

COUNCIL
Thursday 5 February 2025 from 14.00-18.00
Lakeside Private Dining Room
MINUTES

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Members:	Chair – External member	Mr Charlie Geffen
	Treasurer - External member	Mr Nigel Jones
	President & Vice-Chancellor	Prof Stephen Jarvis
	Provost and Senior Vice President	Vacant
	PVC Research and Innovation	Prof Lisa Collins
	Chief Operating Officer	Mr Will Davies
	President, Students' Union	Mr Matt Aikin
	Member elected by Senate	Dr Femi Adeyemi-Ejeye
	Member elected by Senate	Dr Charo Hodgkins
	Member elected by Senate	Prof Jin Xuan
	External member	Prof Dame Julia Buckingham
	External member	Mr Nick Gatfield
	External member	Ms Pam Jestico
	External member	Ms Sarah Miles
	External member	Ms Pam Powell
	External member	Sir Philip Rutnam
	External member	Dr Helen Turner
	External member	Mr Philip Whitecross
	External member	Dr Linda Wilding

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

By invitation: Prof Tao Chen, Associate Vice President, International (26/013)
Ms Helen Litvak, Director of Marketing and Communications (26/011)
Mr Matt Purcell, Director of Health and Safety (26/014)
Ms Emma Rowsell, Chief Student Officer (26/015)
Dr Abhijit Sengupta, Dean of GIFT City (26/012)
Ms Laura Smythson, Interim Director of Student Life (26/015)

INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

26/001 Preliminaries

- .1 There were apologies from Julia Buckingham.
- .2 Lisa Collins was welcomed to her first meeting of Council.

26/002 Declarations of Interest

- .1 None

26/003 Minutes

- .1 Council **approved** the minutes of the Council meetings held on 20 and 28 November 2025 for publication.
- .2 Council **approved** the minutes of the Council/Executive Board Awayday held on 21 November, but not for publication.

26/004 Matters Arising

- .1 The updated actions log was **noted**.

STANDING ITEMS

26/005 Chair's items

- .1 The Chair provided a briefing on pre-meeting discussions which focused on REDACTED AS COMMERCIALY SENSITIVE and the International Engagement Strategy.
- .2 Council ratified the resolutions approved outside of the meeting:
 - Appointment of Sarah Miles to Remuneration Committee, approved by Convene resolution on 9 December 2025
 - Approval of Annual Report and Financial Statements, approved by Convene resolution on 11 December 2025
 - Appointment of Tim Dunne as Emeritus Professor, approved by Convene resolution on 22 December 2025
 - Appointment of Lisa Collins to Council as an interim member in the absence of a Provost, approved by Convene resolution on 13 January 2026

26/006 Vice-Chancellor's Report on strategic matters and sector context

- .1 The VC presented the paper.
- .2 Council noted that there had been a successful visit from the Duchess of Edinburgh and the Duke of Kent the previous week.
- .3 The current Chancellor will have completed 50 years in summer 2026. There are plans for an event to celebrate this milestone in the summer.
- .4 Council noted an update on research. REDACTED AS COMMERCIALY SENSITIVE Council noted the potential impact of government funding priorities on Surrey. To mitigate the potential impact, Faculties have been asked to diversify funding sources and be prepared to bid for opportunities which align with government priorities.
- .5 REDACTED AS COMMERCIALY SENSITIVE REDACTED AS COMMERCIALY SENSITIVE

26/007 Follow up from Awayday

- .1 Martine Carter presented the report.

- .2 Council noted the summary of the Away Day discussions and the actions identified to support the development of the University's Strategic Plan. A more formal document would come to Council in the Spring with a view to a final version coming in July for Council approval.
- .3 The following points were noted:
 - .3.1 More detailed data and financial information will be provided for the next Council meeting.
 - .3.2 Major strategic initiatives such as the Research Institutes and the brand work are being incorporated into the wider plan.
 - .3.3 EB was holding an Awayday the following day and would be scenario planning. Plans would be integrated into the Goodall Strategic and Financial plan for the next 5 years.
 - .3.4 EB was reviewing REDACTED AS COMMERCIALY SENSITIVE opportunities and the associated resources. Opportunities to stop activities are also being considered.
 - .3.5 The Executive Team were identifying the immediate priorities. Council questioned whether senior management resource was sufficient to drive forward all priorities. It was noted that the University is out for advert for more senior roles (including the Provost).

