

## BISHOP GROSSETESTE UNIVERSITY

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE UNIVERSITY COUNCIL

WEDNESDAY 2 JULY 2025

11 AM IN CSH 11 and 12

**Present**

Stephan Bolton

Alison Brown

Julia Chippendale (Development Session only – *MS Teams*)

Bishop Stephen Conway (Development Session only)

Russ Coulter

Dr Stephen Critchley

Rebecca Crooks

Tom Dannatt

Anne Frost (*Chair*)

Stephen Galjaard

Prof. Andrew Gower

Prof. Marianne Howarth (Development Session only – *MS Teams*)

The Very Rev'd Dr Simon Jones

Rev'd Canon Dr Sarah Lawrence (Development Session only)

Walter Leschenko

Dr Sacha Mason

Rachel McLafferty

Rebecca Midgley

Jaidip Sen

Elise Temple

Kate Truscott

**In attendance**Leanne Chancellor, Head of the Vice-Chancellor's Office (*Minutes*)

Craig Ferguson, Secretariat, Alumni Relations and Ceremonial Officer

Dr Nick Gee, Executive Dean of Faculty

Kym Gill, Students' Union Vice-President: Education

Amy Hare, Head of Finance (for Development Session only)

Prof. Andrew Jackson, Executive Dean for Research and Knowledge Exchange (for Development Session only)

Jonathan Lidster, Director of CIS, Strategy &amp; Performance (for Development Session only)

Connor Short, Safeguarding, Contention &amp; Project Officer (Items 9 and 10)

**Action****University Council Strategy Development Morning Sessions****1. Welcome**

1.1 The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Andrew Gower welcomed University Council members to the strategy development sessions and noted the aims:

- To reflect together as a University Council and University Executive on the core purpose, goals and objectives of the University.
- To consider a draft Strategic Plan 2025-30 and agree any further recommendations for amendment.

- To provide a strategic steer in the University’s academic development.
- To consider a draft Financial Resilience Framework 2025-30 and agree any further recommendations for amendment.
- To work together as a University Council, with opportunity for group discussion and to share feedback through plenary.

**2. Strategy Development 2025-30**

2.1 Development sessions for the morning consisted of the following:

- Strategic Plan 2025-30
- Development of the Academic Portfolio 2025-30
- Development of Research and Knowledge Exchange 2025-30
- Financial Resilience Framework (FRF) 2025-30, including the review of the first draft budget for 2025-26 (year one of the FRF).

2.2 The Chair NOTED that this was Rev’d Canon Sarah Lawrence’s (SL) final meeting, following her resignation.

- Members recorded their thanks to SL for her work and support during her time as a University Council member and wished SL well.

*Following the Strategy Development Sessions the following left the meeting.*

- *Professor Andrew Jackson, Executive Dean for Research and Knowledge Exchange.*
- *Jonathan Lidster, Director of Corporate Information Services, Strategy and Performance.*
- *Amy Hare, Head of Finance*
- *Bishop Stephen Conway.*
- *Professor Marianne Howarth.*
- *Rev’d Canon Sarah Lawrence.*
- *Julia Chippendale.*

**University Council Meeting**

**1. Welcome**

1.1 The Chair, Anne Frost, welcomed members to the fifth University Council Meeting of the 2024/25 academic year.

1.2 The Chair formally welcomed Stephan Bolton, Students’ Union President 2025-26 to the University Council meeting.

**2. The University Prayer**

2.1 The Chair invited the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Andrew Gower (AG) to lead the University Prayer.

**3. Apologies**

3.1 Apologies for absence were RECEIVED from:

- Professor Marianne Howarth;
- Rev’d Canon Sarah Lawrence (SL);
- Julia Chippendale; and
- Bishop Stephen Conway.

#### 4. Declarations of interest

4.1 The following new declarations of interest were NOTED:

- The Chair NOTED that she had stepped down as Chair of the Schools Trust and she had recently taken up another Chair role at Sandwell College – there was no conflict of interest as Chair of Council.
- The Very Rev'd Simon Jones (SJ) NOTED that he had become a member of the University of Lincoln Academy Trust but again was noted that this was not a cause of conflict of interest.

#### 5. Minutes of Previous Meetings

5.1 1 April 2025

5.1.1 The minutes of the University Council Meeting held on 1 April 2025 were APPROVED as a true and accurate record of the meeting and the Chair was authorised to sign them.

