Durham University

Public

Council

24 February 2026

Present: Caroline Johnstone (Chair), Rebecca Askew, Richard Dale, Leslie Ferrar, Tom James Harrington, Mark Jagger, Denise Lievesley, Cheryl McEwan, Cheryl Millington, Tom Mole, Karen O'Brien, Nigel Perry, Philip Plyming, Ari Sadanandom, Corinne Saunders, Mike Shipman, Abi Taylor, JJ Thakkar, and Terry Toney

In Attendance: Neil Scott, Amanda Wilcox, and June Hughes (all items), Nick Benbow for Minute 67, Stewart Ross for Minutes 68 & 69, Shaid Mahmood for Minute 68, James Crooks for Minute 69, Clive Roberts for Minute 70, John Pritchard for Minutes 71 & 72, and James Walsh (Minutes).

Apologies: Andrew Baldwin, Oliver Foster, and Rob Senior.

Minutes of a Meeting of Council held in the Lindisfarne Centre, St Aidan's College

58. Welcome and Apologies

Noted:

a) on behalf of Council, the Chair welcome June Hughes to the meeting. June was observing the meeting as part of her undertaking of the Council Effectiveness Review;

b) Monday evening had been the opportunity for Council Members to join the University's annual Convocation event. The evening had featured a panel discussion on Artificial Intelligence (AI) which Council Members found very interesting, with a comment shared of one panel member who suggested that AI needs humans; and

c) Council's condolences were with Rob Senior and Leslie Ferrar, following recent bereavements in their families.

59. Declarations of Interest

Noted: there were no declarations of interest.

60. Minutes of Meetings held on 16 December 2025 (C/25/50 Confidential)

Approved: the minutes of the meetings held on 16 December 2025.

61. Matters Arising

Noted:

a) in relation to the Secretary's Note at the end of Minute 49: Council received assurance that all the University buildings which were in use met the mandatory fire safety requirements; and

b) in relation to Minute 48c): the recruitment of one of the Lay Members of Council was focusing on someone with experience in technology in the broader sense, rather than AI in particular.

62. Action Log (C/25/51 Confidential)

Noted:

a) in relation to 23/24-02 Student Support Project: a review of the Project was subject for discussion at Senate in April, which would be reported to the May Council meeting through the Senate report. The action could therefore be closed; and

b) in relation to 25/26-1 DSU President's Report: the Durham Students' Union (DSU) were currently reviewing their strategy which may include how they might strengthen their relationship with Common Rooms and their Presidents. However, following initial investigations the evidence indicated that Presidents who felt least supported were those who led Common Rooms which were registered as separate charitable organisations. The action could therefore be closed.

63. **Annual Planner** (C/25/52 Internal)

Noted:

a) later in the agenda was an item about the pattern of Council meetings for members to agree. Part of this pattern of Council meetings included consideration of topics for the Monday evening presentations, with members encouraged to suggest items for inclusion, particularly where they focussed on the Strategic Updates. These would be reflected in the section of the Council Annual Workplan; and
b) the Council Effectiveness Review survey included a question about whether the current pattern of Monday evening presentations and Tuesday morning Council meetings worked for members, who were asked to include any narrative thoughts for consideration as part of the Review.

64. **Vice-Chancellor's Report** (C/25/53 Confidential)

Noted:

a) the Vice-Chancellor (VC) provided details of some of the key initiatives since the last update to Council, including:
   i) the launch of 'It's Never Just' campaign in conjunction with the DSU, which looked to raise awareness of sexual abuse and violence;
   ii) the announcement by the Durham University & College Union (DUCU) of industrial action which would take the form of action short of a strike, defined as working to rule without undertaking additional non-contracted hours. Although this would not impact on students taught sessions, there was a likely impact on Open Days and Postgraduate Research (PGR) Students, the latter who may see a reduction in additional engagement hours. The Executive was disappointed that industrial action had been enacted, with the University proactively responding to the issues identified by DUCU in their mandate;
   iii) Closed Minute
   iv) the University had not produced a comprehensive history of its foundation until the modern day. The Executive had therefore commissioned the production of a book which would be part of its 200th anniversary celebrations.
b) in relation to the recent news about University College London's (UCL) £21m out of court settlement with students, the following:
   i) the Student Group Claim had brought a court case against the UCL in response to UCL student concerns about what they saw as a reduced in-person experience during the Covid-19 pandemic, for which they were seeking compensation in their course fees. Although a settlement had been made, non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) were in place and it was, therefore, uncertain why and on what grounds a settlement had been made. A further 36 Higher Education (HE) institutions were facing a similar claim from the Student Group Claim, although Durham University was not among the 36 – further claims can be raised until the end of September 2026;
   ii) the University had been very diligent during the pandemic, putting in place several initiatives to support students, whilst adhering to Government guidelines during the Covid-19 pandemic; and

