Confidential

COUNCIL
Thursday 23 July 2026 from 14.00 to 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	Prof Emma Flynn
	Chief Operating Officer	Mr Will Davies
	President, Students' Union	Ms Nicoelle Ocampo
	Member elected by Senate	Dr Femi Adeyemi-Ejeye
	Member elected by Senate	Dr Charo Hodgkins
	Member elected by Senate	Prof Jin Xuan (to 26/080)
	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 Matthew Knight, Chief Financial Officer
Ms Jacqui Philips, Head of Governance, Institute of Cancer Research

By invitation: Mr Matt Aikin, SU President 2025-26 (26/074)
Prof Annika Bautz, PVC Education (26/076)
Prof Lisa Collins, PVC Research and Innovation (26/073)
Mr Alex McKee, CEO of SU (26/074)
Mr Matt Purcell, Director of Health and Safety (26/081)
Dr Jim Shaikh, CEO of Innovate Surrey Ltd (26/073)

INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

26/064 Preliminaries

.1 There were apologies from Matthew Knight, Pam Powell and Phil Whitecross.

.2 Emma Flynn and Nicoelle Ocampo were welcomed to their first Council meeting. It was noted that Jacqui Philips was attending as an observer.

.3 Noting that it was Charo Hodgkins and Jin Xuan's last meeting of Council, the Chair took the opportunity to thank them for their contribution over the previous three years. It was noted that, ideally, only one Senate representative on Council would leave each year, but with three

representatives on two-year terms, this was not always possible, even with the possibility of extending members by one or two years
Action: RA and EF to consider if it would be possible to increase the Senate terms to three years.

.4 Noting that it was Pam Jestico's last meeting of Council, the Chair took the opportunity to thank her for her great contribution for over six years.

26/065 Declarations of Interest

.1 None

26/066 Minutes

.1 Council **approved** the minutes of the Council meeting held on 21 May 2026 for publication.

26/067 Matters Arising

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

.2 Council requested that a regular project update come to Council, which would include a system to determine whether the projects were on track or were delayed.
Action: WD

STANDING ITEMS

26/068 Chair's items

.1 Council **ratified** the three approvals made outside the meeting:

- Amendment to Ordinances to allow VC, PVC R&I, PVC Education and Provost to confer degrees - approved by Convene resolution on 16 June 2026.
- REDACTED AS COMMERCIALLY SENSITIVE
- Ordinary Resolution for Will Davies and Matthew Knight to be added as directors for University of Surrey (Asia) Ltd, approved by Chair's action on 3 July 2026.

.2 Council **approved** the two resolutions relating to the GIFT City campus in India:

- Resolution for change of business address for the GIFT City Campus
- Resolution for establishment of GIFT City bank account

26/069 Vice-Chancellor's Report on strategic matters and sector context

.1 The VC presented the paper.

.2 Recent ministerial appointments to the Government were noted, including the closure of the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology and the redistribution of its portfolio across other departments. At this stage, the Government's intentions regarding science and technology remain unclear.

.3 The results of the Graduate Outcomes Survey were reported as disappointing, with only 50% of graduates completing the survey; this was considered primarily a process issue rather than evidence of a substantial underlying problem. Work is underway to analyse the impact of Professional Training Year take-up on graduate outcomes, and further information will be brought to Council in October. REDACTED AS COMMERCIALLY SENSITIVE

.4 An update on transnational education (TNE) was noted. Progress at CAU and GIFT City is positive, with the GIFT City fit-out underway and plans targeting the first student cohort in July 2027; a detailed implementation plan, including staff recruitment, is in place. The prospects for

establishing Suzhou-Surrey University appear less favourable, as another institution is currently the front-runner for occupying the available campus. There remains the possibility of creating a joint institute, although this would be on a smaller scale than the branch campus originally envisaged. Conversations with JITRI are ongoing.

