

**COUNCIL**  
**Wednesday 5 February 2025 from 14.00-18.00**  
**08BB04**  
**MINUTES**

*Sections marked Commercial in Confidence are claimed as exempt from publication under Section 43 of the Freedom of Information Act on the grounds of commercial sensitivity.*

<b>Members:</b>	Chair – External member	Mr Charlie Geffen
	Joint Vice-Chair – External member	Mr Vib Baxi
	Joint Vice-Chair - External member	Ms Rachel Hubbard
	Treasurer - External member	Mr Robert Napier
	President & Vice-Chancellor	Prof Max Lu (to 25/016)
	Provost & Executive Vice-President	Prof Tim Dunne
	Chief Operating Officer	Mr Will Davies
	President, Students' Union	Mr Liam White
	Member elected by Senate	Dr Josh Andresen
	Member elected by Senate	Dr Charo Hodgkins
	Member elected by Senate	Prof Jin Xuan
	External member	Prof Dame Julia Buckingham
	External member	Ms Judith Eden
	External member	Ms Pam Jestico
	External member	Mr Nigel Jones
	External member	Ms Pam Powell
	External member	Sir Philip Rutnam
	External member	Dr Helen Turner

**In attendance:** Ms Ros Allen, Head of Governance Services (secretary)  
Ms Martine Carter, Vice-President Strategic Growth  
Mr Matthew Knight, Chief Financial Officer  
Ms Sarah Litchfield, University Secretary & Legal Counsel

**By invitation:** Prof Lisa Collins, PVC Research & Innovation (25/010 and 011)  
Mr Matt Purcell, Director of Health and Safety (25/014)  
Ms Emma Rowsell, Acting Chief Student Officer (25/015)

#### INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

**25/001 Preliminaries**

.1 There were apologies from Judith Eden, Pam Jestico and Philip Rutnam.

**25/002 Declarations of Interest**

.1 None

**25/003 Minutes**

.1 Council **approved** the minutes of the Council meeting held on 27 November 2024 for publication and the minutes of the Awayday held on 28 November 2024, not for publication.

**25/004 Matters Arising**

- .1 The updated actions log was noted.
- The date for the additional Council meeting on SRP remained to be agreed.
  - The COO would circulate an update on the Stag Hill House action and there would be a full Council discussion at a later date.
  - The Programme Review update will be the main subject of the academic matters at the March meeting.

**STANDING ITEMS**

**25/005 Chair's items**

- .1 Council ratified the following resolutions:
- Approval of Annual Report and Financial Statements and Letter of Representation by Convene resolution on 18 December 2024;
  - Approval of updated Ordinances by Convene resolution on 20 December 2024;
  - Approval for the appointment of the VC Search panel and its delegation authority by Convene resolution on 13 January 2025.
- .2 The Chair provided a briefing on pre-meeting discussions. The main focus was on how Council could support the exec team to deliver the Strategy, particularly with the departure of the VC and the challenge of achieving an £8m surplus. They had also discussed recruitment of a new VC and external members.
- .3 It was noted that a follow up Effectiveness Review pulse review would be circulated shortly and reported to the March meeting.

**25/006 Vice-Chancellor's Report and Performance Monitoring**

- .1 The VC presented the report.
- .2 The following further points were noted:
- There has recently been more positive news regarding the potential indexing of UG Home fees to inflation. As there have only been informal views expressed, no assumptions will be made until there is a formal announcement. However, the planning round will look at modelling of the impact.
  - EB is confident that it will deliver the £8m surplus this year and is reviewing further opportunities for savings and income. There will need to be consideration of subsequent years regarding how to maintain a surplus whilst investing in the future.
  - It was noted that a Surrey academic had published an article saying that students are mollycoddled and this had gone down poorly with students
  - With respect to the NSS, there were positive signs from the positive results of the latest Pulse Survey and the Semester 1 MEQs, although they represent relatively small samples and there may be academic areas where students are less satisfied.
- .3 The University is taking a proactive approach on AI and recently held a workshop on how it could be used in teaching, research and support. Council queried how the University is

ensuring the security of its data in the context of staff potentially using systems like ChatGPT or those which record and take minutes at meetings. It was noted Surrey has not unlocked the intranet to large language models and that the guidance was that if you are not sure where the data is going, you should not share it with an AI app. A formal procedure is being developed. Council asked to see the procedure when it is finalised and suggested a special briefing for Council would be useful.