iii) Universities UK (UUK) were discussing the matter with the 36 HE institutions facing a claim against them, with a planned briefing for all VCs following those initial discussions.

c) **Closed Minute**

g) in relation to the Durham Castle Reserving and Development Programme, which aimed to look at alternative ways to manage the Castle as part of the World Heritage Site (WHS), the following in discussion:
   a. the Castle project was important for the University's brand, with the Dean of Durham Cathedral offering the support of the Cathedral to the programme which the University was looking to develop; and
   b. Council would consider the development of the programme relating to the Castle at a future meeting, recognising the tension which existed between its operation as a functioning college whilst maximising wider opportunities and opening up the asset as a visitor attraction.

65. Durham Students' Union President's Report (C/25/54 Public)

Noted:

a) the DSU was very supportive of the launch of the 'It's Never Just Campaign', which demonstrated the seriousness that the University was placing on tackling sexual violence. The DSU was keen to embed positive behaviours across all student groups, and would be reflecting on a revision to its by-stander training;

b) on the issue of academic workload, recognising that the union representation for students came from the DSU, with staff representation coming through the campus trade unions including the UCU predominantly for academic staff, there was an intersection for PGR students who were technically represented by both groups. Discussions had therefore been held by the DSU with PGR students who were also UCU members and had raised concerns about their own workloads. DSU would reflect on how best they could support PGR students;

c) in reflecting on the issue of ethical banking, the President of the DSU thanked the University Secretary and Chief Financial Officer (CFO) for their willingness to explore opportunities, as well as welcoming the University's appointment of an Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Sustainability). The DSU was looking at how it could evidence student appetite around the level of interest in an ethical banking commitment from the University, with the DSU looking to move their banking to a different provider, which would also result in more favourable interest rates;

d) in responding to the Renter's Rights Act, the DSU had worked closely with local Estate Agents and other letting agencies, particularly in relation to the issue of Ground 4a Evictions, which were mechanisms used by landlords to announce they will be renting the property the following year. The use of the term 'evictions' could be worrying for students and the DSU had put communications in place and were working with letting agencies in a positive manner. Council congratulated the DSU about the success it had achieved in this area in supporting students who were struggling to adapt to the new Act;

e) in responding to feedback from some students that they were struggling to afford food, the DSU were investigating the provision of a 'pantry' in Dunelm House which would be stocked with free food, although it would have to be only accessible with a student id card to ensure security. The use of the id card would also enable the DSU to signpost individuals towards other support, such as food vouchers and the University's Hardship Fund. The DSU would monitor its implementation to see if there were patterns to usage that may be resolved by other means;

f) although the National Union of Students (NUS) was engaged in the public debate on the affordability of student loan repayments, there had been little discussion locally until the press coverage had occurred. The University had been engaged in discussions at the Russell Group, although if no real progress was made in relation to developing a unified approach to lobbying the Government, then the University may decide on its own position, which would likely be about recommending the modelling of different payment plans to find the fairest option. There was a possibility that the affordability of loan repayments may impact on the cohort of students who were statistically less likely to enter HE, which was an important measure of the University's Access & Participation Plan; and

g) the qualitative data gathered by the DSU's Community Officer indicated that there had been an increase in the prevalence of drink spiking. With the provision of covers for drinks helping but not resolving the problem of spiking happening in the first place.

