role were adequately covered (overseeing strategy, governance, and the Corporate Services Directorate), and that Council would be updated on this in due course.

The President noted that Council would be hearing an update on the Life of a Student project, and presentations from Professor McCrum on both the Portfolio Review Programme and academic quality and standards. A further presentation would be delivered by the Vice-Chancellor and Professor D Zaum on feedback from the planning round. Dr Baylon would provide further information on the proposed strategic partnership with Tianjin that Council were being asked to approve under the Significant Partnerships Policy, noting that the operational work on the project was still underway.

The President informed Council that Mrs. J. Young would be speaking to Council about a matter concerning the NIRD Trust. She noted that Council would be asked, in their capacity as trustee of the NIRD Trust, to approve a number of recommendations made by the NIRD Trust Committee. Papers would be shared with Council members following the meeting and members would have the opportunity to comment or ask questions via email.

The President noted that there was lots of change going on in the sector and that it was important to ensure that Council were fulfilling their role supporting change within the University and being a critical friend. It was vital that Council offered high support and, where necessary, high challenge while enabling change and making bold decisions.

The President noted that Dr Messer and the Director of Corporate Services, Ms. Rowe, were leading on a Governance review at the University. This was very important work and sought to review how committee structures work in the University, including Council. It was noted that the heads of Council sub-committees would be contacted by Dr Messer and Ms. Rowe in order to partake in the review, in due course.

The President noted that appraisals for Council members would be taking place soon, and would be an opportunity for members to reflect on their contributions to Council so far, this academic year.

The President reminded Council members that Court was taking place later that evening, and noted that she hoped to see many members of Council there.

25/22 Vice-Chancellor's opening remarks (item 1)

The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that he would be giving Council an update on how things had changed since his first Council meeting as Vice-Chancellor back in 2018. This would be done under item 7 the Report of the Vice-Chancellor.

The Vice-Chancellor announced that a new Chief Financial Officer had been appointed. Vinodha ('Vin') Wijerantne would be starting the new role at UoR on 28 April. The Vice-Chancellor explained that Mr Wijerantne had great experience and very positive references and that he would hopefully be attending Council in June.

25/23 Life of a Student (item 3)

Mr Alexander (Chair of the Student Experience Committee) introduced the item. Mr Alexander noted that Council had previously received an online session on the Life of Student project. He noted that Council has asked to see more data based, rather than anecdotal, evidence in this area and that the presentation to Council today reflected that. Cat Redding, the CEO of Reading Students Union was attending Council to inform them of the initial findings of the project, based on the data collected. This work aligned with the student segmentation work that had been undertaken by the Student Experience Committee.

Ms Redding provided Council with her professional background, [redacted, section 40]. She stated her priorities for the role as ensuring the agility of RSU (and not allowing stagnation to occur) and listening to student voices. She noted that external companies had been used to help RSU with the Life of a Student Project and that together they had taken an innovative approach to grouping students, analysing them as people and attempting to understand their motivations for attending University.

Ms Redding informed Council that the data gathering for the project had involved an short intercept interviews with 80 students, followed by a quantitative survey with approximately 1500 students and that the final stage would be focus groups with students from each designated segment. Ms Redding confirmed that once final findings were shared with RSU, the project would move into the strategic development phase which would in turn inform RSU's new strategy.

Council received a presentation setting out the key findings from the segmentation project. They were informed that traditionally, across the sector students were grouped by their programme of study, or where they were from. RSU's project, involved grouping students by what they wanted and what their motivations were for attending University. It was noted that 4 key themes had become apparent from the project, these were:

1. Progression – those students motivated by a desire to succeed (important factors included career, connections and leadership skills).
2. Finding balance – those students seeking fun around study and work (important factors included independence and feeling energised)
3. Security – those students seeking multi-faceted support (important factors included personal safety)
4. Belonging (important factors included creating memories, deepening friendships, self-expression and connection)

Council were informed of some of the key insights from the data derived from the project. The data showed that over half the students surveyed did not like asking for help, with just under half saying that the transition to University was difficult for them. Students seemed focused on achievements and were ambitious, with many stating that they considered their degree part of building towards their future employment. Further insights included, a general worry about money caused by the cost of living crises that was having a detrimental impact on university experience, the important of mental health support, being a global citizen, and receiving practical support to overcome any difficulties experienced while at University.