**Action: RA**

.4 *Redacted as commercially confidential.*

**25/007 Management Accounts and Financial Planning**

.1 Matthew Knight gave a presentation.

.2 *Redacted as commercially confidential.*

**25/008 Cash release update**

.1 Will Davies and Matthew Knight gave a verbal update.

.2 *Redacted as commercially confidential.*

**25/009 University Strategy and follow up from Awayday**

.1 Martine Carter presented the paper.

.2 The examples of what is being progressed in each area were noted. The following points were noted:

- There are significant opportunities for external funding for a Space Institute, primarily government funding.
- Personal Tutor Review is focused on freeing up academic time and improving student attainment.

.3 It was agreed that an update, including progress against milestones, would be provided to every meeting.

**Action: RA to add Strategy update as a standing item.**

.4 Council noted plans for communication.

**25/010 Pan University Institutes**

.1 Lisa Collins attended to present the paper.

.2 The unintended consequences of the original design were noted. The approved recommendations were noted, along with how they will work, particularly with respect to the financial model. It was recognised that not all staff want to be formally PUI staff. There is therefore the opportunity for any member of staff to be part of a PUI as a fellow, on a voluntary basis. The new model is being disseminated to the Faculties at present.

- .3 The three criteria to be used to evaluate new opportunities for Pan University Institutes were noted:
- Research quality and scale, grant income, outputs and other metrics
  - Funding opportunities
  - Impact
- It was suggested that there should be consideration of potential for international collaboration included within the criteria.
- .4 It was recognised that there would need to be flexibility to respond to new opportunities that arise. The University should communicate the successes of the PUIs both internally and externally.

**25/011 Research and Innovation update**

- .1 Lisa Collins attended to present the paper.
- .2 Award volumes are down, largely due to timing issues in the Research Councils. The margins are up, mainly due to the research culture work that has been taking place.

**25/012 Recruitment update**

- .1 Charlie Geffen provided an update on the recruitment of a new VC and external Council members.
- .2 With respect to the recruitment of a new VC, the panel are close to appointing a search firm and will let Council know in the next few days. The search firm will then spend some days on campus, meeting students and key Executive Board and other staff members to understand the University and its requirements. A marketing document will then be put together and timing will be discussed. The panel will ensure that communication and engagement take place with Council and the wider community. There will be an opportunity for engagement with short listed candidates.
- .3 With respect to the recruitment of new external members, a long listing meeting will take place on 14 February. The highest priority will be to recruit a new audit chair.

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**ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION AND/OR APPROVAL**

**25/013 Annual Corporate Risk Management Report and Risk Appetite**

- .1 Will Davies presented the report.
- .2 EB carried out its thorough annual review of the risk appetite in December. Its recommendation for no change to the existing risk appetites was then approved by AAC in January. Whilst the high-level risk appetites have not changed, EB asked for there to be consideration of breaking down the Research, Innovation and Impact risk appetite by sub area. With regard to regulatory risks, serious regulatory requirements have the most averse risk appetite, but all regulatory requirements are taken seriously. The AI risk appetite would be captured by the cyber security and IT risk appetites. Council **approved** the risk appetite.

- .3 EB the previous day looked at risks to Strategy Delivery and revising the approach to risk reporting. Council asked that the risk register show movement in risks. It noted that there is a disconnect between L2 and L1 risks. The new risk register will come to March EB and then to May AAC.
- .4 The current highest risks have not seen any change. A new risk has appeared on the L1 risk register concerning the maintenance backlog, reflecting the gap between expenditure and the requirements. The 'Voids at SRP' risk is less of a concern. H&S risks have remained near the top of the risk register for some time and have been discussed at AAC as some risks have not moved over many months. A plan is being put into place to resolve the issues. A paper will come to AAC shortly.

