

COUNCIL MINUTES

At a meeting of the Council held in the University on Friday, 14th February 2020.

Present:

Mrs Marian Wyn Jones (Chair), Mr Mark Barrow, Professor Iwan Davies, Dr Myfanwy Davies, Professor Andrew Edwards, Dr Peter Higson, Dr Griff Jones, Dr Karen Jones, Dr Llion Jones, Mr Marc Jones, Sir Paul Lambert, Mrs Alison Lea-Wilson, Miss Lleucu Myrddin, Ms. Ellen Parry-Williams, Dr Ian Rees, Professor Gareth Roberts, Professor David Thomas, Professor Carol Tully, Professor Oliver Turnbull, Mr Tudur Williams, the University Secretary, the Director of Human Resources the Director of PACS, the Director of Finance and Mrs Gwenan Hine (Secretary).

Dr Tomos Dafydd participated by Skype.

Professor Jerry Hunter was in attendance for items 19.53 and 19.54.

Apologies:

Miss Julie Perkins

19.50 DEATHS

The Chair referred to the recent deaths of:

Brian Saunderson, former member of staff in IT Services

Ifor Wynne, former member of staff in the School of Computer Science and Electronic Engineering

Alan James Lawrence Busst, Emeritus Professor of French

Olive Keidan, former lecturer in Social Administration

John Wyn Owen, an Honorary Fellow of the University

Members stood in tribute to their memory.

19.51 CONGRATULATIONS

On the award of an Honorary Chair:

Professor Neri Alves, School of Computer Science and Electronic Engineering

On the award of a Personal Chair:

Lucy Huskinson, School of History, Philosophy and Social Sciences

The Chair also congratulated:

Three Bangor University students who have been nominated for the prestigious Royal Television Society in Wales' RTS Cymru Awards 2020.

- Matt Melling who was the Director, Editor and Cinematographer for *Searching for Happiness*, made as part of his MA in Filmmaking.
- Tomos Jones' film *Elis Derby: Fi ac OCD* which was made for his undergraduate project; and
- *Where are U?* a final year project by film studies student Hannah Grinmston in collaboration with fellow student Astral Roberts (who edited and directed).

In addition, cutting-edge PhD research, examining team factors relevant in professional cricket, undertaken by Leonie Webster has not only been awarded Best PhD Thesis of 2019 by the British Psychological Society, but has already directly influenced and enhanced the training of professional coaches in the UK.

It was noted that Bangor University is ranked tenth in the world for its commitment to sustainability according to an international league table of environmentally friendly institutions. The University is one of four UK universities appearing in the Top 10 of the UI Green Metric, a league table of the world's greenest universities. 780 universities from 85 countries were assessed in the *Universitas Indonesia* League Table, which highlights sustainability and environmental management at universities around the globe.

19.52 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- Members were reminded that they should declare any personal, financial or beneficial interest in any matter under consideration at this meeting prior to that matter being considered.
- The following members declared an interest:

[1] Dr Ian Rees, Chair of the Welsh Language Commissioners Audit Panel.

19.53 BANGOR 2050 STRATEGY

- Professor Jerry Hunter presented the draft Strategy to the Council which focussed on the sector leading research and guidance which the university was already known for. The Strategy was closely aligned to the Welsh Government's aspiration for a million Welsh speakers by 2050.
- It was noted that the strategy would include a number of different elements, involving departments, and groups already in place at the university (such as Canolfan Bedwyr and UMCB) as well as a network of staff researching into Welsh language / bilingual matters, a more commercial venture working on Welsh language standards and a Welsh language recruitment campaign aimed at increasing the numbers of Welsh language students coming to the university.
- The Strategy would be taken forward by the Welsh Language Strategy Group, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor.

19.54 CIVIC ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

- Professor Hunter also apprised members of the draft Civic Engagement Strategy and it was noted that:

- [1] The draft would be circulated widely within the University for consultation;
 - [2] Consultation would also be undertaken within the local community and with business partners, including SMEs.
 - [3] The Strategy would be framed by reference to the goals contained within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
- B. The Council welcomed the current direction of the Strategy but noted that it was important to ensure that the university had the capacity to undertake the necessary engagement and consultation.
- C. It was noted that Professor Hunter had recently decided to step down from his role as Pro Vice-Chancellor to focus on his research. The Chair thanked Professor Hunter for his work at a senior level within the University for a number of years and wished him well for the future. This was echoed by Miss Myrddin on behalf of Undeb Myfyrwyr Cymraeg Bangor.

19.55 MINUTES

- A. The Minutes of the meeting held on 29th November 2019 were confirmed and signed.
- B. With reference to:
- [1] **Estates Matters** (Minute 19.36); it was noted that an updated report had been provided to the Finance and Resources Committee meeting in early February. A full six faceted condition survey of the whole estate had been commissioned with the pilot study currently being undertaken at the Wrexham campus. The pilot would give a good indication of what can be expected across the wider campus and would be thoroughly reviewed with key stakeholders. It was expected that all surveys would be completed by July 2020, although the current programme would not include mothballed or non-occupied buildings which would be undertaken at a later date.
- A programme of preventative maintenance was being prioritised, with work on gutters being the first priority. It was reported that the recent storms had only resulted in limited damage. A window in the Alun Roberts Tower had blown out, however no casualties were reported.
- It was noted that the survey of the Alun Roberts Building had been brought forward and pre-emptive measures were currently being undertaken. Members noted their thanks to the Director of PACS for taking forward the issues raised at the last Council meeting in relation to the building, and a full report would be brought to the next meeting of the Council.
- C. An action log was provided noting progress on all outstanding Council actions. Council noted the progress and completed actions.