In repose to questions raised by Council members:

- It was confirmed that although insight from employers can be helpful in terms of what they are looking for from potential employees, as different students will go into different fields in can be had to generalise the advice. It was noted that today's students were looking for opportunities to socialise with intent. Students were looking for events and functions that allowed them to socialise and have fun, while building contacts or experience that would benefit their future career goals. RSU had increased the number of paid graduate roles within the SU and were working with the Careers Team to increase networking events available to students.

- It was noted that today's students were interested in politics, and that universities should be a free space for students to provide political views on campus, so long as the views were within the law. It was agreed that everyone should have the opportunity to speak up equally. Ms Redding noted that the University's response to the encampment on campus last academic year had been much better than that of other universities. Ms Redding noted that it was important for RSU to have a role in fostering tolerance on campus and encouraging respectful debate, diversifying programmes and holding more events.
- It was confirmed that there wasn't currently a regular mechanism for receiving student feedback to RSU, but RSU were introducing a new insights team which Ms Redding hoped would build a more data driven hub for RSU. She noted the need to gather data in a formal way so that the RSU could be agile to the student voice. It was noted that RSU hoped that eventually the student data collected by them could be used to help inform University policy and decisions. Ms Redding noted that RSU and the University had a great relationship and she hoped that RSU would become a data tank for the University, in terms of student views.
- In relation to the themes identified from the Life of Student Project, and how the information obtained could be used to improve recruitment, it was noted that the cost of living crises was affecting students in all areas of the country, but that essential costs like rent was often cheaper in northern areas of the UK. It was confirmed that the University was very good as ensuring the safety and security of its students. It was noted that the University's current position as 'Sustainable University of the Year' in the Times Good University Guide, was having a positive impact on student recruitment. Location was cited as in important factor in students deciding to come to Reading, with easy access into London. It was noted that there was still some work to do in terms of students feeling that they 'belong' at the University, but Ms Redding noted that this was improving. She noted that RSU hoped to be able to provide advice to students about how to be safe activists and how to safeguard students both on and off campus when carrying out activism. It was noted that Liberty had some helpful material on this.
- It was noted that similar work was being undertaken by the University in terms of collecting data from applicants, and that it was encouraging to see that similar themes were coming up in both projects. It would be helpful to compare to two sets of data, once the Life of a Student work was completed.
- It was noted that in relation to plans to share student data collected as part of the Life of a Student Project with the University, further advice on compliance with GDPR or other data protection legislation should be sought before doing so.

The President of Council asked the RSU representatives to set out their top three asks of Council, which were as follows:

1. For the University to look at the RSU as a data bank, and that as a result, RSU can be more involved in key University decision making

2. Continue to support RSU in its growth agenda, noting that it was taking a professional and informed approach.
3. Opportunity for further interaction between students and Council members, including a networking dinners or events where Council could share experience and advice with students.

The President noted that this would be Mr Haxell's and Mr Gandhi's last meeting as RSU sabbatical officers. She thanked them on behalf of Members of Council for their excellent contribution to Council and wished them the very best of luck for the future.

25/26 Portfolio Review Programme: final report (item 4)

Council received a presentation from Professor McCrum on the closure of the Portfolio Review Programme (PRP), and the resulting achievements and benefits.

Professor McCrum noted that she had first spoken to Council about the project back in 2020 as a consequence of the University's post-Covid response, which in turn had laid the foundations for the University's new strategy. The drivers of the programme were to improve student experience and wellbeing, to review the programme portfolio in order to ensure the best students were recruited, to improve the staff and student workload, and to ensure the best use of University resources.