26/008 Management Accounts

- .1 Matthew Knight presented the paper.
- .2 Council noted the management accounts for December year-to-date performance, as well as the Q1 forecast. The key information was:
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 - Liquidity days remain significantly above the OfS minimum of 30 days.
- .3 REDACTED AS COMMERCIALY SENSITIVE

26/009 Cash release update

- .1 WD and MK presented the papers.
- .2 **Blackwell Park Ltd (BPL)** - REDACTED AS COMMERCIALY SENSITIVE
- .3 **Surrey Research Park (SRP)** - REDACTED AS COMMERCIALY SENSITIVE
- .4 **Blackwell Park Ltd Letter of Support**
 - .4.1 Council **approved**
 1. Rolling over the interest on the loan from the University to BPL for the period of at least 12 months from date of approval of the accounts.
 2. Making available such financial support as may be required for BPL to meet its liabilities as they fall due for a period of at least 12 months from date of approval of the accounts.
 3. The Council Chair to sign the letter confirming the above as attached at Appendix 1 of the paper.

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION AND/OR APPROVAL

- 26/010** REDACTED AS COMMERCIALY SENSITIVE

26/011 International Engagement Strategy

- .1 PD presented the paper with Helen Litvak in attendance.
- .2 Council noted that:
- Extensive discussions had taken place about the University's approach to international engagement, as articulated in the draft International Engagement Strategy.
 - The document had had input from both thematic leads (Team Heads in Global, PVC&I), the faculties (represented by the ADIs) and Strategic Growth (VPSG).
 - Consideration by Council at its meeting on 5 February 2026 had been designed to allow Council members early opportunity to review, comment and input.
- .3 The feedback from discussion at EB on Monday was noted, including:
- The importance of consultation and engagement.
 - Inclusion of case studies and exemplars.
 - More emphasis on the international student experience.
- .4 It was recognised that the Strategy document was currently too long, needed to have clearer and more focused priorities and needed to be reduced to a more digestible size.
- .5 Council discussed the following points:
- The Strategy should include the long-term goal of how global the University wanted to be, and the ambitions for areas such as TNE and research partnerships.
 - For TNE campuses, there would be recruitment of international students from other countries and opportunities for students to progress from the overseas campus to Surrey.
 - There was a need to ensure that the Guildford campus was prepared for the potential arrival of an increased number of international students and that Surrey offered a distinctive student experience.
 - REDACTED AS COMMERCIALY SENSITIVE
- .6 Council **agreed** that:
1. The comments from the Council meeting would be considered by the Responsible Senior Officers and incorporated as necessary in the paper.
 2. A revised version would come to EB for consideration in March/April 2026.
 3. Subject to a positive recommendation at that meeting, the strategy would be submitted to Council for approval on 31 March or 21 May 2026.

26/012 GIFT City Update - REDACTED AS COMMERCIALY SENSITIVE

26/013 Suzhou-Surrey University (JITRI) - REDACTED AS COMMERCIALY SENSITIVE

26/014 Health and Safety

- .1 Matt Purcell attended to present the papers.
- .2 **Annual Report**
- .2.1 Council noted the recommendations supported by Executive Board:
- Delivery of the new Health and Safety strategy, including ongoing monitoring of the University's performance in relation to trend identification, subject to further discussions.

