

Bangor University

COUNCIL MINUTES

At a meeting of the Council held in the University on Friday, 10th July 2020.

Present:

Mrs Marian Wyn Jones (Chair), Dr Tomos Dafydd, Professor Iwan Davies, Dr Myfanwy Davies, Professor Andrew Edwards, Mr Iwan Evans, Dr Griff Jones, Dr Karen Jones, Dr Llion Jones, Mr Marc Jones, Sir Paul Lambert, Mrs Alison Lea-Wilson, Ms. Ellen Parry-Williams, Miss Julie Perkins, Dr Ian Rees, Mr Harry Riley, Professor Gareth Roberts, Professor Paul Spencer, Professor David Thomas, 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).

Apologies:

Professor Nicky Callow

19.101 WELCOME

The Chair welcomed Professor Paul Spencer, Pro Vice-Chancellor / Head of the College of Natural Sciences, Mr Iwan Evans, President, Undeb Myfyrrwyr Cymraeg Bangor and Mr Harry Riley, President, Students' Union to their first meeting.

19.102 DEATHS

The Chair referred to the recent deaths of:

John Becton a student in the School of History, Philosophy and Social Sciences

Margaret Hewitt a graduate of English & History in 1964 who also sat on the University's Alumni Advisory Board for 10 years

Members fell silent in tribute to their memory.

19.103 CONGRATULATIONS

A. On the award of a Readership:

Dr Sam Oliver, School of Sports, Health and Exercise Science

B. The Chair also noted the following achievements:

Covid-19 Research

A pilot programme to flag early signs of the coronavirus in Welsh communities by monitoring sewage systems, was awarded almost half a million pounds. Leading the research is Professor David Jones of the School of Natural Sciences.

Book of the Year / Llyfr y Flwyddyn

Two creative writing Lecturers have been included in this year's English language Wales Book of the Year shortlist, and a Journalism Lecturer is shortlisted in the Welsh language Llyfr y Flwyddyn, announced on 1 July 2020. The two shortlisted for the English awards are poet Zoë Skoulding for her latest collection *Footnotes to Water*, and novelist Alys Conran, for her latest novel *Dignity*. Shortlisted for the Welsh Llyfr y Flwyddyn fiction category is *Babel*, a novel by Ifan Morgan Jones.

Undergraduate dissertation Published

Former student James Edwards has seen his final year dissertation work at Bangor University published in *Acupuncture in Medicine*. He compared treatment outcomes for acupuncture against drug therapy and surgery.

Eisteddfod-T

University students were successful at the virtual Urdd Eisteddfod – Eisteddfod T - in May 2020.

- Cai Fôn Davies, a second-year student studying Welsh and History won the Main Composer title.
- Aelwyd JMJ, the Urdd Aelwyd of Bangor University's Welsh-medium Halls of Residence, came second in the Choir (14-25 years) competition with a mesmerizing performance of Robot Alwyn's 'Yn Llygad y Llew', accompanied by Elain Rhys.
- Mared Fflur Jones, who is on her second year of her Welsh degree, won the main literary award, and the main poetry award went to alumnus, Osian Owen. Osian graduated with a first-class BA (hons) Welsh degree from the School of Welsh and Celtic Studies in 2018 and is currently studying for a Masters.

Learned Society of Wales Fellowships

Three Bangor University academics are among the new entrants to the Learned Society of Wales' Fellowship:

- Professor Nathan Abrams, Professor of Film Studies, School of Music and Media
 - Emeritus Professor Peter Field, Emeritus Professor, School of Languages, Literatures and Linguistics
 - Dr Sue Niebrzydowski, Reader in Medieval Literature, School of Languages, Literatures and Linguistics
- C. On behalf of the Council the Chair warmly congratulated the members of staff and students concerned.

19.104 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. No declarations of interest were made in relation to this meeting.

19.105 STUDENT RECRUITMENT UPDATE

- A. Ms Westwood was formally welcomed to the Council in her role as Chief Marketing Officer/Vice President International.
- B. Members were apprised that the position following the UCAS deadline in June indicated that the University continued to run behind the sector and was losing market share of UK domiciled students. This was despite the university investing in external consultancy and external service provision, as well as increased investment in advertising, where it would have been reasonable to have expected to see some benefits in terms of performance in comparison to the rest of the sector. It was difficult to know how much the Covid-19 situation had impacted on this situation, however there remained a huge challenge both in the short and long term to turn the situation around.

The situation in relation to international recruitment has, historically, been stronger for the university, but the Covid-19 situation has impacted this particular market even more than the Home/EU market. Ms Westwood noted that Clearing was going to be an even more critical period than usual for the university. The approach to Clearing was currently being planned in order to maximise advertising and staffing around the A-level results day. The university's partnership with UCAS Media, and in addition a recent agreement with UniQuest, have allowed the university to enhance its advertising, focus its activities in key areas, and follow up on applicants especially from the English market.

