



BUCKINGHAMSHIRE  
NEW UNIVERSITY  
EST. 1891

## **COUNCIL (BUSINESS MEETING)**

Open Minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2024 in The Room, High Wycombe campus and on MS Teams.

### **Present:**

- Maggie Galliers (Independent [Chair]);
- Karen Satterford (Co-opted member [Deputy Chair and Chair of Governance, Staff Reward and Vice-Chancellor's Remuneration Committees]);
- Professor Nick Braisby (Vice-Chancellor [Chair of the Missenden Abbey Board]);
- Brian Lewis (Independent [Chair of Audit Committee]);
- Dr Annet Gamell (Independent [Chair of Student Experience Committee]);
- Sadie Groom (Independent);
- Shaun Crawford (Independent);
- Adam Honor (Independent);
- Jackie Westaway (Independent);
- Francine Goodrich (Independent)
- Ze'ev Portner (Academic Representative);
- Peter Robinson (PSE Representative);
- Dr Russel Stone (Senate Representative);
- Dr Kevin Campbell-Karn (Senate Representative)
- Amy Pile (Students' Union President)
- Joy Dellah-Gu (Student Co-opted Member)

### **In attendance**

- Professor Damien Page (Deputy Vice-Chancellor)
- Professor Paul Morgan (Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education));
- Ellie Smith (University Secretary and Clerk to Council)
- Trevor Gabriele (Chief Financial Officer);
- Ian Harper (Commercial and Business Director);
- Dr Emma Tomsett (Minute Secretary)
- Matt Hiely-Rayner (Director of Strategic Planning and Change)
- Margaret Rioga (Director for Student Success / Prevent Lead)

### **Apologies**

- Andy Cole (Independent);
- Marek Pruszevicz (Independent);
- Justin Sullivan (Independent [Chair of Resources Committee]);

## Welcome / Apologies for Absence

- 24.296 The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and noted three apologies as outlined above. A warm welcome was given to Adam Honor who was attending his first meeting.
- 24.297 Council noted that the University Secretary and Council had decided that her long and distinguished career at BNU would end at the end of January 2025, on which more would be said at the end of the meeting.
- 24.298 The Chair had attended the BNU Impact Awards earlier in the day which had been a joyous event at which many staff had been celebrated but particularly those who had been nominated by their colleagues.

## Declaration of conflicts of interest

- 24.299 There were no declarations of conflicts of interest.

## Minutes of the previous meeting

- 24.300 The Open and Reserved Minutes of the previous meeting on 8 October 2023<sup>4</sup> were approved as accurate records of the meeting without amendment.
- 24.301 The Chair noted that BNU had received over 2,000 positive responses following the announcement that the Deputy Vice-Chancellor had been appointed as Vice-Chancellor from 1 February 2025.

## Matters Arising / Status of Actions

- 24.302 Council noted the status of the actions as outlined on the action sheet. All actions were complete or had a completion date given. Council noted that action 24.159 was an agenda item at Council's Away Day in February 2025. The Students' Union and the University were working on a plan for the session which would be shared with the Chair shortly.
- 24.303 It was noted that dates on the action sheet were appearing in both UK and United States format. The Minute Secretary would investigate a solution to this.

**Action: Minute Secretary**

## Chair's Action

- 24.304 Apart from the items reported as signed using the University Seal and Coat of Arms in agenda item 22a, there were no chair's actions to note. The Chair thanked the Chair of Audit Committee for signing one item on her behalf.

## Student Accommodation

- 24.305 Council considered an update on the University's plans to develop new student accommodation. Previous analysis by Cushman and Wakefield had identified a deficit of 500 student rooms. Redevelopment of the Windsor House shopping centre might also cause BNU to lose 72 of its existing rooms at this site in the near future. Analysis of 15 sites had identified further development at the University's existing Hughenden Village site as the best option. The University was currently operating under an Exclusivity Agreement with developer Harman Hughenden Park Ltd (HHP) to discuss their proposal to buy a plot of land on the Hughenden site, build 150 rooms and lease them back to the University on a twenty-five-year lease (a sale-and-lease-back arrangement). Heads of terms had been agreed. Soft testing had indicated there was no interest in a development of 150

rooms from larger developers; some developers had expressed interest in the larger scheme but the up-front costs they required made that option non-viable.