The programme and module review was undertaken in order to reduce the number of programmes and modules within the University, in order to give students real choice in a meaningful way. The University also made changes to its structure, moving from three terms to two semesters. This was done for a number of reasons including to ensure that students were being taught closer to when they were assessed, to maximise time and space and to make operational efficiencies. Following the move to blended learning during the pandemic, the PRP project provided a good opportunity to intentionally redesign programmes to include both in person and virtual elements in a way that worked best for staff and students. A new VLE, Blackboard Ultra, had been implemented to support this work.

Professor McCrum summarised the main changes that had been made as a result of the PRP Programme.

- Programmes – changes to programmes in order to offer coherent and cohesive programmes to students. Programmes were updated to embed sustainability and develop ideas of belonging and transition. A compulsory first semester of modules had been introduced in order to help students transition to university.
- Modules – create commonality in module size and shape across the University. The changes looked to correct issues of parity and workload across modules.
- Assessment – review of the types and amount of assessment across modules, introduction of a standard maximum of 2 assessments per each 20 credit module. There had been a deliberate move away from so many in-person exams.
- 350 programmes and 2000 modules had been reapproved by the University's Programme Board which had been a substantial piece of work.

Professor McCrum informed Council that while it wasn't possible to measure the full benefit of the programme yet, the indicators showed that the number of programmes had been reduced by 35%, the number of modules had been reduced by 20%, unique pathways had been reduced significantly and timetabling had been improved. The process of embedding the changes into business as usual was now underway, along with the internal in-progress evaluation. A separate independent evaluation of the programme was expected to start in early 2026.

It was noted that over 20 other universities had reached out to Professor McCrum for advice on carrying out similar projects at their institutions.

The President extended her thanks to all the staff involved in the programme, both academic staff and colleagues in professional services.

Council members recognised that the PRP was a very complex project and that it was a fantastic example of a change project delivering what it was designed to do. It was noted that lessons should be learned from the project to apply to future large scale projects and that continuous improvement processes were important. Professor McCrum noted that there was still work being done to ensure the changes made as a result of the project were embedded, including escalation routes should anything slip, monitoring processes, including a benefits tracker, and ongoing management of the portfolio.

In relation to comments from Senate, it was acknowledged that there were some further lessons that needed to be learned form the project and the impact that it had on academic staff during implementation. Professor McCrum noted that long term the benefits of the project would outweigh any negatives. Professor McCrum explained that the next phase of the work would involve going back to schools to try and reduce exceptionalism even further in relation to, in particular, long, thin modules which impacted staff workload.

The President of Council noted that implementation of the project was still underway and that the benefit tracking piece was yet to conclude. The project achievements and initial benefits were acknowledged and the closure of the project noted. The President extended her thanks to Professor McCrum, Professor Strohfeldt and everyone else involved in the project.

Resolved :

1. 'That the Final Report on the Portfolio Review Pathway, so submitted, be received
2. That having regard to the relevant minute of the Senate, the closure of the Portfolio Review Project, and it's achievements and benefits, be noted'

25/27 Academic quality and standards: assurance provided to the Council by the Senate, including a request to approve the Annual Learning and Teaching Report (Item 4)

Council received the Annual Learning and Teaching Report.

Professor McCrum informed Council that the report had been seen and commented on by both the Senate and the Student Experience Committee. She explained that the Office for Students measured key indicators around continuation, completion and progression, and that these were national thresholds that all registered providers were required to achieve. Professor McCrum assured Council that the University well exceeded the required thresholds.

[Redacted, section 43].

Professor McCrum acknowledged the residual issue of low continuation rates amongst black students and on foundation programmes, and explained that the University had a specific taskforce looking at ways to tackle this.

Regarding the National Student Survey, it was noted that the University was in the best position that it had ever been and that it was exceeding benchmarks and sector averages. The University was being impactful in areas that it had not been historically such as assessment, student voice and partnerships.

Members of Council were encouraged to access the background reading in the Council papers for further and more detailed information in this area.

Council members noted the good results and the improvements the University had made, although they acknowledged the BAME awarding gap and the importance of working to close this. The awarding gap was sector wide and the University had initiatives in place that it believes would be impactful.