19.56 STUDENT RECRUITMENT UPDATE

- A. Professor Andrew Edwards gave an update on the current situation in relation to student recruitment. It was noted that international student recruitment numbers were up by 14% (PGT) and 23% (UG) on last year, but Home/EU numbers were currently marginally down by approximately 6% on the figures at the same time last year.
- B. It was noted that discussions continued to be undertaken with UCAS Media and a number of suggestions had been received. In addition, Michael Laverty, Brand & Reputation had been engaged to look at the university's brand. Professor Edwards reported that the current focus centred on:
- Refreshing current academic programmes, including a review of the university's portfolio of courses, and establishing foundation years in business and science which were progressing well;
 - Updating and refreshing the university's web site, and delivering a new website by early summer;
 - Reviewing, and developing, targeted media campaigns;
 - With the assistance of data from UCAS Media identifying competitor institutions and benchmarking.

The importance of continuing to support international student recruitment was highlighted, in particular in order to offset any shortfall in Home/EU numbers. It was reported, however, that for programmes which had UCAS Media intervention recruitment numbers were higher, being only 1.1% lower than last year rather than the reported 6% across the portfolio.

- C. Council members noted that:
- [1] The Executive had approved an additional £235k spend on marketing and recruitment for the current academic year, focussing on additional front line capacity for open days, additional staffing resources within the central recruitment and marketing team, enhanced peer to peer recruitment, and development of partnership working on marketing and recruitment between the three Colleges.
 - [2] A number of new posts had been agreed, with the intention that some would be filled immediately and others later in the academic year. It was noted that the University would also use consultants in the interim to support the central marketing function.
 - [3] The university's approach to marketing needed to be modern and outward looking and it was suggested that the link with Visit Wales should be developed further.

19.57 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S BUSINESS

- A. The Vice-Chancellor reported a number of issues to the Council.

[1] **Universities Minister**

The appointment of Michelle Donelan MP as Universities Minister was reported. It was noted that the ministerial post did not, for the first time in a while, include the science brief which would be implemented through the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

It was noted that there was still no clear indication of how the government would take forward the Augur Report at the current time.

[2] **Horizon Europe**

It would appear that the UK government was committed to Horizon Europe, however the future of the Erasmus programme was not yet clear. The University needed to consider how it would take forward the student mobility programme in the future.

[3] **Gillian Camm Review of Governance in Wales**

The Camm Review of Governance in Wales was progressing, and an announcement was expected soon. Once the outcome of the review was known the recommendations would be considered and brought to the Council for discussion.

[4] **USS Pensions**

The Council considered whether the university would be able to increase its contribution to the USS pension scheme from 21.2%, and agreed that, given the financial challenge it would present, this was not something it could agree to at this current time.

[5] **Air Accident Investigation Branch**

It was noted that the Vice-Chancellor had received a letter of thanks from the Air Accident Investigation Branch for the support provided by the university, and specifically by the Prince Madog vessel, in the search for Professor David Last who was tragically killed in an air accident in November 2019.

19.58 STUDENTS' UNION UPDATE

The Council received an update on the Students' Union's recent activities, campaigns and events. It was noted that the December 2019 General Election had been one of the Union's main priorities so far during this academic year, and in particular raising awareness with students that they were able to register to vote either in Bangor or at their home address.

A Students' Union Strategic Plan is currently being developed together with communications and marketing plans which will run alongside. A key focus of the Plan would be to encourage the participation of international students in activities and events, and for the first-time international student ambassadors will be part of the student led teaching awards on the 1st May.

A petition had been drawn up to send to the Welsh Government in relation to the reduction in train services, and increased costs, across North Wales following the change in train operator.

A survey looking at the experiences of first year Welsh students had been completed and a number of useful comments had been received which will enable Undeb Myfyrwyr Cymraeg Bangor (UMCB) to assist future first year students to settle at the University from Welcome Week onwards. Discussions were currently being held with academic schools in relation to the use of the Welsh Language during Welcome Week.

19.59 REPORT FROM THE EXECUTIVE

A report from the meetings of the Executive held between December 2019 and February 2020 (attached as Appendix I to the official copy of the Minutes) was received, and in particular the following were highlighted:

- [1] Knowledge Group** – The Executive received a comprehensive report from the first meeting of the Knowledge Group ('K' Group) which comprised representatives from both academic schools and professional services. It was reported that staff warmly welcomed the opportunity for discussion and to meet new colleagues and that the Group was maturing and increasing its work.
- [2] Immigration Issues** – it was noted that the University had withdrawn the visas of over 30 students from India during the previous semester, due to attendance and engagement issues. Changes in admissions processes for perceived high-risk areas of India have now been implemented and it was noted that this issue is not unique to Bangor.
- [3] Coronavirus (Covid 19)** – A tactical working group has been established and is meeting regularly to discuss the University's response and to provide regular updates to staff. An FAQs page has been created and is updated regularly, staff and student emails have been circulated highlighting the current travel and health advice from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, the NHS and Public Health Wales. Staff and students who are abroad in countries particularly affected by the virus have been identified, and where necessary financial assistance to return to the UK has been provided.

