

MINUTES FOR COUNCIL (BUSINESS MEETING)

Open Minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2024 in G5.05, High Wycombe campus.

Present:

- Maggie Galliers (Independent [Chair])
- Andy Cole (Independent [Deputy Chair and Chair of Staff Reward, Vice-Chancellor's Remuneration and Governance Committees])
- Professor Nick Braisby (Vice-Chancellor)
- Karen Satterford (Co-Opted [Chair of Student Experience Committee])
- Anna Crabtree (Independent [Chair of Resources Committee])
- Dr Susan Rosser (Independent [Chair of Audit Committee])
- Irene Kirkman (Independent)
- Dr Annet Gamell (Independent)
- Brian Lewis (Independent)
- Marek Pruszewicz (Independent)
- Justin Sullivan (Independent)
- Sadie Groom (Independent)
- Ze'ev Portner (Academic Representative)
- Peter Robinson (PSE Representative)
- Dr Russel Stone (Senate Representative)
- Amy Pile (Students' Union President)

In attendance

- Professor Damien Page (Deputy Vice-Chancellor)
- Ellie Smith (University Secretary and Clerk to Council)
- Trevor Gabriele (Chief Finance Officer)
- Ian Harper (Commercial and Business Development Director)
- Dr Ciaran O'Keeffe (Head of School: Human and Social Sciences) – for the Deep Dive: School of Human and Social Sciences item only
- Jon Lees (Academic Registrar) – for the Degree Outcomes Statement item only
- Dr Ben Brabon (Director of Learning Enhancement and Academic Practice) – for the Access and Participation Plan item only
- Komal Sharma (Committee Officer) - Observer
- Dr Emma Tomsett (Minutes Secretary)

Apologies

- Jackie Westaway (Independent)
- Mikhail George (Student Co-opted Member)
- Professor Paul Morgan (Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education))
- Professor Karen Buckwell-Nutt (Senate Representative)

Welcome / Apologies for Absence

- 24.188 The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and noted four apologies as outlined above.
- 24.189 The Chair welcomed the new SU President to her first meeting as an official member of Council. The Chair also welcomed Komal Sharma (Committee Officer) who was observing the meeting.
- 24.190 The Chair of Council expressed her thanks and gratitude to Independent Members Irene Kirkman, Anna Crabtree and Dr Susan Rosser, Student Co-opted Member Mikhail George and Senate Representative Professor Karen Buckwell-Nutt, who were standing down from Council after the meeting, for their invaluable service to Council. The Chair noted that the Independent Members had served on and chaired several Council committees and had governed the University through a transformative journey. Further remarks would be made at the drinks reception after the meeting.
- 24.191 The Chair noted that Council would also formally thank former Students' Union (SU) President Brandon Tester for his contribution to Council during the 2023-24 academic year at the annual Council dinner after the meeting.
- 24.192 The new Senate Representative to Council, Dr Kevin Campbell-Karn, would join Council from October 2024 but was unavailable to observe today's meeting.

Declaration of conflicts of interest

- 24.193 No conflicts of interest were declared.

Deep Dive: School of Human and Social Sciences

- 24.194 Council considered a presentation on the School of Human and Social Sciences from the Head of School. Council's attention was drawn to the School's wide-ranging portfolio in Psychology, Sports, Education and Social Sciences and planned future portfolio development; staffing; its recent achievements; the School's performance in the National Student, Postgraduate Taught and Postgraduate Research student surveys; accreditations; research activity; and some of the challenges the School faced including the School's Graduate Outcomes, which were particularly strong for Sports Therapy but needed enhancement in other areas.
- 24.195 The Chair thanked the Head of School for an extremely informative presentation. In response to queries from Council members, the Head of School advised:
- a) the School was experiencing a year-on-year decline in withdrawals and expected that to continue in 2024-25 as it was working closely with Academic Registry on early intervention for students who might be considering withdrawing
 - b) there was no single factor in why recruitment to Psychology was not as strong as the School wished. Marketing focused on the placements and work-based learning offered following market research which indicated these should be highlighted to applicants, and the School was also particularly promoting its counselling and mental health and well-being programmes as these had been identified as a particular strength
 - c) the next significant investment the School hoped for was in the Psychology Lab and the technical resources for the Psychology programmes
 - d) Psychology's Graduate Outcomes (GO) results had historically been impacted by the timing of the survey: when the survey had been done six months after graduation, Psychology graduates had often been in roles that were not classified as graduate employment due to the nature of the post-

university training they were required to undertake. The School expected to see an improvement now that the GO survey was done 18 months after graduation