66. Chief Financial Officer's Report to Council (C/25/55 Confidential)

Noted:

a) the CFO reported that currently financial performance was tracking ahead of the budget, with the largest changes due to reductions in staff costs, partly through an over provision for the pay award settlement. Tuition fee income was also above budget projections, mainly through the excellent efforts of the recruitment and admissions teams. However, this was against a deficit budget, and some item lines were behind budget;

b) with the new finance system in place, there had been improvements in ensuring earlier invoicing and cash settlements. This would also result in improved financial reporting, with the CFO to present management accounts at the next meetings of Finance Committee and Council. Council recognised the improvements to reporting, emphasising that being able to see management accounts and better reporting on cash was very important; and

c) although Council recognised the short summary as positive news, this was against a deficit budget, and expenditure required further reduction alongside improvements to income, with the Other Operating Expenses (OOE) target of £10m important to achieve. The OOE target reduction had been shared at a departmental budget level, which was intended to embed and maximise the opportunity to achieve the overall saving.

67. Financial Sustainability Initiatives Tracker (C/25/56 Confidential)

Noted:

a) the Director of the Strategy Delivery Unit was in attendance in support of the Financial Sustainability Initiatives Tracker that had distilled the projects presented to Council at their meeting on 4 November 2025. These projects were designed to support delivery of the 5-Year Financial Forecast submitted to the Office of Students (OfS) which set targets to improve the University's finances and work towards delivering a consistent surplus budget;

b) in developing the Tracker, the University Executive Committee (UEC) had discussed the projects in detail at an Away Day. With the Tracker designed to not be a comprehensive source of all the projects but a focus on the ones driving the most impact on surplus potential – with other important benefits for the University strategy;

c) some of the projects detailed in the Tracker were interlinked or interdependent on each other. The red, amber, green (RAG) ratings for each of the items had been challenging to decide upon (some projects were at an early stage, for example), but the Executive was confident that what was presented was an accurate snapshot of the projects which were key deliverables for the institution; and

d) in discussion, Council commended the introduction of the tracker and agreed that one tracker used by UEC and Counicl was the right approach - the following points were also made:

i) it was difficult to strike the right balance in providing enough information that Council could either be assured or provide appropriate challenge, noting that some initiatives will be complex and multi-layered;
ii) management tools were a useful source of assurance, with the layout of the Tracker thought to be helpful. It was noted that the commentary on the articulation of the risk for each project varied, with a recommendation for more consistency in explaining the risk;
iii) Council may benefit from being able to see the interdependencies for key stakeholders, such as staff or students, with a summary of these enabling the detailing of potential challenges to the success of the project;
iv) the Tracker will be helpful for Council in developing their Annual Planner, enabling focus on particular projects when appropriate. This was evidenced in the later discussions in the Council agenda on Student Journeys Future and the Joint Education Initiative (JEI);
v) the Tracker included projects which generated income and made overall savings. However, it was difficult to quantify that with all projects, with the Durham Education 2027 referenced as a particularly important enabling project. Although Durham Education 2027 would result in necessary changes to improve the design and delivery of modules, it was not easy to detail the overall savings that the project would deliver;
vi) the Strategic Risk Register, which Council received on 16 December 2025, had included a one-page summary, and a similar format would improve the presentation of the Tracker, with the additional detail on each project retained. Council agreed that it was important not include too much detail which obscured what Council needed to understand about each of the projects;
vii) although the Research Excellence Framework (REF) was important for the University, the Executive had considered it as a business-as-usual initiative and had not included it in the Tracker; and
viii) Council overall appreciated the detail in the Tracker, and with inclusion of a one-page summary was keen to see the Tracker scheduled when appropriate for future meetings of Council.

68. **Hild Bede Project Update and Decision** (C/25/57 Confidential)

Noted:

a) the paper (taken as read) presented a comprehensive summary of the history of the proposal to redevelop the Leazes Road site where the College of St Hild & St Bede was located, prior to their relocation to Rushford Court, **Closed Minute**
l) the Chair of Council was due to undertake a tour of the University student accommodation to which other Council Members were welcome to join, or to make their own arrangements to see the Leazes Road site in understanding the complexities of the site.