.5 There were 49 applications for the Dean of FEPS role, representing a particularly strong field of candidates. Interviews are scheduled to take place in September.

.6 A local and regional strategy is being developed. The University will consider potential strategic partners and work more closely with the Chamber of Commerce, amongst others. REDACTED AS COMMERCIALLY SENSITIVE the local business base is very strong, and we should explore how best to leverage this to our advantage. Discussions with the Chamber of Commerce have highlighted that the Surrey Research Park currently has no formal connection with the Chamber, and there is interest in identifying how we might work more effectively with local businesses and entrepreneurs and bring them together, potentially through a University convened forum, notwithstanding the existence of SCC's Growth Forum. There are many opportunities to improve our engagement with Guildford. We should clarify the roles the University can play and agree in advance how we will position ourselves within the new unitary authority, including consideration of academic activity and collaboration with local bodies such as the hospital.

26/070 Performance Monitoring - Admissions

.1 Martine Carter presented the report.

.2 Council noted the updated forecast against the intake plan REDACTED AS COMMERCIALLY SENSITIVE Council noted updates on progress against the agreed mitigations to close the gap to plan, including work on Clearing, attrition, and overseas conversion, as well as the approach to managing the implications for timetabling and accommodation. Further updates will be provided to Council, recognising that final numbers will not be known until students arrive.

.3 Council discussed strategies to reduce the University's reliance on Clearing, focusing on widening the application funnel by deepening and broadening target markets. It was recognised however, that the Clearing market will continue to grow, with increasing numbers of students using it to leverage their achieved grades. The key operational window remains A-level results day and the following day, during which we will implement an established communications strategy in a highly competitive environment where every university is pushing hard; some Russell Group institutions have already published lower entry grades. We have mixed market-share performance across different areas and have analysed this in detail, while also exploring new programme opportunities to strengthen our position.

.4 Council discussed the impact of the latest NSS outcomes and how best to leverage them. A plan is in place to use the results proactively in our recruitment and communications, but it was recognised that prospective students may not fully understand what the NSS measures or why it matters. We therefore need to develop clear, accessible messages that translate the data into meaningful evidence of the student experience at Surrey and ensure that this is communicated effectively across our marketing and recruitment channels.

.5 Council considered how strongly we are promoting employability in our messaging, noting that it is a major USP, particularly for parents. While employability is already emphasised at Open Days, it was felt that our approach could be more sophisticated and more systematically integrated across communications. There is an opportunity to articulate our employability offer

more clearly and consistently, ensuring it features as a core element of our narrative to prospective students and their families.

.6 Accommodation is guaranteed for students admitted through Clearing, and a sufficient number of rooms has been held back to support this approach. Contingency plans are in place in the event of over-recruitment, including a list of additional options within a 30-mile radius. However, Clearing is increasingly a local market, and last year a significant proportion of students admitted through Clearing were London-based commuter students.

.7 The potential use of AI-driven data to support Clearing was discussed, with a view to improving decision-making and targeting during this period. It was noted that we have already identified students at risk of declining their firm place and are implementing tailored strategies to retain them, and that similar data-led approaches could enhance our effectiveness in managing Clearing and conversion more broadly.

.6 There would be an intensive review of Surrey Business School over the following 6 months to consider how to enable it to excel.

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION AND/OR APPROVAL

26/071 University Strategy Update

.1 Stephen Jarvis presented the paper.

.2 The aspiration to become a global top-100 university was acknowledged as challenging but remains a key institutional goal. Council recognised that the strategy should not be driven solely by rankings; rather, it must focus on making Surrey a better university in substantive terms, with decisions grounded in the quality of our education, research, and wider impact. Rankings will continue to be monitored as one indicator of progress, but care must be taken to avoid allowing them to dictate priorities or overshadow broader strategic objectives.