The President noted the huge amount of work that goes into quality assurance at the University and thanked the colleagues involved. The President confirmed that Council accepted the Learning and Teaching report and were assured on the matters of academic quality and standards reported to it by the Senate.

Resolved :

1. 'That Council is assured on the matters of academic quality and standards, as reported to it by the Senate, and commented on by the Student Experience Committee
2. That the Annual Learning and Teaching Report, so submitted, be approved'

25/28 Outcome of the planning round 2025-30 (item 5)

Council received a presentation from the Vice-Chancellor. The Vice-Chancellor informed Council that he would be speaking about the wider Higher Education context, and progress made since the presentation he made to Council in November 2024. The Vice-Chancellor reminded Council that at the November meeting of Council he set out a new strategic direction, which built on the existing strategy, and included a proposal for UoR to be a top 100 university within the next 5-10 years. [Redacted, Section 43]. As part of the previous presentation, the Vice Chancellor had informed Council that in order to improve the financial position and sustainability of the University, some hard decisions would need to made by Council and that some proposals put forward would require a greater risk appetite than that expressed previously, and a need to move quickly to make the most of opportunities for growth.

In terms of the planning report, the Vice-Chancellor confirmed to Council that the finances being reported today were in line with those set out at the November 2024 Council meeting. Final figures were still being calculated but it appeared that the income from International PGT students in 2025/26 would be slightly lower than predicted last November but this reduction had been mitigated.

The Vice-Chancellor gave some background on the current UK Higher Education context. He noted that many Universities were announcing cuts, and that this included some of the Russell Group Universities. He suggested some potential reasons for this including inflationary pressures, reduced numbers of international PGT students, the increase in employers National Insurance and the fact that the full economic cost recovery of our research only stands at 68%. The Vice-Chancellor concluded that it was becoming evident that the current Government doesn't have funding plans to support Higher Education beyond reinstating inflationary adjustments for Home UG tuition fees.

The Vice-Chancellor showed Council members some data related to a number of S10 universities and their application totals over the previous seven years. While many comparable universities were showing a decline in applications, data showed that high quality undergraduate applications to UoR were increasing year on year. This had resulted in a growth of student numbers at intake with the exception of 2024, the reasons for which Council were already aware of. The Vice-Chancellor noted that Council had made a decision in November 2024 to take a longer term approach dealing with the resulting financial shortfall, to avoid non-strategic cuts.

The Vice-Chancellor provided an update on the Global Sustainability Leaders Scholarship. He confirmed that it had been developed and launched and that over 100 applications from AAA grade students (or AAB from those from a deprived background) had been received. Further updates would be provided to Council in the coming months. Council were also informed that the introduction of learning analytics had been approved and was under development, and that two targeted voluntary redundancy schemes had started, targeting areas of the University based on outlying staff/student ratio.

In terms of updates related to the University's international activities, the new Provost at University of Reading Malaysia was now in post, a new ISLI foundation programme structure had been approved, and UoR had just been ranked in the top 101-150 in the Times Higher Education reputation rankings.

<u>2024/25 Planning report</u>

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Planning and Resource), Professor Zaum, spoke to Council about the 2024/25 planning report. [Redacted, Section 43]. The University was making targeted investments in research particularly in the areas of Climate and Weather Science and Agrifoods.

Professor Zaum presented a chart to Council mapping the different parts of the University against research quality and financial performance, and sought views on whether high-level data reflected in this way was helpful, in order to determine whether to develop the work further. Council members reported that it was helpful to see complex data set out in this way but sought further clarity on what good performance would look like on the chart. It was clarified that the charts would be useful when looking at changes in performance over time, in order to see the direction that each area of the Univrsity was travelling in. It was noted that access to high level data such as that reflected in the chart was useful in terms of putting in place specific plans and support for areas that were failing to meet requirements, although this would depend on how long the issues had existed – the data may also help with future planning exercises. It was agreed that further explanation on the data and the chart would be welcomed by Council.

