

Bangor University

## **COUNCIL MINUTES**

At a meeting of the Council held in the University on Friday, 24<sup>th</sup> April 2020.

### **Present:**

Mrs Marian Wyn Jones (Chair), Mr Mark Barrow, Dr Tomos Dafydd, 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, Miss Julie Perkins, 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 Property and Campus Services, the Interim Director of Finance and Mrs Gwenan Hine (Secretary).

### **19.80 MEETING GUIDELINES**

The Chair noted that this was the first meeting to be held virtually, and informed members that in order to facilitate the smooth running of the meeting the agenda had been split into three areas which included matters for discussion, for approval and for information. It was confirmed that neither the current Charter nor the Statues prohibited a meeting of Council being held virtually.

### **19.81 DEATHS**

The Chair referred to the recent deaths of:

**Alwen Eleri Hughes**, former member of staff in the Halls Office

**Martin Mortimer**, Postdoctoral Research Fellow

**John Stevenson**, Honorary Research Fellow in the School of History, Philosophy and Social Sciences

**Dilys Brewer**, Student, Learn Welsh North West

Members fell silent in tribute to their memory.

### **19.82 CONGRATULATIONS**

A. On the award of a Personal Chair:

**Nia Whiteley**, School of Natural Sciences

**Peter Shapely**, School of History, Philosophy and Social Sciences

**Zoe Skoulding**, School of Languages, Literatures and Linguistics

**Thora Tenbrink**, School of Languages, Literatures and Linguistics

**Helena Miguelez-Carballeira**, School of Languages, Literatures and Linguistics

**Simon Neill**, School of Ocean Sciences

**Mattias Green**, School of Ocean Sciences

**Paul Mullins**, School of Psychology

B. On the award of a Readership:

**Caroline Bowman**, School of Psychology

**Yeung Djern Lenn**, School of Ocean Sciences

**Simon Middleburgh**, School of Computer Science and Electronic Engineering

C. The Chair also noted that the University has been ranked 68th out of 766 global universities, for its work toward the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. This was a major achievement and recognition for the University which is working towards becoming 'a Sustainable University'. In addition, the ranking places the University seventh worldwide, for Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG 12), 23rd for SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) and it is the only Welsh institution listed. It was noted that the University is already ranked tenth in the world for its commitment to sustainability in another international league table of environmentally friendly institutions.

### **19.83 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

A. 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.

B. The following members declared an interest:

Professor Andrew Edwards and Dr Llion Jones in relation to minute 19.86.

### **19.84 MINUTES**

A. The Minutes of the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2020 were confirmed.

B. With reference to:

- [1] **Estates Matters** (Minute 19.55[1]); the Director of Property and Campus Services updated Council on the progress made with the Estate Strategy but it was noted that the Covid-19 pandemic had impacted progress, as work was currently focussed on establishing the temporary hospital in Canolfan Brailsford - Ysbyty Enfys Bangor. A successful six faceted condition pilot survey has been undertaken at the Wrexham campus, and an internal review completed. Confirmation had also been received from surveyors that work can commence on the scheduled survey of the main campus buildings, on the 11<sup>th</sup> May subject to the easing of lockdown restrictions. The Council noted with appreciation that a number of Property and Campus Services and Commercial Services staff were currently on campus working to ensure that both the staff and students who remain on site, and the university estate remain safe and secure.
- [2] **Student Recruitment** (Minute 19.56); Professor Andrew Edwards updated Council on the current situation in relation to student recruitment. Council were informed that Covid-19 had necessarily refocussed and reshaped the University's recruitment and marketing strategies. The work undertaken by Michael Lavery has almost been completed, with targeted staff training being offered to marketing and recruitment staff remotely. The work with UCAS Media is ongoing but it was noted that UCAS Media had furloughed approximately 20% of their staff so their capacity to take matters forward was lower than expected. The University continues to work closely with UCAS Media however and is making the best use of the current resources. There are some positive signs that the work is paying dividends with an uplift in student applications being noted, particularly in both Biological and Social Sciences. Work was currently ongoing to prepare virtual open days for prospective applicants with both School and Professional Services staff providing video content. The situation in relation to September 2020 remained uncertain, and it was noted that the Executive continued to work on scenario planning for the 2020/21 academic year.
- [3] **RESERVED BUSINESS**
- [4] **Staff Survey**; Professor Andrew Edwards reported that the Staff Survey had been completed, and a group was currently looking at the outcomes. The dissemination of the report had been delayed but the intention was to send it out to all staff shortly, with a covering email from the Vice-Chancellor. Several positive trends had been identified from responses, however there were also a number of areas which needed further discussion and work. It was hoped to run virtual focus and feedback groups shortly, and the outcomes from the survey will also be fed into the health and wellbeing strategy which is currently under development.

C. An action log was provided noting progress on all outstanding Council actions. Council noted the progress and completed actions.