#### 6. Matters Arising

6.1 Action Table

6.1.1 Members RECEIVED the action table from 1 April 2025 and progress against actions was NOTED.

6.2 Any Other Matters

6.2.1 Link Governor for Students

The Chair NOTED that SL held the role of Link Governor for Students (which included the being a Student Trustee) and following her resignation this role was now vacant.

- Kate Truscott offered to take on this role.
- The Head of the Vice-Chancellor's Office to inform the Students' Union Chief Executive Officer and to put her in touch with Kate Truscott.

HoVCO

#### 7. Vice-Chancellor's Report

7.1 Members RECEIVED and NOTED the Vice-Chancellor's Report which was circulated to members on 4 June 2025 and a July update was included in the meeting papers.

7.2 AG HIGHLIGHTED the following to NOTE:

- *Future Vice-Chancellor Reports* – once the Strategic Plan is in place, AG would adapt the Vice-Chancellor's Report so that it reports against the strategic goals, so that members can see the progress being made.
- *Mayor and Deputy Mayor* – Dame Andrea Jenkyns, Mayor of Greater Lincolnshire and Ingrid Sheard, Deputy Mayor visited the University on 12 June 2025, and a news item regarding the visit was published on the website with a quote from the Mayor noting the positivity about the visit and the university enabling students to gain employment opportunities.

AG NOTED that it was becoming increasingly evident that the Government is encouraging universities to be engaged with their local economy, to serve the local economy in a stronger and more recognised way. This has been noticed in the recent Office for Students (OfS) Capital Bid, where the criteria for that is the

extent to which it is connected with regional higher skills needs, which will have an impact for the local people within the regions we serve.

- *OfS Sustainability Report* – NOTED the risks that universities were facing in terms of recovery of finances:
  1. Inability to achieve the growth in student numbers (domestic and international) that remains in the forecasts.
  2. Growth in sub-contracting arrangements which the OfS considers “risky”.
  3. Underinvestment in capital infrastructure which would have long term implications for continued resilience.

AG NOTED in response that the institution will avoid over optimism in our target setting, so we can actually plan against the income that is expected. Therefore, there is more detailed analysis work to be completed before the FE&GP Committee in September 2025. The institution needs to carefully manage sub-contracting arrangements, monitor the relationships closely, and start to make measured capital investment into our estate and IT.

- *Forthcoming Post 16 Skills White Paper* – this has been long awaited for by universities and the Higher Education (HE) sector for the Government to work through the various initiatives which are to be given priority.

AG NOTED that in the meantime, the draft Strategic Plan was geared towards the current and expected policy priorities, including HE providers responding to the local and national skills needs and leveraging the opportunities for short course / modular learning through the introduction of the Lifelong Learning Entitlement.

- *University Awards* – the University has been very successful with a number of awards – national and regional awards for our student accommodation, student satisfaction, teaching quality and student support.
- *Open Day* – the next Open Day was scheduled for 11 July and 15 August 2025.
- *Student Recruitment Update* – at the time of this meeting, we are 41 firm accepts short of the target of 846. There were still 258 pending applications and 92 pending decisions for those potential students who have been offered places.

## 8. To Receive the Students’ Union President’s Report

8.1 Members RECEIVED and NOTED the Students’ Union President’s Report.

8.2 The Students’ Union President, Stephan Bolton (SB), HIGHLIGHTED the following key points to NOTE:

- Clubs and Societies Feedback Forum.
- Student Council Motions regarding Student Spaces.
- Students’ Union Strategy Five Year Strategy.
- Students’ Union Presidency Handover Week.
- Swap Shop to be relocated from the library to the Student’s Union Common Room, to be more student facing.
- Annual Student Teaching Academic Representation (STAR) Awards event.
- Annual Union Fest.

8.3 SB also NOTED a farewell message from Max Gordon, former Student’s Union President.

*The Safeguarding, Contention & Projects Officer, Connor Short, joined the meeting.*

## 9. Safeguarding / Office for Students E6 Conditions Update

9.1 The Safeguarding, Contentions and Projects Officer, Connor Short (CS) NOTED that at the last University Council meeting in April 2025, he updated members on safeguarding metrics, cases that had been received, identifying common issues and trends, and an introduction to the new regulatory compliance (E6 Conditions) coming in from the OfS.