- e) the University's appointment of new research professors had led to a significant increase in the number of research bids submitted and the number of School staff becoming research active.

24.196 The Vice-Chancellor advised Council that the University was reviewing all its Psychology facilities as they were a key factor in converting applicants to enrolled students. The facilities were good, but the University was reviewing whether they were in the right locations and how they could be further improved.

24.197 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor informed Council that there had been a cross-institutional reduction of 50% in student withdrawals at Level 4 in the 2023-24 academic year to date. If translated to improved continuation, this would lead to increased income and improved performance in various key performance indicators (KPIs).

24.198 Council noted that the University had significantly increased the amount of external research funding it had secured in the current academic year and had submitted bids worth over £4m for 2024-25. The Head of School: Health and Social Care Professions had secured a substantial grant from a research council which would help generate more such funding as it would enable the University to demonstrate it had a track record of success in such bids. Much of this research was also collaborative, for example in Africa, and had a civic intent, which was unique to BNU. The new research professors were on track to cover their salary costs in 2025 and the new Research Strategy was proving highly effective.

24.199 The Chair of Audit Committee, who had particularly followed the University's research activity during her two terms on Council, welcomed the recent developments.

Minutes of the previous meeting

24.200 The Open Minutes of the meeting on 21 May 2024 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting without amendment.

Matters Arising / Status of Actions

24.201 Council noted the status of the actions as outlined on the action sheet.

Chair's Action

24.202 There were no chair's actions to note.

University Matters

Vice-Chancellor's Report

24.203 Council considered a report from the Vice-Chancellor which drew Council's attention to the following points:

- a) the new Labour government had made a series of ministerial appointments in education, although the Department for Education had not yet confirmed all of their portfolios. The new Secretary of State for Education had stated that stabilising the sector's finances was a "day one" priority and it was hoped that action on this would be seen soon. The Secretary of State was holding an open meeting shortly for education workers to share her vision, which members of BNU would be attending

- b) the Universities and Colleges Employers Association had published its full and final pay award offer of a 2.5% uplift for 2024-25 to the University and College Union (UCU) although the UCU had not yet accepted it. The award was manageable for BNU and had been included in budgetary assumptions. The award would be made in two stages (August 2024 and March 2025)
- c) the University had still not received any indication from the Office for Students (OfS) of any actions it might take regarding its assessment of the University's Business and Management provision, but discussions with another provider had indicated this was not unusual
- d) the Voluntary Severance (VS) Scheme had been launched, with 7 formal applications received, but no application was guaranteed to be accepted
- e) the University's recruitment position for 2024-25 had now stabilised, with recent further improvements on the figures given in the report, but Clearing would be highly competitive and conversion of international applicants to enrolled students critical.

24.204 In response to queries, the Vice-Chancellor clarified

- a) the University's current recruitment position was 6.5% ahead of the sector. The University had invested in and restructured its Admissions team to help drive further recruitment and marketed itself as a university well, but recognised that enhancements could be made in how particular programmes / clusters were marketed
- b) the University Executive Team (UET) was developing a systematic approach to civic engagement (CE) activity and would ask Council members for support and involvement once it had been finalised. A small task group had been established to help deliver the CE strategy and leads were being asked to develop plans for delivery of a CE event in six months. Council members would be invited to those events
- c) UET had met the new Wycombe Labour Member of Parliament before and was now working on building more links with her
- d) the tender process for the Brunel Engine Shed was underway. Applications were being reviewed and the University hoped to appoint soon with the aim of opening the Shed by the end of 2024. It was also undertaking development work at High Wycombe station.