- Monitoring the effectiveness of specific interventions to address the emerging trends within the institutional incident data.
 - Implementation of interventions to address the wider assurance on fire safety, including the increase in residential and non-residential fire alarm activations, being led by the Director of Campus Operations, as Chair of the Compliance (Health and Safety) Committee
 - Continuing to monitor the completion of mandatory training to achieve the target of 95%.
- .2.2 The current focus is on the delivery of the Strategy and on improvements to management training.
- .2.3 Council asked that the RIDDOR target be reconsidered as it was above the sector average and had not been exceeded in recent years.
- Action: MP to consider new RIDDOR target.**
- .2.4 A target of 95% for mandatory training had been set as it was not thought possible to get to 100% due to sick leave, maternity leave, new staff etc. The names of those who do not complete the training will go to EB members to chase and ultimately would be reported to the VC. The proposed Learning Management System would help to track compliance.
- .2.5 It was suggested that it was useful to get staff involved in safety audits, particularly junior staff.
- .3 **Regular Report**
- .3.1 Council noted the outcome of the recent regulatory compliance inspection from the Office of Nuclear Regulation (ONR) and Environment Agency (EA). No action was required by the ONR and current actions required from the EA are on target for completion well in advance of the statutory deadline.
- .3.2 Council noted progress following recommendations approved by Executive Board to address emerging incidents, specifically in relation to the risk of being struck by vehicles.

26/015 Student Wellbeing Annual report

- .1 Emma Rowsell and Laura Smythson attended to present the paper.
- .2 Council noted the annual report and recognised the increased level of risk and operational pressure, in particular:
- The significant rise in complexity of cases.
 - That the number of counselling sessions delivered increased by 16.6%, but the average wait time exceeded the KPI (11.8 days vs. 7-day target) due to complexity and staffing constraints.
- .3 Council noted the strategic priorities of the Chief Student Officer in managing wellbeing and the current activities that are ongoing to manage the risks noted above:
- Enhancing early intervention and prevention measures, particularly during high-stress periods.
 - Implementation of the Symplicity case management system to improve data capture and efficiency.
 - Strengthening inclusive practices and universal design adoption across the institution.
 - Maintaining sector-leading partnerships in suicide prevention and statutory mental health services.
 - Continuing to invest in wellbeing and disability support as this remains critical to student success and regulatory compliance.
- .4 Council was concerned regarding the rise in complexity and seriousness of cases. It was noted that the University could not take responsibility for serious mental health issues; these are referred to the NHS. Young adults in education are much less likely to resort to suicide or have thoughts of suicide. The University's numbers are also lower than the local population.

.5 Surrey have introduced the Thrivewell team who run workshops on resilience which could be expanded. All students coming through UCAS are invited to declare disabilities including mental health issues and, if they do declare, they are contacted and offered support. We are also working with academics and personal tutors on engagement and wellbeing to recognise early warning signs.

Action: RA to investigate whether briefing on resilience training could be provided to Council members.

.6 There was discussion of resourcing. Wellbeing resources have increased since 2024 and it has been reorganised. Whilst the team may be quite lean, it offers better support than many other universities.

.7 There are support services offered through the SU as well as the central University.

.8 Whilst this report is annual, the statistics and KPIs are included in the Performance Monitoring Report. Reports are brought to Operations Committee monthly and could be reported to Council more regularly if desired.

26/016 JD Wetherspoons Loan Agreement - REDACTED AS COMMERCIALY SENSITIVE

26/017 Bachelor's Degree Algorithm

.1 SJ presented the paper.

.2 Council noted that the proposal was a readjustment to bring Surrey back into line with what you would expect given its entrance tariff. The paper was presented to Council for good practice noting the previous discussion on good degrees took place at Council as part of the annual approval of the degree outcomes statement.

.3 Council **approved** the recommendations:

- Amendment of the way borderline degree classifications are considered, to take effect for the May 2026 boards, in the following way:
 - Consider all borderline cases within 2% of the next highest degree classification for exit velocity (final-year average), to more accurately reflect students' demonstration of skills and knowledge at the level of the award.
- Measures to effect targeted improvements in lower-performing subject areas.
- Longer-term institutional measures to enable higher attendance – which leads to higher attainment.

26/018 Senate Terms of Reference

.1 SJ presented the paper.

.2 Council noted the proposed amendments to the Terms of Reference:

- The addition of the Dean of GIFT City as an ex-officio member of Senate.
- The removal of the references to Statutes in the Terms of Reference.

.3 Council **approved** the amended terms of reference.

C ITEMS FOR INFORMATION ONLY

26/019 Committee reports

.1 Council noted the reports from Audit and Assurance Committee, the Executive Board, and Remuneration Committee.

D CLOSING ITEMS

26/020 Any Other Business

.1 None

26/021 Date of next meeting

31 March 2025

Mr Charlie Geffen, Chair