9.2 CS HIGHLIGHTED the following key items to NOTE:

- The five key pieces of legislation that inform university policies:
  1. Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006;
  2. Protection of Freedoms Act 2012;
  3. Health and Safety at Work Act 1974;
  4. The Police Act 1997; and
  5. Care Standards Act 2000.
- The safeguarding overview showed that 30% of our safeguarding profile as an institution was surrounding sexual harassment and misconduct. This is our largest percentile as an institution and is the most common concern for students – it was NOTED that institutions over England, Scotland and Wales were reporting a similar profile.
- There was quite a list of things expected from universities regarding the new E6 condition of registration, examples were:
  - Requirement around policies and procedures – these included implementing the terms of reference, directly referencing freedom of speech, changes in regulation and referring to specific terms, e.g., abuse of power.
  - All conditions have been met, except one, this is regarding interpersonal relationships between staff and students. It is currently recommended by the OfS that institutions place a ban on interpersonal relationships between staff and students. However, at BGU the proposal is that it is not appropriate for the University to define what is or is not a healthy relationship between staff and students. It is believed that all of our students are adults, all of our members of staff are adults, and whilst we do not actively encourage personal relationships between staff and students, we should adopt the approach of a reporting mechanism, encouraging all of our students and staff to report any relationships, to address conflicts of interests and concerns, to then be dealt with in an appropriate, sensitive and timely manner.
- The conditions came into effect in two distinctive waves:
  - First wave was in September 2024 – the prohibition on using Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs) to prevent students from disclosing information about harassment and sexual misconduct.
  - Second wave will be in August 2025 – a full implementation of Condition E6, including the requirement for a single comprehensive source of information and other preventative measures.
- Training on this condition has been reviewed and will be made mandatory for all staff working in HE around sexual harassment in the workplace. Training has been embedded into the university's IHASCO training suite. There are also staff resources, training guides and access to public information reporting systems on SharePoint and there is an additional training area on BlackBoard for the implementation requirements for students.

- Student training was being implemented as a mandatory training request from the OfS, as an exercise to inform student of their consent and what is consent, how it is defined, how you report sexual harassment and misconduct and how the university will regulate it.  
It was NOTED that there was one exception to the mandatory training and that was if a student declared that they had a conflict with the training, they can then 'opt out' of the training and only complete the minimum understanding.

- 9.3 CS updated members and talked through the PEACHY training, which stands for 'Permission, Enthusiastic participation, Active bystander, Communication, Honesty and You'. These are the core principles which have been used to implement across the training they have been entrenched in.
- 9.4 The Chair THANKED CS for his presentation, it was good to see all the training available.
- 9.5 Members were CONCERNED about the decision not to ban relationships between staff and students – even though both parties may be adults it is a criminal offence because a staff member is in a position of power.
- CS NOTED that discussions on this have been held with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).
  - CS NOTED that there are circumstances where individuals may have both staff and student statuses, where there may be an instance where there is a staff member with an existing relationship with an enrolling student.  
If a mature learner studying with us, forms a relationship that is kept within professional bounds, is it the position of the institution to say that relationship must end or must change? CS NOTED that we are not saying that we are condoning or encouraging staff and student relationships, but what we are saying is that the situation and the relationship between those two individuals needs to be addressed with an appropriate approach.
- 9.6 Members understood what CS was proposing, however, they were still CONCERNED and needed absolute reassurance that any vulnerable students would be protected.
- 9.7 Members as a collective Board were not comfortable with this decision and NOTED that the Staff and Students Relationships Policy was on the agenda to be approved. It was NOTED that this policy would not be approved today and suggested that the policy be revisited and further discussions held.

CS/UC

**10. To Approve the Following Policies**

- **Prevention of Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy**
- **Safeguarding Children and at-risk Adults Policy**
- **Dignity Policy for Staff and Students**
- **Staff and Student Relationships Policy – (NOW WITHDRAWN)**

- 10.1 Members RECEIVED and NOTED the above policies, which had been revised in line with the new E6 OfS compliance regulations. It was NOTED that these policies had been reviewed by the University Executive Group (UEG) prior to being presented to members.
- 10.2 Prevention of Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy
- 10.2.1 CS NOTED that this policy had been reviewed with regards to nomenclature and reporting structures and has had a full-scale audit to align it with the E6 criteria.
- 10.2.2 Members were CONTENT to APPROVE the Prevention of Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy.

### 10.3 Safeguarding Children and at-risk Adults Policy

10.3.1 CS NOTED that this policy had been reviewed regarding nomenclature, reporting structures, and specifically looking at the E6 criteria, making stricter definitions around vulnerable adults.

10.3.2 Members RAISED the following comments and questions:

- For the students that are not based here at the University itself, have they been considered in our approaches and are the right reporting lines in place for the academics in partner institutions?
  - CS CONFIRMED that this policy had been in consultation with the Head of Academic Partnerships who had reviewed it against our partnership provisions – especially our franchise Partners, whose students count as ours.