Agreed: due to the inability of UPP to meet the Preferred Bidder Letter's Mandatory Project Requirements:

a) that the changes to the scope that UPP deemed necessary to deliver a Commercially Viable Project, coupled with the revised commercial terms that UPP had presented, were not acceptable; and
b) to reject UPP's revised proposal and terminate the PB Agreement in order to avoid the University's exposure to UPP's costs.

69. Student Journey Futures Programme Update (C/25/58 Confidential)

Noted:

a) the paper on the Student Journey Futures Programme (SJF) was intended as an update to Council and an in-principle approval to progress with a light touch financial request, which would require firmer detail and consideration as part of the Capital Plan;

b) SJF was a major undertaking for the University, involving a new admissions system, attendance management and a significant change project for all users. The VC had originally chaired the SJF Programme Board, but would be asking the COO to chair going forward;

c) ARC had identified the SJF as a major strategic risk and would be undertaking a deep dive into the project;

d) the business change that the SJF would deliver would see a shift to working arrangements, with consultation with staff key in ensuring that the returns needed from the project were realised;

e) from the project being presented at FC on 29 January 2026, the following points:

   i) although undertaking any major IT systems update was not necessarily desirable in the current financial climate, FC recognised that the status quo was not an option and the SJF project was therefore essential;

   ii) there was no perfect IT system which would resolve the issues that the University had with its current student information system. This meant that process changes were required, as the introduction of a new system would not be successful if the processes remained the same, and this included removing many of the customised elements of the existing system and undertaking a thorough data cleansing exercise; and

   iii) **Closed Minute**

f) in discussion, the following comments:

   i) although the level of cost involved in the project was not unusual, the scale of aligning processes, cleansing data, changing working habits, and ensuring that the new system could align with financial systems, was extraordinarily complex. This was why ARC would be undertaking close scrutiny of the risks connected to the SJF;

   ii) in ensuring that systems could appropriately interact, the project would develop a technical solution which would enable the student information system to link with the financial system through an intermediary IT programme, this was the easiest way of ensuring synergy between the systems that the University utilised. There was though no other student information system available on the market which offered greater connectivity; and

   iii) **Closed Minute**

Agreed: in principle to reimplement the University student IT system and the anticipated costs, pending a further review and approval of overall costs through Finance Committee.

70. Wuhan Joint Education Initiative (C/25/59 Confidential)

Received: Presentation on Wuhan University Durham University Joint Institute

Noted:

a) on 31 December 2025 the University had been notified that the Chinese Ministry of Education (MoE) had approved the proposal for a JEI between the University and Wuhan University (WU), with the first cohort of students due to start in September 2026;

b) the six programmes put forward by the JEI had been approved by the MoE which was an excellent outcome. The uplift of student numbers in subsequent years had not been approved, although WU had indicated that this was due to changes in the procedure making it easier to increase student numbers in future years;