.3 The University's roots and their continuing influence on its activities and ethos were acknowledged, particularly the longstanding focus on vocational, practical, employability-focused and real-world education. Viewed through this lens, strategic decisions relating to the Surrey Research Park, employability initiatives and similar areas become clearer and more coherent, reinforcing our identity and strengths. Spin-outs and innovation were also highlighted as key components of this tradition, underscoring the importance of maintaining and enhancing our entrepreneurial and applied outlook.

.4 The University REDACTED emphasises a distinctive identity that should run as a common thread through everything we do and how we describe ourselves. This identity needs to be clearly articulated and consistently projected to different audiences, ensuring that our strengths, values and aspirations are well understood by students, staff, partners and stakeholders.

.5 It was noted that new members of EB should be given the opportunity to contribute to and help shape the document, ensuring their perspectives are reflected in its framing. The intention is to share and discuss the document widely across the University so that it becomes meaningful, owned, and brought to life through our collective activity.

.6 Council noted several overarching comments.

- The inter-relationship between education and research could be articulated more strongly, as it is one of Surrey's key USPs.

- The Professional Training Year (PTY) remains central to our offer, and we need a clear plan for its development and growth, with the ambition that every student should gain some form of work experience. Students who undertake PTY typically return more driven and focused. With regard to fees charged for the PTY, it was emphasised that there are real costs associated with the support provided.
- The University must stay closely attuned to the accelerated pace of change in the workplace, where requirements are evolving continuously, and continue to embrace the critical use of new technologies, including ensuring that our students are trained in the smart and responsible use of AI.
- The Strategy should also help clarify what we do not intend to do, informing decisions such as not selling the Surrey Research Park.
- There was support for leveraging investment in doctoral training and for strengthening links with industry in this area, including exploring models through which SMEs could contribute to doctoral training, even if unable to fund a full studentship, with appropriate benefits accruing to the University.

.7 Council discussed how it can support the University in moving to the next phase of its development, recognising that additional resources will be required and that the Goodall Plan provides a strong foundational framework. The immediate priority is to ensure a shared understanding of the University's direction of travel, following which the Executive will return to Council with more concrete proposals for implementation. The Awayday scheduled for 17 November will offer a dedicated opportunity to provide a substantive update and to explore areas of these plans in greater depth.

.8 Council recorded its thanks to colleagues for their contributions to this work, with particular appreciation expressed to Martine Carter.

26/072 Goodall Five-Year Plan

.1 Martine Carter presented the paper and several slides.

.2 Council noted the planned growth in surplus and income, recognising that this will create greater capacity for strategic investment in talent and facilities, including enhancements to digital infrastructure.

.3 The plan is ambitious and carries REDACTED AS COMMERCIALLY SENSITIVE risk, making revenue-risk mitigation critical. A series of change programmes will be required to deliver the plan; some are inherently riskier than others, and some areas are more within our control than others. It was acknowledged that circumstances will not always unfold exactly as planned, but that the University will retain sufficient flexibility to adjust its approach as needed. Downside scenarios have been modelled within the financial plan, and Council took assurance that there is adequate cushioning and liquidity in place to support the institution through more challenging periods, enabling it to respond proactively while maintaining strategic momentum.

.4 Council received an update on the growth plan, noting that staff recruitment is being explicitly tied to projected expansion. REDACTED AS COMMERCIALLY SENSITIVE Extensive work has been undertaken on workforce numbers, and a granular staffing plan is in place, recognising that targeted, relatively small investments can have a significant impact.

.5 Key assumptions include (REDACTED AS COMMERCIALLY SENSITIVE) underpinned by credible market-share estimates and new programme development.

.6 Operating cash will be a key indicator of how effectively the core business is performing and how efficient it is. Confidence in teaching income is currently greater than in research income in a challenging macro environment, but it remains essential to maintain research income at around 15–20% of total income to sustain our status as a research-intensive university. REDACTED AS COMMERCIALLY SENSITIVE

.7 The Treasurer commented positively on the strength and granularity of the plan. Council:

1. **Approved** the 26/27 budget and note the five-year financial plan that will form the basis of the Office for Students submission
2. Noted the five year delivery plan and next steps

26/073 Innovate Surrey Ltd Strategy

.1 Lisa Collins and Jim Shaikh attended to present the paper.