- 24.306 The University was in the process of submitting two planning applications: the first for the 150 rooms and the second for a broader scheme, as the entire site could hold up to 672 rooms. The 150 rooms could be available from September 2026 and the University's solicitors had advised that issuing a VEAT Notice was an appropriate and compliant mechanism to announce to the market BNU's intention to contract with HHP. The University had commenced due diligence on HHP which had so far yielded no cause for concern.
- 24.307 In response to queries from Council, the Commercial and Business Development Director clarified that
- a) the new rooms would be built on the corner of the Hughenden plot and the remaining plot of land would not be too small for larger developers
  - b) the 72 rooms at Windsor House would not be redeveloped while the shopping centre below them was redeveloped. The University had informed Dandara that it would need at least 18 months' notice before redevelopment could commence
  - c) the University could add a stipulation to any contract with HHP that it had first refusal if HHP decided to sell the building at the end of the lease.
  - d) with the rent that the University might be able to charge for the new rooms, the project would break even. It was noted that BNU subsidised the existing rooms at Hughenden
  - e) the University's financial exposure in the initial planning phase would be c. £200,000.
- 24.308 Council approved continued work under the Exclusivity Agreement.
- 24.309 Council approved the creation of a property group to work on the detail of the proposal and in due course to present planning and design information to Resources Committee. It was noted that the group's terms of reference had already been agreed and Independent Members Justin Sullivan, Francine Goodrich and Shaun Crawford had been asked to join it. It was agreed that the Students' Union President would also join the group. It was hoped the first meeting would be held before Christmas.
- 24.310 Council also approved delegated authority for Resources Committee to approve the planning and final design, and publication of the VEAT Notice in early 2025. Independent Member Ms Goodrich confirmed use of a VEAT Notice was common practice.

## **Financial Statements for the year ending 31 July 2024**

- 24.311 Council noted that the accounts for both the University and Missenden Abbey Limited had already been scrutinised by Resources and Audit Committees, who had recommended the former to Council. The Chair of Audit Committee confirmed the Committee and the external auditors had been very pleased with the outcome for BNU.

### KPMG Audit Findings Report 2022-23

- 24.312 Council considered the KPMG Audit Findings report. The Chief Finance Officer (CFO) noted that KPMG had been satisfied with the University's work on the Financial Statements, finding no material misstatements after the audit. There was one unadjusted misstatement, but this had not affected BNU's income and expenditure. Four control issues had been raised by KPMG and the University was taking action to address these, including the removal of manual calculations of tuition fees.

- 24.313 Council approved the results of the audit of the University's consolidated financial statements and its subsidiary companies that had been conducted by KPMG. The report had previously been considered by and recommended by Audit Committee:
- the report had been prepared in accordance with Financial Reporting Standard (FRS) 102 requirements;
  - there had been no significant changes to the audit plan and strategy;
  - the audit was substantially complete pending review of the final financial statements and receipt of the letter of representation;
  - KPMG expected to be in a position to sign their audit opinion in advance of the Office for Students (OfS) deadline subject to approval by Council and provided that the outstanding matters noted on page 5 of the report were satisfactorily resolved;
  - The Auditor's Report was expected to be unmodified.
- 24.314 Council also approved the Letter of Representation to the auditors as recommended by Audit Committee for sign-off by both the Chair of Council and the University Secretary and Clerk to the Council.
- 24.315 It was noted that KPMG's fee had increased by 64%. The CFO advised Council that the auditors had been required to do more, and also additional audit work at one of the University's partners, so this year's fee had increased, but the University had negotiated the fee down from an original figure of over £200,000. The University was in the last year of its contract with KPMG and would then commence a tendering process, but audit fees would remain high.

#### Annual Accounts for the year ending 31 July 2024

- 24.316 Council approved the Consolidated Financial Statements for Buckinghamshire New University. These had previously been considered by Resources Committee to reflect upon the financial performance of the University in 2023-24 and by Audit Committee who had provided assurance that FRS102 and OfS SORP audit compliance requirements had been met. Both Committees' comments had been incorporated into the narrative text. Council did not request any further amendments to the narrative text.
- 24.317 Council noted the University's reported income of £192m, its strong closing cash balance of £47m and the surplus of £3.7m. BNU was in a much better position than many in the sector in reporting a surplus for the previous financial year.
- 24.318 In response to a query about plans for using the cash reserves, the CFO confirmed various options were being considered including further investment or repaying some or all of its £19m loan, subject to considerations of liquidity.
- 24.319 It was confirmed that Audit Committee had reviewed the Staff Note.