c) a recent UK Government White Paper on international strategy was in alignment with the JEI and the announcement of restrictions being lifted on Visas to China beneficial to the development of the JEI;
d) an inauguration date had been set for 16 March 2026, at which time the JEI would be formally launched, and recruitment would begin for the first cohort of students;
e) in the pre-delivery phase, the University would be utilising existing staff, whilst new staff would be recruited to deliver from September 2026, including staff covering learning & teaching administration and academic delivery;
f) there were over 50 HE institutions delivering JEIs, so the University had a supportive community in which they could seek advice and guidance from;
g) WU were in the process of developing a new campus from where the JEI would be delivered from, which had been signed off by WU's equivalent of Council on 4 February 2026. The new JEI building on the new campus would be branded as being a building for both universities. WU was though adopting many of the programme design features offered at Durham University, which were pedagogically ahead of Chinese delivery methods;
h) the Executive Dean for the Faculty of Science delivered a presentation covering the following areas: the heritage buildings that WU had which were of tourist interest; the new branding which involved cleanly using both university logos; the offices and teaching spaces which would be used in the first two years whilst the new campus was built; the mapping of the curriculum between the two universities, with the proposal being approved by the Academic Quality Standards committee with the decision due to be reported to Senate; the plans for the new campus, with funding for the campus dependent on WU having an international partner and the new campus to be in place by the end of year two with a capacity for 20k students; and the co-location of the new campus JEI buildings to the National Centre for Engineering, a facility which only 20 Chinese universities had been awarded; and
i) in discussion the following points of note:
    i) Council noted the tight timelines to meet the September 2026 start date. Although Council was assured that WU were confident of recruiting the 350 students to begin studies in September, year two was recognised as being more challenging as student numbers would be at a minimum of 700 (if no increase to the intake was approved), however, this would give time to enable recruitment of the necessary staff for operational purposes;
    ii) Council was concerned about the details of the financial modelling if the uplift from a 350-student intake for subsequent years was not approved, despite assurance that the uplift process was straightforward. If the University was unsuccessful in increasing student numbers, then it would need to reassess the business model of the JEI;
    iii) membership of the Joint Management Committee (JMC) was confirmed as being chaired by the President of WU, with the DVC as co-chair and although WU had a numerical advantage on the JMC (8:7) any decision required a two-thirds majority to be carried;
    iv) WU were inside the top 200 QS World Rankings and the partnership was attractive for both parties, with the international exposure beneficial to the University. Although there were some risks if the University was not in the top 100 QS World Rankings, the partnership was not founded on that criteria;
    v) reflecting on earlier consideration of the Tracker, Council were informed that the figures identified in the Tracker related to income and not net income, which the JEI paper had also included;

vi) at the Council meeting on 16 December 2025, a query had been raised about the calculations used in the offsetting of travel emissions by staff from the University to China being based on the reduced number of Chinese students needing to travel to the UK. Due to the decline in Chinese students coming to the UK, these figures may require greater investigation to prove their value. The Executive Dean for the Faculty of Science recognised that changes to visa arrangements now made it easier to fly more staff to China, although travel would be co-ordinated to reduce individual flight occurrences, however, the issue would be revised and an updated view presented to Council; and

vii) although the UK Prime Minister's announcement of lifting restrictions on visas to China was welcomed, this only benefited short term visits and not necessarily staff who were working on the JEI.

Agreed: to receive an update on the environmental calculations for the project. **CR**

71. Strategic Performance Indicators and Strategy Bi-annual Update (C/25/60 Internal)

Noted:

a) following the Strategy Refresh during the 2022-23 Academic Year, the Strategic Performance Indicators (SPIs) had been reviewed with relevant RAG ratings included, and an arrow indicating the improvement or otherwise of the measures since Council had last considered the SPIs in July 2025;

b) on reflection some of the SPIs were overly ambitious, with civic and regional engagement being very difficult to find appropriate measures to consider progress against. These lessons would be important when considering the SPIs which would be included with the new Strategy;

c) in discussion the following reflections:

i) the colour of the ratings were reflective of the narrative contained within, rather than being a record of progress against that particular SPI. PGR was noted as a particular example where it was rated red, despite significant progress being made through the establishment of a Graduate School and the appointment of a Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor (PGR);

ii) a summary of the SPIs on a single page with the detail following, in a manner presented to Council through the Strategic Risk Register, would be of great benefit to Council;

iii) although the University did perform well in sustainability and environmental league tables, the reason for the red classification was that the University was unlikely to make its zero-carbon emissions ambition by 2035, particularly as it did not have finances to invest in heat recycling or photovoltaic panels. There was also recognition that to achieve this aim required support of the local Council, who after the last local elections had moved away from funding climate related initiatives. The University did have the same ambition, but the new Strategy would need to shape how it could achieve its aims;

iv) the challenge for some of the SPIs around citation metrics and the QS World Rankings was that improvements might be made through academic staff attending conferences, which was being pressured by a need to reduce OOE expenditure. These challenges were considered by the Strategic Planning Team in deciding which priorities carried the most important holistic outcomes;

v) some of the indicators had been refreshed as part of the Strategy Refresh, although most were as had been agreed at the start of the Strategy period in 2017; and

vi) the targets around the National Student Survey (NSS) were too high and although close attention was made every year to the QS World Rankings, the ability of the University to affect that SPI was limited.

