

**Key Messages from the Meeting of Council
on 2 June 2025**

Strategic Items

Budget	Council approved the University budget for 2025-26 and three year financial plan, including proposed tuition fee increases. The budget includes an operating deficit of £13.9m in 2025-26, improving in plan years back to break even by 2027-28. Actions taken to reduce recurring staff and non-staff costs by £20m and £10m respectively have been fully embedded in the 2025-26 budget. Council acknowledged that a deficit position was unsustainable in the long-term if the University was to return to a surplus position. The transformation programme would develop the plans to deliver this target surplus.
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Approvals

Code of Conduct for Freedom of Speech	Council approved the revised Code of Conduct for Freedom of Speech.
Castle Leazes	Planning approval for the redevelopment of Castle Leazes had been secured, but delays had resulted in inflationary cost pressures. Council approved a recommendation from Finance Committee to maintain the University's 49% stake in the Castle Leazes Joint Venture and authorise the necessary funding adjustment, which had been included in the University Budget, noting the investment remained strategically important and continued to achieve the planned return.
Re-appointment of a University Dean	Council approved the re-appointment of Professor David Kennedy as Dean of Digital Education until 1 September 2030.
Financial Regulations and Delegations of Authority	Council approved revised University Financial Regulations and associated governance documentation.

Reports

Vice-Chancellor's Business	<p>Council received updates on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Immigration White Paper ▪ Industrial Action ▪ Supreme Court Ruling ▪ UniversitiesUK Sector Efficiency Report ▪ Joint Institute for Clean Hydrogen ▪ Engagement and Place Awards ▪ Workforce Resizing
Extraordinary Meeting of Senate, 21 May 2025	<p>Council discussed the report from the extraordinary meeting of Senate that took place on 21 May 2025.</p> <p>Council noted the view expressed by members of Senate that the business cases and the associated voluntary and potentially compulsory redundancies did have the potential to impact upon the overall academic character of the University due to the deleterious effect on reputation and colleague morale, and the effects of a reduced capacity for research that would impact REF/QS, grant capture, the attraction and retention of high-performing staff, and the recruitment of talented students.</p> <p>Council discussed the University's Equality Analysis process. It was acknowledged that colleague disclosure rates were low in relation to some protected characteristics despite University efforts to encourage colleagues to disclose; however, the Equality Analysis process requires scenarios and mitigations to be considered for all protected characteristics, irrespective of whether they are disclosed.</p> <p>The report from Senate also expressed support for Senate and Council working together more closely to deliver the academic strategy of the University, to be facilitated by a joint meeting. Council agreed that it would welcome the opportunity to work with Senate, particularly in the context of the transformation programme and academic strategy, but also on the shared understanding of roles.</p>

	Members of Council agreed that financial understanding needed to be embedded more thoroughly across the range of University activities. Given the continuing uncertainty in the financial outlook for higher education for the years ahead, the University needed to keep working to restore a sustainable balance between income and expenditure and this could not be achieved by using cash reserves or repurposing capital expenditure.
Risk Management	Council confirmed it had received sufficient assurance that risks relating to strategic objectives and enablers were being managed appropriately.
Additional reports considered by Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Health and Safety ▪ Finance Committee ▪ Nominations Committee ▪ Key Messages from Senate, 30 April 2025 ▪ Reported Business

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12 June 2025