.2 Council noted the draft Innovate Surrey Ltd (ISL) Strategy 2026–2031 setting out an updated purpose and strategic ambition for ISL, clarifying the strategic priorities and performance requirements, and describing how ISL will scale commercialisation activity over the next five years through a coherent, multi-stream approach.

.3 The importance of aligning with the wider landscape and national agendas was recognised. The Research Strategy and the Civic Partnerships and Place document will come forward in the Autumn and will link to the ISL Strategy. There is substantial activity underway in this space, including collaboration with regional partners, offering services to other universities, and providing wider regional leadership, with a particular need to embed ISL more fully within the Surrey Research Park. It was noted that Set Squared should be referenced in the document, as we are both partners and competitors, and they are raising a shared £100m fund; while this represents one important element of the landscape, we also need to consider the development of our own fund. Work is ongoing on a comprehensive restructure to bring all innovation support together under one roof, and there is growing interest in “spin-ins” through a proposed ISL incubator.

.4 Council discussed how best to engage commerce and industry as partners in the ISL agenda. This will be taken forward through the new Partnerships Strategy, which will bring relevant staff into a single team tasked with identifying key strategic partners and strengthening priority relationships. As part of this work, we are in discussion with NPL about locating their spin-outs on the Surrey Research Park, illustrating the type of collaborative opportunities we aim to pursue.

.5 Surrey has a substantial volume of intellectual property, with around 80 Intellectual Property disclosures a year, placing us in the top tier of universities when scaled by research income and representing a doubling of historical activity - but our commercialisation performance remains relatively weak, and the process is currently fragmented. Work is underway to put more robust processes in place and to provide the support and encouragement needed to improve outcomes. A key element of this will be a more strategic approach to prioritisation, focusing on the strongest candidates, triaging the remainder, and progressing opportunities at the most appropriate time to maximise their potential value

26/074 Students’ Union Annual Report

.1 Matt Aikin and Alex McKee attended to give a presentation.

.2 Council were pleased to note the belonging events success, particularly for international and PG students.

.3 The strong relationship with the University was recognised and celebrated. The SU was congratulated on the strong performance in the NSS.

26/075 REDACTED AS COMMERCIALLY SENSITIVE

26/076 NSS Results

.1 Annika Bautz attended to give a presentation.

.2 Council noted:

- The NSS 2026 results and Surrey's improvement in overall positivity to 87.7% and relative sector position to 7th;
- That the 87% Plan achieved its principal institutional objectives;
- That the final part of this year's plan will include an evaluation of the interventions introduced through the 87% Plan and recommendations on which should be retained, scaled or revised.

.3 Assessment and feedback performance varies across the University, but remains weak in many areas, which is disappointing given the sustained institutional focus on improvement. Timeliness is a particular concern, and it may not be clear to students that there is a three-week turnaround deadline for feedback. Clearer communication is therefore essential, for example by reiterating the date for the return of assessment at the point of setting it. Requests for extensions due to extenuating circumstances are an issue which delays feedback, particularly when they are submitted late. It was noted that AI is not currently used for marking.

.4 Module evaluation questionnaires and in-year pulse surveys provide an ongoing indication of likely NSS outcomes, with a strong correlation observed between these internal measures and the final NSS results. This reinforces the value of regular feedback mechanisms in highlighting emerging issues and informing timely interventions to improve the student experience.

.5 The NSS has an open comments section which provides more details on issues.

.6 Council **endorsed**:

- Assessment and Feedback as the primary thematic priority for the NSS 2027 strategy, with Learning Resources retained as an area for monitoring;
- The proposed approach and timeline for the NSS 2027 strategy and action plan.