Looking forward the current portfolio review being undertaken as part of Professor Nicky Callow's work on learning and teaching is going to be crucial to ensuring that the university has a marketable set of courses to promote for 2021/22 and onwards. Further investment in marketing is crucial in order that the university has new talent providing fresh perspectives and approaches. In tandem, developing the brand and narrative of the university is a key deliverable for Ms Westwood over the summer.

- C. The Council welcomed the approach being undertaken and acknowledged the challenging picture for the 2020/21 recruitment cycle, and the time it would take to make a difference to the current situation.
- D. It was **agreed** that the new branding would be shared with the Council at its September meeting.

19.106 MINUTES

- A. The Minutes of the meeting held on 24th April 2020 were **confirmed**, subject to two minor amendments being made, noting that in relation to minute 19.86 (Review of the Executive Team) the changes made were cost neutral, and clarifying titles in relation to the Assistant Pro Vice-Chancellors.
- B. With reference to:
- [1] **REF** (minute 19.64A); Professor David Thomas provided the Council with an update on the REF. The Council **noted** that the Units of Assessment had been brought down from 11 to 9, and currently the university envisaged entering 270 FTE members of staff into the process. Professor Thomas confirmed that in his opinion the university was currently in a robust position, and a further mini REF was planned for October.
- [2] **Review of the Executive Team** (minute 19.86); The Chair congratulated Professor Thomas on his recent appointment as Professor of Arctic Ecosystem Research at the University of Helsinki. It was noted that Professor Thomas would be leaving the University in the autumn and he was thanked for his work as Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) as well as in the School of Ocean Sciences over many years, and members wished him well for the future.
- C. An action log was provided noting progress on all outstanding Council actions. Council noted the progress and completed actions.

19.107 STAFF SURVEY UPDATE

- A. Professor Edwards and Mrs Hibbert provided the Council with an update on the recent Staff Survey. The Staff Survey was part of the development of the People First Strategy and would provide an evidence base for taking this Strategy forward.

It was noted that there had been a good response to the survey with 62% of staff responding. A detailed breakdown of responses to all the questions had been provided to members in the overview report. Staff Focus Groups were currently being held in order to examine the results in more detail and to receive ideas from staff on what they would like to see in the future.

The Council noted that there were some specific challenges highlighted and the development of action plans was essential in order to address the issues being raised. The need to ensure that PDR processes in all areas were undertaken was highlighted, and the university should be aiming for high participation rates with this process.

Following the completion of the Focus Groups a further report would be written which would be brought to the Executive and the Council.

- B. The Council **noted** the outcomes of the Survey and requested that it be kept fully informed in relation to the work being undertaken. In particular the Council raised concerns about the issues with the PDR process and requested a further report on how this was being addressed.

19.108 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S BUSINESS

- A. The Chair congratulated the Vice-Chancellor on presenting a strategic outline to the Welsh Government that morning, relating to the development of a Medical School for Bangor University, and the Vice-Chancellor confirmed that this was an important first step. The next steps for the development would be the establishment of a Project Team to work on the substantial detail which will be required. The Vice-Chancellor emphasised that the University has an absolute commitment to supporting medicine and subjects allied to medicine, which will be research driven, in addition to providing first class learning and teaching opportunities. The Council **noted** that it would be kept fully informed as this important development proceeds.
- B. The Council were updated on the arrangements in relation to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) role, and it was **noted** that Professor Spencer would undertake this role in addition to other duties, with the university looking to appoint two Associate Pro Vice-Chancellors to assist with the work.

19.109 COVID-19

A. Covid-19 Governance Oversight Group

- [1] The Chair presented the minutes of the meetings of the Covid-19 Governance Oversight Group held on 1st June and 1st July 2020, and the appended Terms of Reference for the Group. It was noted that further legal opinion specifically for the Trustees in relation to their liability for the EIB loan was awaited.
- [2] Mr Riley queried the lack of student representation on the Group given the important decisions being made. It was confirmed that the Group had been set up to include the Chairs of Council Sub Committees with additional powers to request that others attend as is necessary. The Chair confirmed that the Council and the University takes student representation very seriously indeed and noted that students were represented on all Council Sub Committees. The Covid-19 Governance Oversight Group has no decision-making powers and any recommendations from the Executive for decision-making by Council would go through Sub Committees for scrutiny, or alternatively, direct to Council, all of which have student representation.

B. ADDRESSING THE FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

- [1] The Vice-Chancellor presented his paper on addressing the financial challenges of Covid-19 and noted that the pandemic presents the most profound operational and economic challenge for Bangor University in its entire history. The University

has responded to the immediate operational challenges associated with the pandemic, and it was now necessary to consider fully the implications of the pandemic on the future operations of the University and its capacity to respond.