It was noted that the Planning Report had been scrutinized by Scrutiny and Finance Committee and that further scrutiny in relation to the timing of actual monetary realisation of the proposals was on their radar. It was recognised that the University was seeking to pull on both the growth and cost control levers and that this was a big ask on staff and that the Council was conscious of this. The planned use of some of the University's investment fund allowed for a calculated risk and acted as a shock absorber in relation to the University's growth plans.

The President confirmed that Council members had reviewed the Planning Report and accepted it as the basis for which the 2025-2026 budget can be prepared for review and approval on 30th June 2025.

Resolved :

1. 'That, having regard to the scrutiny that has been undertaken by the Scrutiny and Finance Committee, the outcome of the planning round 2025-2030, is accepted as the basis on which the budget for 2025-2026 can be prepared for approval at the next meeting of Council'

25/29 Tianjin partnership (Item 6)

Council received papers on the Tianjin Partnership Proposal.

The Pro-Vice- Chancellor (International), Dr Caroline Baylon presented the contextual background to Council. The Partnership was being brought to Council under the new Significant Partnerships Policy, which was created to ensure greater assurance in relation to bigger, more significant partnerships, and ensure appropriate oversight by Council. Dr Baylon explained that Council were not being asked to approve any of the operational aspects or plans related to the proposal, just the entering into the partnership itself. Dr Baylon reminded Council that a full business case had been provided and that this had been approved by the University Executive Board and endorsed by the Scrutiny and Finance Committee – the minutes from the meeting of the Scrutiny and Finance Committee where the proposal was considered were included in the Council papers made available to members.

Dr Baylon explained that the proposal was an example of the type of opportunity that required the University to work in a more agile and less risk averse way, which was the direction of travel endorsed at the November meeting by Council. Dr Baylon explained that the opportunity had presented itself and the University had grabbed it. Even though things had moved quickly, Dr Baylon reassured Council that the University had not compromised on the due diligence that had been carried out and that the University Executive Board had been comforted by the thorough processes that had been undertaken. Dr Baylon explained that the project was being managed in collaboration with colleagues from across the University, and that it had a fairly large programme team that met weekly. The board was taking on lessons learned and successes from similar activity that had been carried out at the University previously. [Redacted, Section 43].

Dr Baylon noted that in terms of the China context, things were changing rapidly but that Tianjin was a prestigious University in China and it was positive that they wanted to partner with the University on Business programmes. She further noted that due to rising costs in China, Chinese students were struggling to travel to the UK to undertake study here, having the partnership with Tianjin in China provides some mitigation for this. It was confirmed that the work was being supported by many different colleagues including from within ISLI and professional services, [Redacted, Section 43].

[Redacted, Section 43].

[Redacted, Section 43].

In response to questions from Council members:

- [Redacted, section 43]
- Dr Baylon confirmed the proposal required Chinese Ministry of Education approval, which

was likely to take 3 to 9 months from the time an application was made. [Redacted, section 43]

- Dr Baylon noted that Council members were supportive of the proposal and understood the benefits of partnership with prestigious Chinese partners.
- [Redacted, section 43]
- [Redacted, section 43]
- In response to a question about maintaining academic freedom, Dr Baylon accepted that while principles of academic freedom were different in China, the proposal was purely a teaching partnership in business programmes, and so she didn't foresee anything problematic. She confirmed that nothing would be censored and that Tianjin would be delivering University programmes.
- Dr Baylon noted that there was concern about whether the project had learned enough about resource requirements beyond the implementation phase from previous partnerships to ensure that there was capacity at the University to keep the programmes running during BAU. [Redacted, section 43]
- Dr Baylon noted concerns about the sharing of data with China and assured Council that the University was taking this seriously. Council members urged caution in relation to data sharing and IP.
- Dr Baylon accepted that although the partnership proposal was with Tianjin University, the site of the joint institute was Hainan, which was a long way from where Tianjin was based. She noted that Tianjin had a number of UK partners that were doing similar things but accepted the concern that the University may not have the full picture of what was going on at Tianjin University given the geographical position of the joint institute. Dr Baylon reassured Council that in order to mitigate this risk, there would be joint leadership of the institute, with the University's appointed leader being based on the ground in Hainan. The University was also delivering a third of the teaching on the agreed programmes and so University staff would have oversight. She further confirmed that the quality assurance for the programme would remain with the University and would be done from the UK.
- [Redacted, section 43]. She noted that the top 1% of Chinese students wouldn't necessarily come to the University of Reading, but that they would go to Tianjin. The University had maintained a close working relationship with Tianjin for over 10 years.