.7 Council formally recorded its appreciation for the outstanding contribution made by Annika Bautz over the year, thanking her both for delivering such strong NSS results and for her leadership in AI in Education and the Good Degrees initiative. Good Degrees are on track to have increased by circa 6% this year, which was recognised as a tremendous achievement.

26/077 Strategic Risk Register and University Risk Appetite

.1 Will Davies presented the paper.

.2 Council discussed the process for managing the risks associated with the plan, noting that we are becoming clearer about our risk appetite across different categories of risk. These risks will be actively monitored, with regular reporting and review, and will be brought back to the relevant committees for discussion and oversight, ensuring that emerging issues are identified early and addressed in a structured and transparent way.

.3 Council discussed several strategic risks. Cyber security was confirmed as being incorporated within the broader IT risk. In relation to sensitive jurisdictions, there was consideration of whether the University's risk appetite should be more risk-averse than merely cautious. The definition of "security" was also examined, with agreement that national security and University-level security should be distinguished more clearly in the next review. It was noted that high-risk donations are escalated through appropriate governance channels, and that partnerships currently come to EB for approval, ensuring that these areas receive appropriate scrutiny and oversight.

.4 Council **approved**:

1. The University Risk Appetite
2. The updated Strategic Risk Register
3. The overarching themes and actions for the Strategic Risk Register
4. For the Strategic Risk Register to be reviewed twice a year – in November and May - and be reported to EB, AAC and Council.

26/078 Nominations and Governance Committee Report

.1 Charlie Geffen presented the paper.

.2 Council noted that Lynne Owens had been proposed by Philip Rutnam for the role of Pro-Chancellor. An external firm carried out full due diligence, and no significant issues were flagged. It was recommended by the Nominations and Governance Committee that this appointment be supported.

.3 Recruitment for a replacement for Pam Jestico on Council was underway, with a focus on recruiting a new member who could also serve on AAC.

.3 Council **approved**:

1. The appointment of Lynne Owens as Pro-Chancellor of the University
2. The appointment of Nick Gatfield as Chair of the SSP Board

26/079 Audit and Assurance Committee Report

.1 Linda Wilding and Will Davies presented the paper.

.2 Council noted that:

- KCG have been appointed as the University Internal Auditors until the end of 2026/27.
- AAC are receiving a report on Cyber Security to every meeting.

.5 Council **approved**:

1. The appointment of Pam Jestico as a co-opted member of AAC after she steps down from Council, until 31 December 2026.
2. The appointment of BDO as the external auditors from the year ending 31 July 2027.
3. The Internal Audit Charter.

26/080 Blackwell Park Ltd Loan Extension

.1 REDACTED AS COMMERCIALLY SENSITIVE

26/081 Health and Safety Report

.1 Matt Purcell attended to present the paper.

.2 There was a detailed discussion on the issues raised including:
REDACTED

.3 There was also a discussion about those departments responsible for carrying out the outstanding audit actions, and the Vice Chancellor made it clear that he was ready to provide whatever support needed to ensure timely action.

.4 It was **agreed** that an update would be provided at the Council meeting on 7 October 2026 and the expectation was that a significant proportion of outstanding actions would be completed by then.
Action: MP

C ITEMS FOR INFORMATION ONLY

26/082 USS Debt Monitoring

.1 Council noted the report.

26/083 Public Procurement Regime Status for 2026/27

.1 Council noted the report.

26/084 Freedom of Speech Annual Report

.1 Council noted the report.

26/085 Committee reports

.1 Council noted the reports from Executive Board, Finance Committee and Senate. The cyber security risk highlighted in the EB report was noted and Council asked for an update to come to the next meeting.
Action: WD

D CLOSING ITEMS

26/086 Any Other Business

.1 None

26/087 Date of next meeting
7 October 2026

Mr Charlie Geffen, Chair