#### Subsidiary Accounts for the year ending 31 July 2024

- 24.320 Council also approved for sign-off the Letter of Representation for the following subsidiary company in order that its Board could confirm it was a going concern and sign off its accounts:
- Missenden Abbey Limited (MAL).

- 24.321 Council noted the growth in turnover, but the costs of sales had hampered overall performance. The CFO commented that for the previous years the company had been trading at a loss of about £500,000. Note 11 showed that MAL owed BNU about £2.1m. Unless the position of the Abbey was reversed, that debt would continue to grow. This had been discussed at Resources Committee and an action to look at options for MAL had been agreed.
- 24.322 The Vice-Chancellor noted that the Missenden Abbey International Hotel and Hospitality School was still establishing itself, so the School had not yet made the material difference to the Abbey's performance that had been hoped, and a change of management at MAL was beginning to improve its performance. However, there was a deeper question about the future link between the Abbey and the School.
- 24.323 The Chair thanked Independent Member Sadie Groom for agreeing to the chair the MAL Board from January 2025.
- 24.324 The Chair commented that BNU could not sustain the loss year on year as it was not a good use of public funds and Council and the University might have to make some difficult decisions, but it was pleasing that for the 2024-25 year to date MAL was breaking even. It was noted that the MAL Board had approved the accounts, which had also been considered by Resources Committee.

## **Financial Position Update**

- 24.325 Council received a presentation on the University's financial position for the 2024-25 year to date. Council was informed that the cost base was under control, the University had confidence in its student numbers due to changes to enrolment processes, which had meant there were fewer 'ghost students' in the numbers, and it was on track at this stage of the year thanks to the additional students recruited on the new 'weekend' programmes. The CFO reemphasised that without the £20m income received from partnerships the accounts would look very different.
- 24.326 In response to queries from the Chair, the CFO advised that he believed BNU was experiencing a change in how the sector operated. Medium to higher tariff institutions were lowering their entry requirements due to shortfalls in international recruitment; some full-time undergraduate (FTUG) students who had previously chosen to come to BNU were now going to other universities. This meant that BNU would have underrecruited relative to target in its key FTUG market, but still shown year-on-year increases, were it not for the new 'weekend' programmes. He believed the competition for FTUG was not likely to ease soon so BNU needed to take action to retain its market share. The Academic Representative agreed with this analysis, commenting that BNU's Clearing results had been reduced in 2024 because students had received offers from other institutions that had lowered their entry tariffs. The Senate Representative Dr Stone advised Council that BNU's Marketing team believed more students would enter into Clearing voluntarily in 2025 as they anticipated other providers would lower their requirements, making Clearing even more critical.
- 24.327 The Vice-Chancellor commented that the shortfall in FTUG recruitment relative to target (excluding the new 'weekend' programmes) was significant and concerning. It was partly due to extra competition, but the University was also seeing more students deferring their places with some students considering more alternatives to university education. Although BNU had met its targets for FTUG due to successful recruitment into programmes that offered weekend teaching, the changes in the market were concerning and signal that there might be less growth in FTUG

recruitment in future. BNU might need to develop a much more competitive offer based on market need: weekend students were receiving the message that BNU would fit their learning around their needs.

- 24.328 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor commented that BNU had developed 11 new programmes which were being marketed for January 2025 entry which were recruiting well internationally. The programmes had been created based on market need and even in the most competitive markets BNU was doing well. There was value and opportunity in creating curriculum around market demand. The Chair commented that this was welcome news, but it was agreed that BNU must not lose sight of the domestic market.
- 24.329 It was also noted that there were pressures in the degree apprenticeship market, with NHS Trusts recruiting fewer apprentices. Government changes to funding for Level 7 programmes would create additional pressure.
- 24.330 The PSE Representative suggested that, with other providers struggling, there was an opportunity for BNU to break the mould and offer something very different.
- 24.331 One Council member also requested that Council received a tabular presentation of the different categories of BNU student with BNU's targets for each group versus what they had already achieved. It was recognised that BNU's student numbers changed throughout the year as it had multiple intakes, which could make presenting definitive data challenging, but the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) was asked to consider this for future meetings. It was also noted that a trend analysis and year-on-year comparisons would be helpful.