The President thanked Council for their input and the really important points that had be raised. She noted that UEB had approved the proposal and Scrutiny and Finance Committee had endorsed the proposal. Council were being asked to agree that the University can enter into the proposed partnership with Tianjin. The President noted that there was lots of operational work still to do in terms of business continuity challenges, residual issues set out in the legal advice paper and that there was much more for the University to satisfy itself of prior to signature, which was likely to take at least 9 months. The president noted that the proposal wasn't without risk but that Council were being presented with an opportunity by the University to support its growth plans. The President sought agreement from Council members that, notwithstanding the operational work still to do, it was content for the University Executive Board to move ahead. It was noted that there would be no plan to bring the proposal back to Council unless something material or a particularly risk level change , in which case the President noted that further scrutiny by Council may be required.

Resolved :

1. 'That, having regard to the scrutiny that has been undertaken by the Scrutiny and Finance Committee, strategic approval is given, for the University to enter into a significant partnership with Tianjin University'

25/30 NIRD Trust

Janet Young as Chair of the NIRD Trust Committee spoke to Council about matters on a very recent NIRD Trust Committee meeting agenda. She confirmed that papers would be being sent to Council members the next day with a number of matters for review and approval if members were content to do so.

[Redacted, Section 43].

The NIRD Trust Committee was also agreeing that Council, acting as NIRD Trustee, approve the proposed grant request of £7.5 million for the year 2024/25 to support Agrifood research, .

The third matter concerned the current Loddon Garden Village development. The majority of this land was owned by NIRD, but the University had incurred all the costs in terms of planning and preparing the land for disposal, and NIRD Trust Committee agree that Council can approve the reimbursement of these costs in cash back to the University, in its role as trustee. The reimbursement amount requested was £2.2. million.

Ms Young confirmed that these detailed NIRD papers would be shared with Council members the next day, with an opportunity for questions and comments in writing, until 18 March 2025.

Items for report

25/31 Report of the Vice-Chancellor (Item 7)

Council received the report of the Vice-Chancellor.

The Vice-Chancellor noted that the University had been successful in securing two awards from the Advanced Research and Invention Agency (ARIA). One was significant, with a value £2.8 million and was linked to research into Climate Change. He also confirmed that the OfS had written to all regulated universities requesting submission of in-year financial monitoring document, which was due to the OfS taking an enhanced role in the financial sustainability of Higher Education Institutions.

[Redacted, Section 43].

The Vice-Chancellor would soon be hosting a meeting of leaders and CEOs of local authorities to discuss devolution and what benefits this may bring to the University.

Resolved:

1. "That the Report of the Vice-Chancellor, so submitted, be received"

25/32 Report of Scrutiny and Finance Committee (Item 8)

Council received the Report of the Scrutiny and Finance Committee.

The Vice President of Council, Mr Corrigan explained that the committee had looked at a proposal concerning Greenlands , and that it had determined that it was minded to approve a feasibility study. Mr Corrigan remined Council members that the University is the Trustee of the Greenlands Trust and so approval for any course of action would at the appropriate time need to be given by Council in its role as sole Trustee.

[Redacted, Section 43].

Council members noted that there were defined charitable purposes for Greenland Trust assets and so any proposals linked to the site must be in accordance with these and the governance must be monitored to ensure it is appropriate. [Redacted, Section 43].

[Redacted, Section 43].

The Director of Finance spoke to Council members about the Financial Quarter two report. He confirmed that quarter two was looking broadly as predicted, and that unfortunately, this meant that the deferral of the 2024/25 pay award (previously approved by Council) would not be reversed. [Redacted, Section 43]. The Director of Finance noted that the current view on the financial sustainability of the Higher Education sector was having an impact on the ability of universities to source lending , however, the risk to UoR in this regard was minimal, given its strong balance sheet current position.