24.205 Council considered a request in the report about how it would prefer to conduct discussions for approving the University moving forward with Strive Capital to develop and build more student accommodation. The Vice-Chancellor and Commercial and Business Development Director informed Council that

- a) the need to increase student accommodation capacity was becoming increasingly urgent as Windsor House was going to be redeveloped from September 2024, which would mean BNU would lose 72 rooms for three years, and there were 300 students on the accommodation waiting list
- b) the University's options regarding how new student accommodation could be built were narrowing: Aviva had informed BNU they were not interested in the project and there had been little interest in the Design, Finance, Build and Operation model. Larger developers seemed to prefer bigger projects
- c) BNU could pursue public procurement but had been advised this would a considerably long time
- d) Andrew Harman, founder of Strive Capital, was a local businessman who wished to 'give back' to High Wycombe and had identified BNU as one medium to enable this. He was the landlord of Windsor House and had tried to find alternatives for Windsor House while it was being redeveloped without success. When BNU had bought the extra plot of land at the Hughenden Park Student Village he had expressed interest in developing the site
- e) due diligence on Strive Capital had not yet been completed but would be extensive

- f) BNU would need to get planning permission for the new buildings
- g) BNU wanted to enter a period of exclusivity now with Strive Capital to explore the development further on the understanding that if either party pulled out they would cover the other party's aborted costs. These would be the costs of design, planning and soil testing but it was not anticipated that they would be substantial
- h) the potential final agreement would be that Strive Capital would purchase the plot of land from BNU and build the new accommodation, which BNU would lease back for 25 years. The full proposal on the project would be shared with Council as soon as it was complete.

24.206 Council commented that the process was important, and it needed to understand the risks involved, but also recognised that without more student accommodation the University would lose students.

24.207 Council agreed that it was willing to approve the University holding more formal discussions with Strive Capital by correspondence.

Action: UET / Council

Financial Position Update: Management Accounts and Q3 Forecast

24.208 Council received an update on the University's performance in the financial year to date. The Chief Finance Officer (CFO) advised Council that the overall Q2 surplus position was improving. In the Q3 forecast, income was increased by £1.5m, predicated on tuition fees. Savings would be made on the salary bill and the University had sheltered funds for the VS Scheme. There had been a slight increase in the cost base based on international recruitment and Estates costs, but the University was predicted to deliver a surplus in line with its target. The University's cash target for the year end was also on track, and all University covenants were being met.

24.209 The Chair of Resources Committee confirmed the Committee had examined the accounts and had accepted them. The variance between the budget and the Q3 forecast had not moved substantially in the past quarter, but achieving a surplus would leave BNU in a much better position than much of the sector.

24.210 Council commented that costs had increased versus the prior year. The Chief Finance Officer responded that the University was taking action to maintain the gap between its costs and income. All optimism bias had been removed from the 5-year forecast, which protected the cash position and ensured BNU would continue to meet its covenants.

Budget for 2024-25 and four-year forecast

24.211 The CFO presented the 2024-2025 budget and Financial Forecast to 2028-2029 to Council. Council was advised that the Budget set out a financial position of total income at £96.2m, total expenditure at £93.2m and an operating surplus of £3.0m. Cash generation would remain strong. Partner income would fall as the University rebalanced numbers between taught and partner students, but taught student tuition fee income was predicated as growing, including from a new mode of weekend teaching. A risk analysis had also been undertaken and mitigations were in place. Further action would be taken if planned mitigations were not as effective as hoped.

24.212 The Chair commended the sensitivity analysis in the paper.

24.213 The Chair of Resources Committee confirmed that Resources Committee had reviewed the budget in detail and had felt confident in it.