**Action: Deputy Vice-Chancellor**

## **Vice-Chancellor's Report**

- 24.332 Council received a report from the Vice-Chancellor on developments within the University and across the sector since its last Business meeting (9 July 2024). The Vice-Chancellor highlighted the Department for Education's references to having to make a difficult decision on Level 7 apprenticeships and that from August 2025 the Foundation Year tuition fee cap would fall by about £3,500. The Vice-Chancellor also highlighted the severe financial pressures on the sector with the Office for Students expecting 75% of providers to report a deficit for 2023-24, and now looking to identify problems before they arose. An institution that was much more demand-led would prosper; BNU was already ensuring its approach as demand-led, but the Vice-Chancellor suspected it would need to do much more in future.
- 24.333 A paper outlining the University's proposal for how it would apply the recently announced increase in the FTUG fee cap to £9,535 was tabled. The University had taken some time, and used legal advice, to decide when and to whom it could apply the increase as it was complex due to consumer protection law. The University was proposing, following its solicitors' advice, that the increase would be applied to new students joining in the 2025-26 academic year as there was sufficient time to inform them of the change, but it would not apply the increase to continuing students as it would potentially breach consumer law. The University had considered the real likelihood that should a continuing student complain to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) about the fee increase being applied to them the OIA could levy a financial penalty related to all such students, not merely those raising the complaint.

- 24.334 In response to a query from Council, it was clarified that it was not really possible to model the impact of increased fees on recruitment.
- 24.335 It was also noted that the decision BNU made for its taught students would apply to students at franchised sub contractual partners, although BNU was again taking legal advice on this.
- 24.336 The PSE Representative suggested that this was an opportunity for BNU to do something different with fees that would set BNU apart from other providers. The Chair agreed that it was important to think creatively, and there would be such opportunities at the Away Day in February.
- 24.337 It was agreed that Council would consider the paper and agree its decision about the application of the fee increase by correspondence. The University Secretary and Clerk to Council would circulate the paper after the meeting by email and members would email their assent or dissent to enable a final decision to be reached.

**Action: University Secretary and Clerk to Council**

- 24.338 The Vice-Chancellor noted that there was much to be positive about. The University was seeing a reset in its market as the weekend market was offsetting shortfalls elsewhere in FTUG recruitment, but BNU had still recruited very well for 2024-25. It had set an aspirational target that it had met, and which was part of the roadmap to the Thrive 2028 target of 10,000FTE. A key message from this year's recruitment round was that programmes and their delivery needed to be more demand-led.

## **Students' Union Report**

- 24.339 Council received a report from the Students' Union (SU) President. Since July, the SU had been focusing upon supporting students with financial pressures, housing pressures and their mental health. It had so far seen a 15% increase in student participation year on year. It was also working on improving campus safety in certain areas in response to student feedback. The SU was raising its concerns with key stakeholders at the University and through the Student Experience Forum. Working groups were being set up to address areas identified as requiring enhancement.
- 24.340 The Chair commended the report because, wherever a challenge was identified, it outlined a channel for its resolution.
- 24.341 In response to queries, the SU President confirmed:
- a) complaints about Gather and Gather related to their provision at the Uxbridge and Aylesbury campuses. The SU had a meeting booked with them to discuss this
  - b) complaints about mould and damp in student accommodation predominantly came from students in private accommodation
  - c) certain aspects of BNU's provision for mental health support were very good, although there could be pressures on the counselling service. Overall, the SU President felt that, in comparison to the rest of the sector, BNU provided a lot of support to its students. Council asked that the SU President kept them updated on this situation.
- 24.342 The Vice-Chancellor informed Council that BNU operated a working-diagnosis model: it did not wait for a student to receive a formal diagnosis of a disability or condition. About one-third of students going through Student Support Services would be considered to have a disability using this model. Despite this being a very large proportion, the Vice-Chancellor advised that this was

excellent practice which protected the University against such cases as the Bristol/Abrahart ones, and BNU's approach was considered sector-leading. The Student Success Directorate was not advising the University Executive Team (UET) that they are under resourced on student services. The Counselling Service triaged students so some students may wait longer if they were considered lower risk. It was agreed that the Head of Disability and Inclusion could do a deep dive on this at a future Council meeting.