72. **Strategy Development Discussion** (C/25/61 Confidential)
Noted:
a) at a recent UEC Away Day, discussions had been held about how to approach the development of the new University Strategy, with the paper presented by the VC and Director of Strategic Planning & Insight the start of the commissioning phase of the Strategy in seeking Council's input on the vision, purpose and value, consultation and communication elements;
b) in learning from the Strategy Refresh, the new Strategy would be devised as a 10-year strategy delivered in two 5-year blocks;
c) in considering what might be included in the new Strategy, UEC had: launched a new income group; would be seeking external views by the end of July; and would look at the academic purpose and value of the institution;
d) a survey had been undertaken of the alumni community, with the respondents referencing the value of the University, city and college to their time studying. With themes to be developed around graduate employability for home and international students;
e) Council were posed several questions: were Council content with the existing values and the purpose statement? Were the identified specific imperatives appropriate in relation to the University's future value proposition? Were the communication and consultation proposals the right approach? Following consideration in mixed groups, the following points were made:
   i) group one were happy with the existing purpose and values and that the imperatives were broadly right. The heritage USP of the University was rightly recognised, but there was a question about why the collegiate experience had not been identified specifically and that its absence in the vision might signal that it was not a long-term part of the University's offer. However, it was also recognised that putting the collegiate experience into the Strategy without testing our understanding of what it meant would be a missed opportunity. Language around education may benefit from being enhanced. The communication and consultation plans were felt to be broadly sensible, although the Executive should be careful that they managed expectations, as often consultations did not often inform you of things you did not already know. Whatever the outcome, having a purpose statement that was clear, memorable, specific and spacious was helpful;
   ii) with the challenge of financial sustainability, it was vital to challenge the colleges and collegiate experience as being sufficiently important to a Council who had a responsibility for financial sustainability of the whole institution. Although there was a lot of evidence from graduates who valued the collegiate experience, little evidence existed about those who did not come to Durham and whether the same identifying measures existed for PG and international students. It would therefore be important to have an informed and cross-benefit analysis of the current college model of operation;
   iii) group two found it difficult to discern the 'purpose' of the Strategy without understanding the civic context that the University was operating in and whether this was sufficiently wrapped in the Strategy. Although the University was keen to attract international students, it was not always clear if the city understood the value that these students provided, beyond the economic imperative for the University. This left the question if the University's purpose and vision sufficiently covered its civic aims to the city and the region;
   iv) group three were happy with the existing purpose and values and liked the idea of a place of choice contained within the imperatives. There was a recommendation that there should be more emphasis on the overall University experience as educating and developing the whole person, evidenced through

education and wider student experience being delivered in a holistic manner. Graduates did not just enter the employment market, but could be transformative and impactful in their communities, it would therefore be helpful to consider how that was framed in the Strategy;
v) condensing the essence of what it is to be at the University was almost at the core of the Strategy and yet was difficult to define;
vi) challenges in developing the Strategy may centre around thinking of different scenarios, such as a completely home-only student model, or options that have previously been considered and discounted. Sustainability had a part to play in the Strategy. It would also be important to consider how the philanthropic campaign sat alongside the new Strategy with engagement of the Campaign Board important in this respect; and
vii) Council recognised that in developing the new Strategy, a lot of pressure was being applied to the same resources being used in other areas, although that was unavoidable considering the requirements of financial sustainability; and
viii) although Council was due to meet in May and July, it may be that in order to appropriately progress the Strategy, additional meetings were required, or the engagement of Council Members harnessed through working groups. Members were particularly keen to engage as Council would ‘own’ the final Strategy.

73. Audit and Risk Committee (C/25/62 Confidential)

Noted:

a) the matters discussed by ARC at its meeting of 22 January 2026; and
b) ARC had undertaken a deep dive into the Economic and Crime Corporate Transparency Act (ECCTA) and its implications for the University. The Committee was assured by KPMG that the University was well prepared for ECCTA with a proactive plan in place to respond to the Act.