- 24.214 In response to queries the CFO, Commercial and Business Development Director and Vice-Chancellor informed Council that:
- a) the biggest hypothetical risk in the budget would be if the London School of Science and Technology (LSST) decided to terminate its partnership with BNU. However, there was no indication currently that LSST were planning to terminate the partnership; BNU was working with them to further enhance the quality of their provision, which was beneficial to LSST as an OfS-registered provider
 - b) BNU was looking to expand its international recruitment and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor advised Council that the University was moving swiftly to validate new courses aimed at the international market
 - c) when BNU had modelled a 5% reduction across budgets, UET had also asked budget holders to model a further 5% reduction which could be used as a corrective step if key budget targets were missed. BNU would take in-year actions if needed.
- 24.215 Council noted that the budget was tight and would monitor it closely, but also noted the sensitivity analysis and the mitigations in place. Council approved the 2024-25 Budget and the Financial Forecast to 2028-2029.

Students' Union (SU) President's Report

- 24.216 Council received a report from the SU President which reflected on the SU's successful year with increased engagement with its activities. The new Sabbatical Officers had been elected following the highest turnout in the SU's history. The SU had identified five key areas that it would focus upon in 2024-5 including the experience for students joining at entry dates other than September; mandatory inductions for all students; and mental health and the cost of living.
- 24.217 The Chair of the Student Experience Committee informed Council that she had already begun discussions with the SU regarding their views about the amount of business on the Student Experience Committee's agendas, and would be holding further discussions to understand their concerns in greater detail and what action could be taken.
- 24.218 The Chair commended the succinct paper. The Chair noted that support for students' mental health and the cost of living was a matter for the University to consider internally, but she was pleased to hear that the Student Experience Forum (SEF) had made an effective start to its work while recognising that the SU believed it could do more. The Vice-Chancellor urged the SU President to discuss with UET or the Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) any concerns about the operation of the SEF. The SU President advised Council that she would be attending her first SEF shortly and would gain further understanding from it about what actions could be taken, what could not and why.

OfS Compliance Annual Report 2022-23

- 24.219 Council noted a report on the University's compliance with the Office for Students' (OfS) Ongoing Conditions of Registration. The University remained compliant with all ongoing conditions of registration with the possible exception of B1 and B2 in relation to BNU's Business and Management provision as it awaited a decision from the OfS following its assessment and B4 in relation to BNU's compliance with the OfS' requirements for the retention of assessed work for 5 years, on which work was underway although this requirement was proving challenging to the entire sector.

- 24.220 It was confirmed that Audit Committee reviewed the University's OfS Compliance Tracker at every meeting.
- 24.221 The University Secretary and Clerk to Council also confirmed that
- a) BNU had a Student Protection Plan in place and was awaiting guidance from the OfS about how this should be updated
 - b) BNU was compliant with the D Conditions but was being prudent and continuously monitoring its financial position
 - c) all fees to external bodies had been paid on time
 - d) BNU had submitted nine Reportable Events in the past academic year, including some under an F3 Notice from the OfS relating to BNU's partnerships
 - e) the University also remained compliant with the E Conditions on governance
 - f) BNU was awaiting Conditions on freedom of speech and sexual harassment in 2025.
- 24.222 The Chair queried if the University was required to share due diligence on new educational partners with Council or any of its committees as part of their approval. The University Secretary and Vice-Chancellor confirmed that while BNU had to report new partnerships, or the termination of partnerships, to the OfS, Council's involvement in these decisions was not formally required.

Degree Outcomes Statement 2023-24

- 24.223 Council considered the Degree Outcomes Statement (DOS) 2023-2024 which had been considered by Senate in June and recommended to Council for approval. The Academic Registrar advised Council that it was a requirement to publish each DOS on BNU's website. The University's awarding of Good Honours (GH) had declined in 2022-23 by 2% from 2021-22 due to the gap between the awarding of GH to partner students compared to BNU taught students and partners becoming a larger part of the University's graduating body. The University was now undertaking work to support and improve degree outcomes at partners, including a revised quality monitoring process and the introduction of categorical marking.
- 24.224 The SU President expressed her support for the introduction of categorical marking.
- 24.225 In response to queries from the Chair, the Vice-Chancellor advised that
- a) the decline in GH would not lead to a dramatic decline in the University's league tables position, but the OfS was concerned about unattributable increases in GH. BNU had amended its degree algorithm which had not impacted degree outcomes, which suggested the algorithm was correct. The next step was to further enhance academic performance as this would improve degree outcomes
 - b) the awarding gap for Black and Asian students was a sector-wide challenge. BNU's awarding gap for these students was smaller than it was at some other providers, but it was focusing on a challenge around awards to male Asian students.
- 24.226 Council approved the Degree Outcomes Statement 2023-2024.