## 19.85 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S BUSINESS

- A. The Vice-Chancellor reported on the strategic challenges for the University during and post the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Vice-Chancellor noted the current exceptional circumstances in which the University found itself, and the challenges both in the short and longer term. The higher education sector may be one of the most affected by the current Covid-19 pandemic, and this was particularly the case in Wales where local economies were far more reliant on the sector.

The University was moving from a crisis management situation to one where it needed to start to plan for the future. The Executive was leading on this and it was noted that a small working group was currently looking at some of the major challenges for the university and the sector, and testing assumptions from the available evidence and possible opportunities for change. The discussions and the planning work would ensure that when the time is right the university could take an evidence-based approach to government, when looking for possible financial assistance. It was likely that the current restriction on large gatherings would remain until well into the autumn, and therefore the university needed to be planning for a continuation of online delivery, as well as the resumption of face to face teaching. The impact on student recruitment for September 2020 was currently unknown but the university was modelling a drop in Home / EU numbers and a more significant drop, of up to 50% in international student registrations. Under this scenario, the resultant drop in funding for the university was significant and at best would be in the region of £15m. Work was already in place to look at the government's Job Retention Scheme (furlough) and banking and corporate lending facilities.

The Vice-Chancellor reiterated his confidence in the Executive team who had provided strong leadership in the preceding weeks and would be leading on issues over the coming months.

- B. The importance of ensuring that Council were adequately sighted on issues, and exercised oversight at this crucial time was emphasised. It was noted that the interface between the Executive and Council was essential at this time, and it was **agreed** that the Chairs of Council committees should meet with the senior management team on a more frequent basis. In addition, an additional Council meeting could be convened if this was necessary.

## 19.86 REVIEW OF THE EXECUTIVE TEAM

- A. The Vice-Chancellor presented a paper outlining a review of the Executive Team. In particular it was noted that initial themes coming out of the staff survey indicated that the effectiveness of the Executive Team and answerability for individual actions along with portfolio transparency was essential. The paper reflected the confidence that the Vice-Chancellor had in the Executive and recommended a number of changes. These include changing the current Deans to Pro Vice-Chancellor/Heads of College and

creating the roles of Associate Pro Vice-Chancellors to work on cross-cutting University themes and appointing new Deans to assist with College responsibilities. It was **confirmed** that the changes suggested would be cost neutral.

- B. It was noted that Dr Kevin Mundy would become the Chief Operating Officer / University Secretary and would lead a review of Professional Services to align them with the academic structure. Dr Mundy would provide a further update on this review at the July Council meeting.
- C. Following discussion, the Council **noted** the changes to the Executive Team and **approved** the appointment of the following as Pro Vice-Chancellors/Heads of College, for an initial period of 4 years:
- Professor Nicky Callow
  - Professor Andrew Edwards
  - Professor Paul Spencer

The appointments, along with the new Deans and Associate Pro Vice-Chancellors, would come into force on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2020.

## 19.87 GOVERNANCE

### A. Charter and Ordinances

[a] The University Secretary provided the background to the proposed amendments to the University's Charter and Ordinances and noted that the changes had been recommended in the Governance Effectiveness Review in 2019. The current Charter and Statutes had remained largely untouched for decades and plans to modernise the Charter and Statutes have been in place for several years. It was noted that work had been ongoing for some months to draft a new Charter which would modernise the university's processes and bring it into line with most higher education institutions who had already gone down this route. In addition it was reported that the current Statute XX relating to grievances, discipline and dismissal of academic staff conflicted with modern employment law, and the proposed changes, now incorporated into the Charter, reformed the constitutional framework governing matters relating to academic staff, providing all staff the rights and protections which the law currently affords and enabling the University to operate efficiently.

Due to the current restrictions on large gatherings it was noted that the University Court would not be able to meet for some time, which afforded the university more time to consult with relevant stakeholders on the content of the new Charter. The new Charter would be on the agenda for the Senate meeting in May and would be the focus of further consultation with staff unions prior to returning to the Council at its meeting in July.

A new set of Ordinances were also presented to the Council, and members' attention was drawn to the fact that additional Ordinances were currently being negotiated with UCU. It was noted that a number of drafting comments had been received on the Ordinances prior to the meeting.

- [b] Following discussion and due consideration the Council **agreed** to the substance and direction of travel of the Charter, whilst noting that comments have been invited from the Senate and other stakeholders. In addition, the Council **approved** Ordinances 1-19 and 29, subject to minor drafting amendments, and **noted** that an additional set would be brought to a future meeting.

## **B. Camm Review**

- [a] The Chair reported that the Gillian Camm Review of Governance in Welsh Universities, which reported in December 2019, had highlighted several key governance values – trust, accountability, transparency, engagement, challenge and competence. The university sector in Wales had subsequently published two documents in response to the Review:

- Governance Charter for Universities in Wales, and
- Commitment to Action

The Charter mapped out an approach to transforming governance in Welsh higher education institutions, and the Commitment to Action set out the commitments which all parties to the Charter were committed to making progress. It was envisaged that each university in Wales would be required to provide an update on progress in this area in their annual reports to HEFCW, in the autumn 2020.

It was noted that clear themes were emerging from the Review which the Council needed to discuss and oversee.