Resolved :

1. 'That the Report of the Scrutiny and Finance Committee, so submitted, be received.
2. [Redacted, Section 43].
3. [Redacted, Section 43].
4. That the FQ2 report, be noted.'

25/33 Report of Senate (Item 9)

Council received the Report of Senate.

It was noted that the annual Learning and Teaching Report had already been agreed earlier in the agenda.

Resolved:

1. 'That the Report of Senate, so submitted, be received
2. That, the fact that the Senate considered matters under 'Assurance on Quality' to identify how these reports provide assurances as to the quality of provision, be noted'

25/34 Report of Appointments Committee (Item 10)

Council received the Report of Appointments Committee

The Vice President of Council Ms Kate Owen noted that a number of members of Council were going to the end of their second term as Council members, and a number of members were coming to the end of their first term. Performance of members would be considered as part of the appraisal process.

The University was currently considering the best way to approach replacement of Dr Messer's role, once he retired in November 2025.

Resolved:

1. 'That the Report of the Appointments Committee, so submitted, be received

2. That, in relation to membership of the Council, the fact that a number of renewals in Class 2, (as detailed in the report) would need to be made before 31 July 2025, was noted

3. That findings of the Advance HE report on the Diversity of Governors in HE, be noted

4. That the retirement of the Chief Strategy Officer and University Secretary as of 30 November 2025, be noted'

25/35 Report of People and Remuneration Committee (item 11)

Council received the Report of the people and Renumeration Committee.

The Vice President of Council, Ms. Owen noted that the committee were keen to ensure that the staff voice was heard in terms of decisions made at Council. It was noted that a staff survey had been conducted and would be used as a way to pick out themes for further exploration at Council meeting, with relevant colleagues invited to attend particular themed meetings.

Ms. Owen noted that the Governance Review was ongoing and that the chairs of Council committees were being spoken to currently, but there would be an opportunity for whole Council involvement at a later date.

Resolved:

1. 'That the Report of the People and Remuneration Committee, so submitted, be received

2. That the fact that University had launched a full staff engagement survey, was noted

3. That the University was undertaking a Governance Review Project, was noted'

25/36 Report of Investment and Development Committee (Item 12)

Council received the Report of the Investment and Development Committee.

The Vice-President of Council, Mr. Corrigan, noted that the future size and shape of the Investment Fund was continuing to be looked at, [Redacted, Section 43].

Mr. Corrigan noted that the committee had developed a new Investments Policy which would be coming to Council for approval in June 2025.

Resolved:

1. 'That the Report of the Investment and Development Committee, so submitted, be received'

25/37 Report of Student Experience Committee (item 13)

Council received the Report of the Student Experience Committee

Resolved:

1. 'That the Report of the Student Experience Committee, so submitted, be received'

25/38 Report of Audit Committee (Item 14)

Council received the Report of the Audit Committee.

It was noted that the report included assurance that the University Pension scheme is adequately funded.

Council members stated that an overriding worry for Council was a cyber security attack, and it was confirmed that an update on IT risk and Cyber Security would be coming to Council in June, through the Audit Committee.

Resolved:

1. 'That the Report of the Audit Committee, so submitted, be received'

25/38 Suggested items for future Council meetings

Council received a paper on suggested items for future Council meetings. It was noted that the June meeting was already full of important items, including a report on professional services and the use of AI. Members were encouraged to speak to Dr Messer with any further suggestions for future meetings.

Resolved:

1. 'That the paper setting out discussion items for future Council meetings, so submitted, be received"

Items for note

25/39 Minutes (25/01-25/19) of the meeting held on 21 January 2025

25/40 Matters arising not arising elsewhere on the agenda, if any

None

25/41 Decisions taken by the President on behalf of the Council

None

25/42 Documents sealed and to be sealed

25/43 Any Other Business

None

25/44 Dates of meetings of the Council for the Session 2024/25:

Monday 30 June 2025 at 10.00 am

25/45 President to lead on brief reflections on the meeting of Council that has just concluded