KPIs

- 24.227 Council received a report on the Thrive 28 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and two deep dives relating to the University's financial surplus and its growth. The Vice-Chancellor informed Council that there had been some movement on some KPIs for which no sector context was yet available. BNU's latest Graduate Outcomes performance had improved compared to a drop of about 2% in

the sector; BNU expected to see an elevated ranked performance but did not yet have the sector detail about this. The Continuation KPI would potentially be impacted by an anomalous cohort of international students who had commenced their studies in 2021-22 but had subsequently been withdrawn in significant numbers on the advice of United Kingdom Visas and Immigration. The University was in discussion with the OfS about whether this cohort should be discounted from BNU's Continuation data, but the outcome of these discussions was not yet known. If the cohort continued to be included in the data, which covered a four-year period, BNU would meet the OfS's B3 Condition of Registration benchmark on its aggregated data, but not on the disaggregated data for one year.

- 24.228 Regarding the Growth KPI, it remained a key strategic aim to grow taught numbers in order to balance taught partner numbers. The budgetary assumptions in the 2024-25 Budget would bring BNU close to its 10,000FTE target, but this was predicated on domestic and international growth and the University could not be certain of how the international market would behave. In the past few years, BNU had grown its Home student population by 50% but had also experienced a decline in European Union student numbers and volatility in its international student population. The University had the mechanisms in place to be able to recruit strongly, but assumptions about international recruitment were difficult to verify.
- 24.229 The Chief Finance Officer informed Council that the Surplus KPI was a retrospective KPI. The University had now experienced four years of surplus after some years of being in deficit, so the Green rating had felt justified.
- 24.230 In response to Council's queries, it was clarified that:
- a) the University was very careful in the international recruitment agencies it worked with, undertook robust due diligence when selecting new agencies, and made it clear to them that they must not overpromise what BNU could deliver, particularly on student accommodation. It monitored its agencies closely, but also aimed to continue to build and strengthen relationships with trusted agencies
 - b) if the OfS did not agree to exclude the anomalous cohort, it was likely that the compilers of the sector league tables would work with BNU to understand it was an anomalous intake so it would likely again not have a dramatic impact on BNU's position. The OfS was not expected to regard this as a regulatory matter
 - c) key BNU statistics were available on sites such as UniStats (now Discover Uni).

Apprenticeships Update

- 24.231 Council received an update on the University's apprenticeship provision and the current Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). The Commercial and Business Development Director informed Council that the University's Self-Assessment Report was currently being revised. The University was generally performing strongly against its success and retention targets, apart from for two programmes, although the issue for one was due to the employer withdrawing multiple apprentices from BNU's policing programmes following the previous government's decision that it was no longer compulsory to have achieved an undergraduate degree to join the police force.
- 24.232 The Chair commended the Head of Apprenticeships for her successful work.

Access and Participation Plan Update / Timeline

- 24.234 Council noted an update on the development of the University's new Access and Participation Plan (APP) ahead of its submission to the OfS by 1 October 2024. The Director of Learning Enhancement and Academic Practice informed Council that BNU was on track to submit by 1 October having reviewed its data, policies and practices; undertaken stakeholder consultation; and identified key risks for BNU students and interventions to mitigate them from pre-enrolment onwards, including targeted support on mental health and building a caring curriculum. The plan was now being drafted.
- 24.235 Council agreed that it would approve the revised APP by circulation over the summer and agreed that ongoing Council oversight of the APP should be reviewed by the University Secretary and Clerk to Council. It was suggested that Student Experience Committee might be best placed to exercise this oversight.