74. Finance Committee (C/25/63 Confidential)

Noted:

a) the matters discussed by FC at its meeting of 29 January 2026, which had been chaired by the Chair of Council in the absence of the Chair of FC;
b) many of the matters discussed by FC had been discussed during the Council agenda, although a paper from the Chief Information Officer (CIO) had been provided for Council’s information as an IT Portfolio update. The CIO had been asked by FC to provide a more strategic and holistic update at future meetings which may be brought to Council, as well as a request for a prioritisation plan for IT projects, so that FC understood which projects had been accepted and rejected; and
c) a cyber deep dive was planned for a future ARC and would be discussed at Council, given the significant risk posed to all organisations.

75. Senate Report (C/25/65 Open)

Noted:

a) the matters discussed by Senate at its meeting of 27 January 2026;
b) NSS outcomes were generally good although there were some outliers which were being addressed with specific action plans to improve performance;
c) improvements in student satisfaction had been noted in the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) which was important as the OfS was likely to adopt the PTES as the NSS equivalent for PG students;
d) Senate had considered outcomes from the Reimagining Governance for a Flourishing Research Culture project which had been funded by the Wellcome Trust.

The outputs of this project may have some cross-governance implications and those engaged in the project through the shadow committees may be engaged in the consultation on the new Strategy;

e) there had been a long discussion at Senate on faculty and programme frameworks, with consultation occurring through the Boards of Studies. The finalised PG Taught programmes framework was likely to be considered at the April Senate meeting; and
f) the Academic Electoral Assembly (AEA) Standing Committee (SC) had reviewed Ordinance 8 which related to the AEA, providing recommendations which Senate endorsed to Council, around what happened in the scenario where an AEA SC member stepped down from their role early.

Agreed: the changes to Ordinance 8: Academic Electoral Assembly as presented.

76. Chair's Report (C/25/66 Internal)

Noted:

a) the Chair thanked Terry Toney for attending a reception with the President of Indonesia;
b) the Chair had met with the Chair of the Campaign Board, Guy Weldon, who was an excellent example of an alumni who was very engaged with the University and supportive of the Executive team;
c) in meeting with the Chairs of the other North East universities, a discussion was held about the Committee of University Chairs (CUC) HE Code of Governance which was undergoing a review. Although a publication date had been delayed to March or possibly later, the current indications were that there may be little fundamental change in the new guidance;
d) Council members were reminded to complete the Council Effectiveness Review Survey for which completion had been extended until Sunday, with members encouraged to include additional commentary which would be extremely helpful;
e) for Council Members unable to attend the session on Safeguarding on Monday 15 December 2025, they were encouraged to review the slides which had been unloaded to Boardvantage and if they had any concerns to raise them with Sam Dale (Director of Student Experience) or Alex Hopkins (Head of the Student Conduct Office) who would be happy to provide 1:1 training;
f) all Council Members would receive an appraisal with the Chair of Council during Easter Term, which would be an opportunity to discuss what else they might wish to contribute to their role on Council; and
g) reflecting on the discussion at Council on 4 November 2025, a sequence of Council dates for the 2026-27 Academic Year had been developed, which would be rolled forward for subsequent years. Members could feed into the Effectiveness Review if the pattern of Monday evening and Tuesday morning pattern worked for them, although they were asked to let the University Secretary or Head of Governance Support Services (GSS) know if the dates outlined were problematic. Electronic invites would be issued by GSS soon.

Agreed: the Annual Schedule of Council Dates for the 2026-27 Academic Year onwards as presented.

77. Register of Sealings (C/25/68 Confidential)

Noted: the report for information.

78. Dates of Future Meetings

Noted: the dates of future meetings: 19 May 2026; and 14 July 2026.

79. Other Business

Noted:

a) the forthcoming International Women's Day event on the 9 March 2026 at which the Chair and VC were guest speakers. It was hoped that a range of staff and students would attend, with Council encouraged to attend if they were able; and

b) the appointment of a new Bishop of Durham, who the VC had met on the day of the announcement of his appointment. The Bishop of Durham was also the Visitor of the University which was an important part of the University Statutes.