10.3.3 Members were CONTENT to APPROVE the Safeguarding Children and at-risk Adults Policy.

### 10.4 Dignity Policy for Staff and Students

10.4.1 CS NOTED that this policy has been reviewed, and minor amendments have been made.

10.4.2 Members were CONTENT to APPROVE the Dignity Policy for Staff and Students.

### 10.5 Staff and Student Relationships Policy

10.5.1 This policy was withdrawn from the meeting, due to more discussion and consideration required.

*Connor Short, left the meeting.*

## 11. **To Approve Strategic Planning (subject to amendments from the Strategy Development Session)**

11.1 Members NOTED that the Strategy Development Sessions were very valuable and helpful to them.

- AG THANKED members for engaging in the Strategy Development Sessions. There had been some good discussions around the Strategy and the Vision – and prioritisation of aspects of the vision.
- AG PROPOSED that included in the Strategy Plan 2025-30, would be nine short articles which will feature as part of the document, to bring alive the strategic narrative.

### 11.2 Strategic Plan 2025-30

11.2.1 Members CONFIRMED that they were SUPPORTIVE of the work that was underway and the direction of travel.

11.2.2 Members gave APPROVAL for the Executive to take forward the Strategic Plan with the content that was being proposed and looked forward to the launch event in October 2025.

11.2.3 AG NOTED that he would circulate the final draft of the text and members would have a week within which to make any final comments.

AG

### 11.3 Financial Resilience Framework 2025-30

- 11.3.1 AG NOTED the different approach and SUGGESTED because of the interconnectedness between the first year of the framework budget for 2025-2026 and the Financial Resilience Framework itself, that it comes back to the FE&GP Committee in September for final review – as there are still some figures and savings that were projected that are still currently unknown currently.
- 11.3.2 AG PROPOSED that an extraordinary University Council meeting be scheduled after the FE&GP Committee in September 2025 to approve the final budget.

## 12. **Committee Chair's Updates**

12.1 Members RECEIVED and NOTED updates from the Chairs of the Committees of University Council.

### 12.2 FE&GP Committee

12.2.1 The Chair of FE&GP Committee, Stephen Galjaard (SG), HIGHLIGHTED the following key points for Council to NOTE:

- Reviewed the April Management accounts.
- Reviewed the Financial Planning and introduction to the Financial Resilience Framework to 2030.
- Reviewed the 2025/26 Budget Assumptions, including a Student Recruitment Update.
- Approved the following:
  - Gifts and Hospitality Policy.
  - Anti-Money Laundering Policy.
  - Anti-Corruption, Fraud and Bribery Policy (in principle subject to minor amendments).
  - Treasury Management Policy (in principle, subject to minor amendments).
  - Tuition Fee Proposal for 2026/27 (with a further review in September 2025).
  - Scholarship, Fee Waivers and Bursaries Proposal for 2026/27 (with a further review in September 2025).

12.2.2 AG NOTED that an extra-ordinary University Council meeting would be scheduled to approve the 2025/2026 budget following the FE&GP Committee meeting scheduled for 24 September 2025.

### 12.3 Audit Committee

12.3.1 The Chair of the Audit Committee, Dr Stephen Critchley (SC), HIGHLIGHTED the following key points for Council to NOTE:

- To note the deep dive in Risk 19; Active Mitigation – Partnerships.
- Reviewed the end of Q3 Risk Register Overview Report.
- Reviewed the Internal Audit Strategy and Plan for 2025/26.

### 12.4 Governance & Nominations Committee (G&N)

12.4.1 The Chair of G&N, Anne Frost HIGHLIGHTED the following key points for Council to NOTE:

- The second and final Governance Horizon Scanning documents had received by External Consultant, Catherine Sykes (CaS).
  - It was NOTED that CaS would be stood down at the end of July 2025.

- The Diocesan Search and Nominations Committee had begun the search for a replacement for SL and would inform the Head of the Vice-Chancellor's Office when a recommendation was to be made.

#### 12.5 Academic Assurance Committee (AAC)

12.5.1 The Chair of AAC, Professor Marianne Howarth (MH), HIGHLIGHTED the following key points for Council to NOTE:

- Received an Access and Participation Plan (APP) update.
- Received an update on the Student Journey Project.
- Received assurance of the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) compliance amidst the University name change.
- Received updates on the development of the academic portfolio and research planning.