Action: Council / University Secretary and Clerk to Council

Audit Committee Update

Chair's Summary Report

- 24.235 Council received the summary of the work of the Audit Committee since the previous meeting of Council, including the minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2024. The Chair of the Committee informed Council that the Committee had noted the increasing regulatory burden on BNU and considered the University's Strategic Risk Register in which risk around domestic recruitment had been marked as heightened, but the partnership risk appetite score had been increased following review.
- 24.236 Audit Committee had recommended the revised Health and Safety Policy for Council's approval. Council approved the policy.
- 24.237 Audit Committee had considered whether to recommend for Council approval an amendment to the University's Financial Regulations / Scheme of Delegation to enable the Vice-Chancellor or Capital Projects Group to approve spending above £2m where the contract sum was related to expenditure of external funding, and where the University's own resources were not committed and in scenarios where the University sought to drive greater value by combining individual projects valued below their delegated limit of authority. The Committee had agreed that this amendment should not be made. Council approved the Financial Regulations with only minor amendments to some UET job titles.
- 24.239 Audit Committee had received the Annual Report on Resilience: Incidences and Actions. Council noted the report.

Governance Committee Update

- 24.240 Council received the summary of the work of the Governance Committee since the previous meeting of Council, including the minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2024. The Chair of Governance Committee informed Council that the Committee had been delighted that the Chair of Council had indicated she was willing to be reappointed as Chair. The Chair of the Committee would not be continuing in the role of Deputy Chair due to work commitments, but recommended the role to fellow Independent members. A recruitment process would now commence.

- 24.241 The Chair of Council expressed her sincere thanks to the Deputy Chair for his work, including interviewing potential Council members and undertaking six-month reviews.
- 24.242 The Chair of Council advised Council she would be willing to be reappointed as Chair for up to four more years if that was Council's wish given that the University was about to appoint a new Vice-Chancellor.
- 24.243 The following actions were then completed:
- a) Council approved the proposal that it would appoint three new Independent Council members from 1 August 2024 to 31 July 2028 by circulation. The University Secretary and Clerk to Council advised Council that the three new members had legal, financial and cybersecurity backgrounds
 - b) Council noted the update on the appointment of the Chair of Council from 1 August 2025
 - c) Council noted the update on the Deputy Chair of Council's decision to stand down from the role and commencement of a new recruitment process
 - d) Council noted the appointment of Joy Dellah-Gu as the new Student Co-opted Member of Council
 - e) Council noted that Dr Kevin Campbell-Karn (Deputy Head of School: Human and Social Sciences) had been elected by Senate as the second Senate Representative to Council alongside Dr Russel Stone following the conclusion of Professor Karen Buckwell-Nutt's term
 - f) Council noted the appointment of three new external Directors to the Missenden Abbey Board: Graham Marskell, Peter Jones and Joanne White
 - g) Council noted the appointment of Amir Khan as External Specialist Co-opted Member of Audit Committee
 - h) Council noted that no Expressions of Interest had yet been received for the positions of Chairs of Audit and Resources Committees. The Chair and the University Secretary and Clerk to Council would be undertaking further action to encourage filling of these roles.
- 24.244 Council also noted the Annual Update on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion following recommendation by Governance Committee.

Governance Effectiveness Review Findings

- 24.245 Council considered the findings and recommendations from the Governance Effectiveness Review undertaken by the Halpin Partnership (March – July 2024). Halpin had assessed Council and BNU's governance arrangements against their Maturity Framework as 'good to leading edge' in all areas and within the upper quartile of the 45 governance reviews they had undertaken. Halpin had confirmed the Council was compliant with the Committee of University Chairs' Higher Education Code of Governance.
- 24.246 Council discussed the recommendation to appoint a Senior Independent Governor (SIG). It was noted that Council had discussed this role several years ago and had felt at that time that the Chair was sufficiently independent from the University as it was not a remunerated post. One member commented having a SIG might make it difficult to find a Chair in future, but Council also noted that it might reduce the workload of the Deputy Chair. Council agreed appointing a SIG should be considered again.
- 24.247 Council agreed that the Governance Committee should review the recommendations and determine an action plan.