- 24.343 The Chair of the Student Experience Committee informed Council that the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education) and the SU President had established a working group to investigate student commuting at BNU.
- 24.344 The Student Co-Opted Member commented that the card listing all the support services available to students which the SU President had introduced was very useful.

### **Thrive 28 KPI Update**

- 24.345 Council considered an update on Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for the Thrive 28 Strategy, The Director of Strategic Planning and Change informed Council that, as was expected, the University had experienced a drop in its 4-year continuation average, which was now beneath the baseline rate of 80% so the University would need to be prepared to explain this. It was largely due to a particular international student cohort where the University had had to withdraw multiple students on the advice of United Kingdom Visas and Immigration (UKVI) but there had also been challenges with continuation from the Foundation Year, though this also reflected a sector-wide problem. The University also used Progression data as a lead indicator for this KPI and was seeing positive signs: it did not have a shortfall relative to target in continuing students for the current academic year.
- 24.346 The KPI for the National Student Survey had seen a slight decline as it was focused upon BNU-taught students, for which BNU was ranked 19<sup>th</sup> in the UK for 2024, but it was positive to remain in the top twenty and for all registered students BNU was number one in the United Kingdom.
- 24.347 BNU's Graduate Outcomes (GO) had also improved for the 2021-22 cohort in the context of a sector decline; the results were now above both baseline and benchmark for this metric.
- 24.348 In response to questions from Council, it was clarified that
- a) the OfS had not yet released outcomes for 2022-23
  - b) performance on GO varied by School, with some not meeting baselines and others exceeding them
  - c) the Foundation Year had been redesigned and was now owned by Schools instead of centralised, so it was anticipated that the 2021-22 results were a legacy statistic. It was noted that there had been valid reasons for introducing centralised delivery in 2018 and that initially results had been positive, but the 2021-22 FY cohort had been particularly affected by international students who had been withdrawn.
- 24.349 The Chair noted that lessons had been learned from the 2021-22 results.

### **Apprenticeships Update**

- 24.350 Council noted that this was a compliance report. Council received the University's latest Self-Assessment Report (SAR). The University was aiming to maintain its Good rating from Ofsted and was aiming for Outstanding at the next inspection. The SAR would be submitted to Ofsted; BNU had rated its provision Good for all apart from two programmes, which the University rated Outstanding. BNU's success rate was 72% for 2023-24 compared to a national rate for 2022-23 of 52%, and would have been over 80% had the previous government's policy change on requirements to join police forces not changed, as this had led to multiple Policing degree apprentices withdrawing. It was noted that several of BNU's contracts with employers required BNU to be rated Good or Outstanding.
- 24.351 Council also received the OfS's report on its audit of the University's Integrated End Point Assessment (EPA) processes, which had been rated as Good.
- 24.352 The Chair commented, as Council's Champion for Apprenticeships, that BNU's success rates had been impacted through no fault of the University's and congratulated BNU on the EPA audit. The Chair would review the plan after the meeting and meet with the Commercial and Business Development Director if necessary.

## **Partnerships Update**

- 24.353 Council considered an update on the University's educational partnerships. The Commercial and Business Development Director informed Council that the OfS had inspected Regent College's (RC) management and business programme at the same time as they had inspected BNU's and identified six areas of concern. BNU students only accounted for 400 of the over 4000 students at RC; the volume of what the OfS saw applied to RC's partnership with the University of Bolton. They had not observed any teaching on the BNU contract. BNU had acted on the 6 areas of concern identified by the OfS. BNU was on a teach-out agreement for franchised provision at RC, but had some students on a validated programme at RC. The OfS had not stated if they would be imposing any sanctions on RC; it was noted that the OfS had not yet imposed any sanctions on any provider following a quality assessment. If sanctions were proposed on BNU, the University would argue that the concerns were historical and had been corrected.
- 24.354 The Vice-Chancellor assured Council that RC had also taken action to address the concerns and that the University had been clear that they must resolve all concerns to its satisfaction. RC had recruited new academic leadership and acted to separate ownership from academic management. BNU continued to work with them closely to ensure they understood what they needed to do.
- 24.355 Council noted that BNU's partnership numbers would fall to approximately 13,000 at the end of 2024-25 from a peak of over 16,000 in 2022-23. The rebalancing between partner and BNU-taught students had commenced but it would lead to a decline in partner contribution to £17.9m, although weekend provision would bridge some of this gap. It was noted that the University had increased its investment with partners, introducing a new quality process to support them, but had also asked partners to cover the cost of any resources BNU had decided to put into partners to address quality and standards. The quality process was probably stronger than any other in the sector, but it was also possible that it might be having too great a constraining effect on partners as partner student numbers were now falling, so it might need some revision in future.