### 13. **To Approve the University Council's Work Programme for 2025-2026**

13.1 Members RECEIVED and NOTED the work programme of University Council and Committees for 2025-2026.

13.2 The Head of the Vice-Chancellor's Office, Leanne Chancellor (LC), HIGHLIGHTED the following points to NOTE:

- The University Council and Committee Work Programme for 2025-26 had been developed following a request from University Council on 1 April 2025.
- The planner outlined the key business which will be brought through each committee, reporting into University Council throughout the academic year.
- It was proposed that from 2025/26 onwards, the University Council and Committee Work Programme would be presented within the June cycle to each committee for review and approval of the following years business.

13.3 LC NOTED that the work programme of University Council and Committees for 2025-2026 had been reviewed by the G&N Committee and was being recommended for approval.

13.4 Members were CONTENT to APPROVE the University Council and Committee Work Programme for 2025/26.

### 14. **Any Other Business**

14.1 Farewell to Tom Dannatt (TD), Deputy Vice Chancellor (Operations) and University Secretary

14.1.1 Members recorded their thanks to TD for his work and support during his time as a Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Operations) and University Secretary and a University Council member and wished TD well for the future.

*Tom Dannatt, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Operations) and University Secretary, Dr Nick Gee, Executive Dean of Faculty, and Leanne Chancellor, Head of the Vice-Chancellor's Office, left the meeting.*

14.2 Appointment of interim University Secretary and Interim Chief Finance Officer (CFO)

14.2.1 AG NOTED that following TD's departure there would be two roles which would be required to filled, one was for an interim University Secretary and the other was for an interim CFO.

#### 14.2.2 Interim CFO

- (i) AG noted that the intention was to advertise externally for an interim CFO, who would provide line management to the Head of Finance, the Director of Corporate Services and the Director of Corporate Information Services, Strategy and Performance.
- (ii) AG NOTED that the CFO role would be advertised at a 0.6 FTE to 0.8 FTE, as a focussed financial leadership role for a period of six to nine months.
- (iii) Members RAISED the following question:
  - Within TD's role was the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), who would now step into this role?
    - AG CONFIRMED that the Head of Student Success, Phil Davis, would become the DSL with the Safeguarding, Contention and Projects Officer, Connor Short, becoming the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL).

#### 14.2.3 Interim University Secretary

- (i) The Chair NOTED that University Secretary role was an appointment of University Council and that the proposal being put to members was to appoint the Head of the Vice-Chancellor's Office, LC, as interim University Secretary.
- (ii) AG NOTED that there was professional development for LC to undertake to better understand and be confident in the role. AG NOTED that LC had the right balance of experience in the institution, governance, and the right level of advice for the Chair and Vice-Chancellor.
- (iii) AG NOTED that the University Secretary would be on an interim basis until December 2025, and then the permanent role would be reviewed from January 2026.
- (iv) Members were CONTENT to APPROVE LC as the interim University Secretary.

*Leanne Chancellor was invited to re-join the meeting.*

### 15. Reportable Events

- 15.1 LC NOTED that since the last University Council meeting on 1 April 2025 to the present meeting (2 July 2025), it was NOTED that there have been no Reportable Events to the OfS.

### 16. Date of Next Meeting

- 16.1 The next meeting of University Council would take place on Wednesday 26 November 2025 from 11:00-1:00pm.
- 16.2 It was also NOTED that an extraordinary University Council meeting would be scheduled September/October 2025, to approve the budget.

### 17. Key Items from Committees

#### 17.1 FE&GP Committee

- 17.1.1 Members RECEIVED and NOTED the minutes of the FE&GP Committee from its meeting on 10 June 2025, and the extra-ordinary FE&GP Committee on 23 June 2025.

17.2 Audit Committee

17.2.1 Members RECEIVED and NOTED the minutes of the Audit Committee from its meeting on 12 June 2025.

17.3 Governance and Nominations Committee

17.3.1 Members RECEIVED and NOTED the minutes of the Governance and Nominations Committee from its meeting on 16 June 2025.

17.4 Academic Assurance Committee

17.4.1 Members RECEIVED and NOTED the minutes of the Academic Assurance Committee from its meeting on 4 June 2025.

**18. To Note the Supporting Documents from the Vice-Chancellor Report**

18.1 Members RECEIVED and NOTED the following supporting documents from the June Vice-Chancellor's Report:

- May GuildHE Policy Update; and
- Telegraph Article on "Record Number of UK Universities in deficit".

Signed Neil ..... Date 26/01/25 .....