**25/014 Annual Health and Safety Report**

- .1 Matt Purcell attended to present the report.
- .2 He commented that H&S at the University has developed substantially over the last 5 years and is continuing to move in the right direction. There is a comprehensive risk register, which is sector-leading.
- .3 The next step is to look at the behavioural element. There is more to do with regard to tools for managers, and this will be the focus of the strategy over the next few years. This will increase expectations on managers. There are IT systems that would provide better support and monitoring of compliance and should be considered in the longer term.
- .4 There is also a need to ensure that all groups of staff are covered. It was suggested that the focus should be on technicians in the front line of much of the health and safety work. Staff are being divided into distinct groups, including a technical support staff group. Helen Turner reported that she can share a report on how such staff can feel unsupported.
- .5 Council noted the large amounts of hazardous waste produced by the University, much of it from Chemistry, as well as life sciences. It is collected and energy recovery takes place as far as possible.

**25/015 Student Wellbeing Annual report**

- .1 Emma Rowsell attended to present the paper.
- .2 Work continues on developing a wellbeing strategy. It links to the 2041 Strategy.
- .3 The Centre for Wellbeing is seeing more students accessing their services. Waiting times have increased, but high-risk students are seen the same day. A large proportion of those presenting themselves self-diagnose as being at risk of harm. There will come a point when the staffing resource would need to be increased to maintain a decent level of service, but at this point the team are looking at introducing innovative ways to deal with more students and trying to intervene earlier, to avert more serious problems. There was discussion of whether the University is setting too high a KPI with respect to waiting times, as they are much shorter than the NHS waiting times.

- .4 Liam White commented that he felt that all the issues were well covered in the report and there are no particular additional points to raise. The Pulse Surveys are showing slightly lower satisfaction with Wellbeing among those who accessed its services.
- .5 There was concern about students who do not access the service, despite struggling with issues. Wellbeing makes students aware of services and were number 1 in the UK in the NSS for this area. There are many points of access to wellbeing services, but it was accepted that there will always be those who will not reach out. There is also an issue of students disengaging with the team and not turning up to appointments. The team are taking measures to deal with that and get students-in-need to re-engage. If there is a concern, then other services such as Campus Safety would be involved.
- .6 There are a spectrum of safeguarding cases, involving activity within and external to the University. Whilst 30 cases seem high, the team take a cautious approach in raising issues of safeguarding.
- .7 Council acknowledged the amazing work that the Wellbeing Team do and asked for their appreciation to be passed on to them.

**25/016 Scheme of Delegation**

- .1 Sarah Litchfield presented the paper.
- .2 The changes were noted. The only significant amendment not already noted by Council, is the requirement for the VC to approve any litigation.
- .3 Council **approved** the Scheme of Delegation for implementation as and when the changes to the Charter and Statutes are approved by King's Privy Council.

**25/017 Emeritus Staff appointments**

- .1 Tim Dunne presented the paper. The VC was not present for this item.
- .2 Council noted the recommended appointments.
- .3 The University will consider giving an honorary degree to the first candidate.
- .4 Council **approved** the appointments as outlined in the paper.

**25/018 Items for future meetings**

- .1 Council noted the paper. Members were asked to let RA know of any other items to be covered.

**C ITEMS FOR INFORMATION ONLY**

**25/019 Health and Safety Report**

- .1 Council noted the paper.

**25/020 TRAC return**

- .1 Council noted the paper.

**25/021**      **Committee Reports**  
.1              Council noted the reports.

**25/022**      **Information Pack for Reference**  
.1              Council noted the pack.

<b>D</b>	<b>CLOSING ITEMS</b>
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**25/023**      **Any Other Business**  
.1              None

**25/024**      **Date of next meeting**  
31 March 2025

**Mr Charlie Geffen, Chair**