- 24.356 The CFO advised that the 13,000 total would be fed through the Quarter 1 forecast so it was too early to state how this number would impact the budget. If a major partner was to leave BNU it would completely change the financial dynamic of the institution and there was not yet a contingency plan in place for this; any action taken would likely involve removing staff costs. The Chair commented that Resources would receive an update for 2024-25 at its next meeting, but BNU would need to think about modelling for future years.
- 24.357 Council noted the continuing challenge of reducing BNU's financial reliance on partners versus the quality challenges and reputational risks.
- 24.358 In response to a query, it was explained that BNU had previously terminated its partnership with Magna Carta College (MCC), who were now delivering the weekend teaching programmes, due to a breakdown in relationships with the then Principal and not quality concerns. MCC had had a debt to the University when the partnership ended, which the weekend teaching was helping to repay. Attendance was good so far and submission rates were over 80%, and the CBDD and Head of School: Business and Law were monitoring the provision closely; there were no concerns so far.

## **Report from Audit Committee**

### Chair's Summary Report

- 24.359 Council received the summary of the work of the Audit Committee since the previous meeting of Council. The Chair of Audit Committee confirmed that the Committee had been content with all the items Council was being asked to approve.

### Annual Risk Management Report (2023-24)

- 24.360 Council approved the annual report on risk management, as recommended by Audit Committee.

### Audit Committee Annual Report to Council and the Vice-Chancellor (2023-24)

- 24.361 Council approved the report which provided assurances from the Audit Committee in relation to the areas listed and formed part of the Annual Accountability Return to the OfS without comment.
- 24.362 Council also approved the following reports which were appended to the report:
- a) Annual Internal Audit Report (2023-24) prepared by KCG, summarising assurance levels achieved across all audit assignments completed during the reporting period;
  - b) Report on compliance of Buckinghamshire New University with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity (2023-24), which was approved for submission to Research England;
  - c) Value for Money Monitoring Statement (2023-24).

### Annual Prevent Report and OfS Monitoring and Accountability Return

- 24.363 Council approved the Annual Prevent report and OfS Monitoring and Accountability Return. The University's Prevent Lead assured Council that BNU had maintained its quality procedures for Prevent, and had this year added a webpage as a single source of all information on Prevent for staff and students. BNU had maintained its links with local community groups and the police, and continued to have policies and procedures in place.

## **Annual Safeguarding Report**

- 24.364 Council approved the report. The Director for Student Success advised Council that BNU's greatest concerns were an increase in complex cases relating to mental health, expressions of

suicidal thoughts and self-harming; increased cases of domestic violence; and increased pressure from the cost of living. The Student Success Directorate had been reviewing how its services could best support students' needs: it had introduced a Report and Support system and was planning a Wellbeing Strategy with a number of initiatives to support students that would align with the new Access and Participation Plan. The Director confirmed that the Directorate consisted of the Student Hub, the Disability and Inclusion Service, the Counselling Service and student accommodation service.

24.365 In response to a query, the Director reported that there was growing concern about the three areas she had outlined across the sector, especially following the Covid-19 pandemic. BNU's reporting was much better now and the interventions it had taken had improved BNU's understanding of students' needs and had helped students.

24.366 The Chair of the Student Experience Committee advised Council she had met with the Director in her role as Council's Safeguarding Lead and had found the meeting reassuring.

24.367 The Chair requested a deep dive into BNU's mental health provision at a future meeting. The Director assured Council that BNU took this issue very seriously.