19.60 REPORT FROM THE STRATEGY AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE

The Report of the meeting of the Strategy and Performance Committee held on the 20th January 2020 (attached as Appendix II to the official copy of the Minutes) was approved.

A. RESERVED BUSINESS

B. North Wales Medical School

The Council received a report outlining the vision to establish a transformational inter-professional Medical and Health Sciences School for North Wales. Members welcomed the development and noted that the Executive has agreed to commission an enabling business case.

19.61 REPORT FROM THE FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

- A. The Report of the meeting of the Finance and Resources Committee held on the 3rd February 2020 (attached as Appendix III to the official copy of the Minutes) was approved.
- B. It was noted that the Director of Finance had decided to stand down after 11 years and would be leaving the University at the end of March. The Vice-Chancellor noted that Mike had led the department through a period of significant change in recent times and had managed the development of improved process both in the business and financial areas. The Chair, on behalf of the Council, thanked Mike Davies for his contribution over the years and wished him well for the future. It was noted that an interim appointment would be made prior to Mike's departure.

19.62 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- A. **Student Recruitment;** The Council noted the latest recruitment position, and in particular the following points were noted:
- [1] Home/EU Undergraduate applications have fallen by 6% compared to the same point last year (excluding applications for HEIW-funded Healthcare courses). Over two years the drop is more significant (-22%) equating to a fall of over 1,400 applications.
 - [2] International applications are up by 20% (undergraduate) and 13% (postgraduate) compared to this point last year, which equates to an increase of almost 160 applications. Over a two-year period, there is an increase of 33% (undergraduate) and 25% (postgraduate) which equates to over 600 additional applications in total.
 - [3] It is still relatively early to draw any firm conclusions regarding recruitment trends and in the last few years applications have improved later in the cycle. There has been some recent recovery in the undergraduate Home/EU numbers. On a positive note, the University's ability to convert Home Undergraduate applications remains strong, and students who attend our open days remain enthusiastic to study here.
- B. **Financial Metrics;** information on the Year-end Outturn at Period 5 2019/20 was provided for information. A positive variance at Period 5 of £333k for academic resource centre was forecasted, against a total expenditure budget of £49m. Professional Services were showing an adverse variance of £1.873m which predominantly related to previously reported variances In relation to subsidiary companies the forecast outturn showed a positive variance of £69k against the expenditure budget.
- C. **Research Grants & Contracts;** Variability from year-to-year in Research Grants and Contract income was noted and in particular it was noted that research income has slightly increased compared to the previous year, with the exception of structural funds income.

19.63 REPORT FROM SENATE

The Vice-Chancellor presented the report from the Senate meeting held on the 21st January 2020.

19.64 RESEARCH GRANTS AWARDS AND APPLICATIONS REPORT

- A. The Pro-Vice Chancellor informed the Council that a mock REF exercise had been undertaken in December and January, which had gone smoothly, and that a full report would be brought to the next meeting.
- B. The Research Grants Awards and Applications Report showed that the university was continuity to undertake internationally recognised, high quality research. However, it was also clear that currently researchers are not bringing in as much grant funding as the university would like. Benchmarked research income, per FTE, is now being shared with Colleges and Schools and it was hoped this would assist Schools in considering their research income per FTE going forward. It was concerning to note that total overheads on research income has nearly halved since 2013/14, and it was noted that further work needed to be undertaken to ensure that researchers fully understand the FEC process.
- C. It was reported that work was currently ongoing to include more metrics-based data into the PDR and promotions process, and it was confirmed that training is being offered to researchers to support writing research grant applications.

19.65 NOMINATIONS & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

- A. The Report of the meeting of the Nominations & Governance Committee held on the 31st January 2020 (attached as Appendix IV to the official copy of the Minutes) was approved.
- B. The Council noted the progress made on reviewing the Charter, Statutes and Ordinances, and were informed that updated documents would be brought to the next meeting of the Council for approval.

19.66 HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE

- A. The Council received a report of key points from the Health and Safety Committee, which had not met since the last meeting of the Council.
- B. An incident in Canolfan Brailsford where 3 members of staff administered CPR to a customer who had collapsed was reported, and the Council were pleased to note that the customer was recovering in hospital.
- C. Following discussion the Council requested that the Committee provides a more detailed report in instances where no minutes are available.

19.67 HUMAN RESOURCES MATTERS

- A. The Council received a report on Human Resources matters, and in particular noted that UCU had agreed to a further 14 days of industrial action beginning at the end of February and running into the beginning of March.
- B. A list of recent senior appointments was received for information.

19.68 SEALING

The Council ratified the sealing of documents listed in Agendum 15.