- [b] Following discussion and due consideration the Council **agreed** to formally adopt the Charter, and to commit to undertaking the actions outlined in the Commitment to Action document. It was noted that a gap analysis would be undertaken on the actions and an updated brought to the next meeting in July.

## **19.88 COVID-19**

### **A. Update**

The Vice-Chancellor updated the Council on the University's response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Council noted the report, and in particular the actions undertaken by the University's Executive in relation to the crisis. The Vice-Chancellor extended his thanks to all members of the university for the swift and effective way in which they acted to enable the university to continue teaching online and providing services remotely. The members of the Students' Union confirmed that they had been involved

in the decision making at the university from the start, and that the response from students so far had been extremely positive. It was noted that new Force Majeure Regulations had been drafted and approved quickly in order to provide a no detriment safety net for students in relation to assessments.

The Chair expressed heartfelt thanks to the Executive team on behalf of Council for the effectiveness of their response to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

#### **B. Finance & Resources Committee Minutes**

Sir Paul Lambert presented the minutes of the Finance and Resources Committee on the 3<sup>rd</sup> April (attached as Appendix I to the official copy of the Minutes) which was convened specifically to discuss the impact of Covid-19 on the University and the future financial implications. It was noted that the Committee had received several scenario plans which dealt specifically with the financial challenges for the university in the autumn, and the importance of ensuring that the university plans its way out of the crisis was emphasised. The challenges of planning for the future with such uncertainty around student numbers were noted. Discussions were ongoing between relevant universities and EIB. Discussions would also be held with Santander around the university's Revolving Credit Facility. Following discussion, the minutes of the Finance and Resources Group were noted.

#### **C. Research**

The university's Covid-19 Research Group continued to meet regularly, and risk assessments were currently being undertaken by PIs for their research. These were being considered and graded on a traffic light system. It was noted that currently very few projects were graded red, where the impact of the current lockdown would have a large detrimental effect on the project going forward.

### **19.89 ETHICS COMMITTEE**

- A. Dr Peter Higson presented the minutes from the meeting of the Ethics Committee held on the 4<sup>th</sup> December 2019 (attached as Appendix II to the official copy of the Minutes).
- B. The Council **approved** the Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body Annual Report for 2018/19, included as Appendix 1 to the Ethics Committee Minutes.

### **19.90 STRATEGIC EQUALITY ACTION PLAN**

- A. Professor Carol Tully and Mrs Tracy Hibbert presented the Strategic Equality Action Plan for 2020-2024. It was noted that the Plan sets out the approach the university would take to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations amongst staff, students and the wider community over the next four years. The Plan detailed the university's role as an employer and higher education provider in supporting and promoting equality of opportunity.

B. The Council **approved** the Strategic Equality Plan for 2020-2024.

#### **19.91 GENDER PAY GAP REPORT**

The Council **noted** the 2019 General Pay Gap Report which the university voluntarily publishes annually.

#### **19.92 REPORT FROM THE EXECUTIVE**

A report from the meetings of the Executive held between February 2020 and April 2020 (attached as Appendix III to the official copy of the Minutes) was received.

#### **19.93 REPORT FROM THE SENATE**

The Vice-Chancellor presented the report from the Senate meeting held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2020.

#### **19.94 STUDENTS' UNION UPDATE**

The Council **noted** an update on the Students' Union's recent activities, campaigns and events.

#### **19.95 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

The Quarterly Key Performance Indicators, and the Student Numbers and Applications report were noted.

#### **19.96 REPORT FROM THE FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

The Report of the meeting of the Finance and Resources Committee held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2020 (attached as Appendix IV to the official copy of the Minutes) was approved.

#### **19.97 REPORT FROM THE AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE**

The Report of the meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2020 (attached as Appendix V to the official copy of the Minutes) was approved. A couple of advisory audit reports were noted, and it was confirmed that the issues raised in the reports had been taken forward.

#### **19.97 HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE**

The Report of the meeting of the Health and Safety Committee held on the 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020 (attached as Appendix VI to the official copy of the Minutes) was approved.

#### **19.98 REPORT FROM THE REDUNDANCY COMMITTEE**



The Report of the meeting of the Finance and Resources Committee held on the 20<sup>th</sup> March 2020 (attached as Appendix VII to the official copy of the Minutes) was approved.

#### **19.99 HUMAN RESOURCES MATTERS**

- A. The Council received a report on Human Resources matters and ***noted*** the update in relation to the National Pay Awards for 2019/20 and 2020/21, and the information on the Staff Survey.
- B. A list of recent senior appointments was received for information.

#### **19.100 VALEDICTION**

The Chair noted that this was Professor Tully's last Council meeting and, on behalf of members, thanked Professor Tully for her significant contribution to the work of the Executive, the Council, and the University at a senior level for a number of years.

The Chair also noted that this was Mark Barrow and Lleucu Myrddin's last Council meeting and thanks were extended to both Mark and Lleucu for their contribution to the Council, to the University and to the Students' Union. The Council wished them both well for the future.