**Action: Minute Secretary**

24.368 It was noted that a section of the SAR focused on safeguarding, but it might be useful to align the report with the SAR.

**Action: Director for Student Success / Head of Apprenticeships**

24.369 It was noted that staff training on health and wellbeing might need refreshing, as it was a responsibility for all staff.

24.370 The Chair thanked the Director for her work and asked that she conveyed this to her team.

## **Report from Resources Committee**

### Chair's Summary Report

24.371 Council received the summary of the work of the Resources Committee since the previous meeting of Council without comment.

### Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement

24.372 Council approved the updated Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement for the year ending 31 July 2024, as recommended by Resources Committee, for publication on the University website without comment.

## **Report from Student Experience Committee**

### Chair's Summary Report

24.373 Council received the summary of the work of the Student Experience Committee since the previous meeting of Council without comment. The Chair of the Committee advised Council that the Committee had given the SU Accounts detailed consideration.

### Students' Union Accounts for the year ending 31 July 2024

24.374 Council approved the Annual Report and Consolidated Financial Statements for Bucks Students' Union, as recommended by Student Experience Committee. The Chair congratulated the SU for making a surplus.

## Report from Governance Committee

- 24.375 Council received the summary of the work of the Governance Committee since the previous meeting of Council without comment.
- 24.376 Council unanimously approved the appointment of the Chair of Council for a second and final four-year term as an Independent Member of Council from 1 August 2025 to 31 July 2029 and for a further term as Pro-Chancellor and Chair of Council for up to a further four years from 1 August 2025.
- 24.377 Council approved the appointment of additional Pro Chancellors to support the Chair of Council during Graduation Weeks.

## Report from Missenden Abbey Board

- 24.378 Council received the summary of the recent work of the Missenden Abbey Board. The Chair of the Board thanked Independent Member Sadie Groom for agreeing to assume the chairing role from January 2025 and noted that the Board would be re-evaluating the Abbey's position at its next meeting.

## Reserved Business: Remuneration Matters

- 24.379 This item was considered under Reserved Business. See Reserved Minutes.

## Reserved Business: Honorary Awards Nominations

- 24.380 This item was considered under Reserved Business. See Reserved Minutes.

## Starred Items

- 24.381 These items had been deemed starred items which would only be discussed if the Minute Secretary received comments before the meeting. No comments had been received.

## Use of the University Seal and Coat of Arms

- 24.382 Council noted that the University Seal had been used on four occasions since the last Business meeting.

## Minutes from the University Committees

- 24.383 Council received a summary of the meetings of Senate (22 November 2024 ) and its Teaching and Learning Committee (13 November 2024) plus a summary of the new Senate deliberative committee structure.

## Minutes from Council Committees

- 24.384 Council received the following minutes of Council Committee meetings without comment: Audit Committee (17 September and 12 November 2024); Governance Committee (15 October 2024) Resources Committee (5 November 2024); Student Experience Committee (22 October 2024) and the Missenden Abbey Board (28 August and 24 October 2024).

## Thank you to the Vice-Chancellor

- 24.385 Council expressed its thanks for the very substantial contributions made by the outgoing Vice-Chancellor and University Secretary and Clerk to Council. The Vice-Chancellor had overseen significant growth, improved league table and financial positions, the establishment of two new Schools, the redevelopment of the High Wycombe campus and had held the institution together during the pandemic. He had put BNU on the map as an anchor institution in the region.
- 24.386 The University Secretary had served BNU for thirty-four years in various posts, supporting four Vice-Chancellors and four Chairs of Council. She had been a passionate advocate for BNU, resilient and able to find solutions. She had led BNU's application to register with the OfS and the institutional audit by the Quality Assurance Agency. Independent Members always found her delightful to work with. The Academic Representative commented that all staff would miss her.
- 24.387 The Vice-Chancellor thanked Council for their commitment to BNU; the Vice-Chancellor's achievements were collective and therefore BNU's achievements. He was immensely grateful to Council for giving him the opportunity to lead BNU, which had been the greatest privilege. He could not have led the University without support from brilliant colleagues and knew that BNU would continue to thrive. He also thanked the University Secretary for her endless support.

### **Date of next meeting**

- 24.388 The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 4-5 February 2025.