Action: Governance Committee

Resources Committee Update

24.248 Council received the summary of the work of the Resources Committee since the previous meeting of Council, including the minutes of the meeting held on 25 June 2024. The Chair of the Committee advised Council that the Committee had focused upon the 2024-25 Budget.

Annual Treasury Management Report

24.249 The Chair of Resources Committee confirmed that the Committee had recommended the report to Council for approval. The Committee had noted that the University had made a practical change to its policy and opened new bank accounts to ensure it maintained the balance held in its bank accounts within the limits of the policy. Council approved the report.

High Wycombe Development Update: Lessons Learnt

24.250 Council considered the report, which had been reviewed by Resources Committee and the High Wycombe Development Oversight Group (28 June 2024). The Chair of Audit Committee commented that the themes in the report had also emerged at Audit Committee's recent meeting; the project had delivered an extremely successful outcome, but the University needed to undertake more planning earlier for future projects to ensure that aspects such as planning permission were achieved in a timely fashion as projects such as building more student accommodation might receive more local objections; that the tendering process was clear from the outset; that there was a project risk register and that the University benefitted from an in-house solicitor.

24.251 It was confirmed that the University did have a part-time internal solicitor and used an external solicitor for advice on procurement.

24.252 The Chair of Resources Committee commented that the report contained practical advice which would hopefully make future projects run even more smoothly.

Student Experience Committee Update

Chair's Summary Report

24.253 Council received the summary of the work of the Student Experience Committee since the previous meeting of Council, including the minutes of the meeting held on 28 May 2024. The Chair of the Committee advised Council that the Committee had considered a report on student participation in SU activities and received its first report from the University Partnerships Board. It had reviewed the Office for the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for Higher Education Annual Report in which the OIA had reported it had received more student complaints than ever for a seventh consecutive year, but had been informed that BNU had seen a reduced number of complaints year-on-year due to the impact of its Early Resolution work. The Committee was looking forward to the National Student Survey 2024 results and thanked all staff who had participated in achieving the record participation rate.

24.254 The Chair of Council thanked the Chair for her excellent chairing of the Committee.

Starred Items

24.255 These items would only have been discussed if comments had been received by the Chair, University Secretary and Clerk to Council or Minute Secretary in advance of the meeting; no comments had been received. Council received the following items without comment:

- a) the summary and minutes of the most recent meetings of the University's Senate (5 June 2024), Education Committee (8 May 2024) and Research and Enterprise Committee (7 March and 15 May 2024)
- b) a report on the use of the University's Seal and Coat of Arms since the previous meeting of Council.

Update on Vice-Chancellor's Recruitment

- 24.256 The University Executive Team apart from the University Secretary and Clerk to Council withdrew from the meeting before this item was discussed.
- 24.257 Council received an update on the process to recruit and appoint the next Vice-Chancellor. The Chair informed Council that Dame Shirley Pearce had been appointed as the external member for the final selection process and requested that those Council members who would like to meet the candidates made sure they were available on 30 September. The University would also try to accommodate any Independent members who wished to be part of a stakeholder panel.
- 24.258 The executive search agency had approached over 70 candidates, of whom 7 had confirmed their interest while a further 10 were still considering their response; it was hoped that there would be a strong field of candidates. Half of the search applicants were female and 20% were from people in the global majority. Twenty applications had also been received in response to the job advert.
- 24.259 The Chair thanked the Appointments Committee, the University Secretary and Clerk to Council, the Director of Human Resources and the Director of Vice-Chancellor, Communications and Civic Engagement for their work in ensuring the process ran smoothly and that staff felt informed.
- 24.260 In response to queries, the Chair advised that
- a) internal applicants would be treated in the same way as the external applicants. The successful applicant would be whoever was strongest on the day
 - b) the executive search agency would ask applicants if they had applied for other vice-chancellorships as this was not uncommon; there was never a time when a university was the only university looking for a new vice-chancellor
 - c) the successful applicant would be choosing BNU as much as BNU was choosing them.

Date of next meeting

- 24.261 The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 8 October 2024.