It was noted that an overview of what is contained in the paper before Council had been shared with members of staff at a webinar delivered by the Vice-Chancellor on the 30th June, in order that staff are engaged in the direction of travel. The position of the university at this time cannot be downplayed, and the Executive intends to work with the Covid-19 Governance Oversight Group to bring forward further recommendations based on the strategic pillars provided in the paper.

At the current time it was difficult to accurately model the university's financial position, as this would necessarily need to be based on the final student numbers for 2020/21. However, work had already been undertaken to provide the Council with some scenarios, based on HEFCW reporting requirements, which painted a picture of the university's likely position going into the autumn, as currently understood.

- [2] The University Council **noted** the outcomes of the modelled scenarios and **approved** the strategic approach outlined in the paper

19.120 ESTATES MATTERS

A. Emerging Estates Strategy

- [1] The Council considered an update from the Director of Property and Campus Services on the emerging Estates Strategy which mapped out the direction of travel over the next few months. It was noted that the current Estates Strategy has expired, and the University needs a refreshed and integrated emerging Estates Strategy to meet future requirements.
- [2] Members welcomed the vision contained within the paper, and it was confirmed that stakeholder engagement would commence as soon as possible. A further update would be provided at the Council Away-Day in either October or November.
- [3] Following discussion and consideration the Council **approved** the next steps workstreams outlined in the paper.

B. Property Disposal

- [1] The Council considered a report from the Director of Property and Campus Services seeking approval to proceed with the disposal of Y Felin Tysilio, and to engage with the selling agents and Solicitors.

- [2] The Council noted:
- a. that the University is required to comply with the Charities Act 2011 in respect of the disposal of land;
 - b. that a Surveyor's report had been obtained in accordance with Section 119(1)(a) of the Charities Act 2011 and the Charities (Qualified Surveyor's Report) Regulations 1992;
- [3] The Council **agreed** to proceed with the disposal of Y Felin Tysilio at a reduced price, and to engage with the selling agents and Solicitors.

19.121 DRAFT SUPPLEMENTAL CHARTER

- A. The University Secretary reminded members that at its meeting in April 2020 the Council agreed to the substance and direction of travel of the draft Supplemental Charter. Following the meeting, further comments had been invited from the Senate and other stakeholders, and in particular the Charter was discussed at the University Senate on 26 May 2020 and a suggested amendment was agreed to and added to the draft presented to the Council.
- B. Following discussion and due consideration the Council informally **approved** the draft Supplemental Charter for submission to the Court for consideration, and onwards to the Privy Council for approval.

19.122 NOMINATIONS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

- A. The Report of the meeting of the Nominations and Governance Committee held on the 19th June 2020 (attached as Appendix I to the official copy of the Minutes) was approved.
- B. On the recommendation of the Nominations and Governance Committee, the Council **approved** the re-appointment of Sir Paul Lambert, and Mr Marc Proudlove-Jones as independent members of Council for a further term of four years, to 31 August 2024.
- C. The Council **noted** the appointments and re-appointments to Council Committees, and the suggested way forward in relation to the Welsh Medium Affairs Committee and the Ethics Committee.

19.123 REPORT FROM THE EXECUTIVE

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

19.124 REPORT FROM THE SENATE

The Vice-Chancellor presented the report from the Senate meetings held on the 21st April, 26th May and 30th June 2020. The Council **noted** that the Senate had received an update on the work undertaken to review the University Charter, Statutes and Ordinances at each meeting, and that following discussion at the May Senate a change had been made to the Charter. The Senate was also consulted on Ordinance 12 which relates to the Senate.

19.125 FINANCE & STRATEGY COMMITTEE

The Report of the meeting of the Finance and Strategy Committee held on the 26th June 2020 (attached as Appendix III to the official copy of the Minutes) was **approved**. It was **noted** that the Pontio Report would be discussed at the Council Away-Day in October 2020.

19.126 REMUNERATION COMMITTEE

The Report of the meeting of the Remuneration Committee held on the 23rd April 2020 (attached as Appendix IV to the official copy of the Minutes) was **approved**.

19.127 AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE

The Report of the meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee held on the 6th July 2020 (attached as Appendix V to the official copy of the Minutes) was **approved**. It was **noted** that the Internal Audit Plan for 2020/21 had been agreed.

19.128 STUDENTS' UNION UPDATE

The Council **noted** an update on the Students' Union's recent activities, campaigns and events. The Chair, on behalf of the Council, thanked both Mr Reilly and Mr Evans, and their predecessors, for an informative report.

19.129 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 staff wellbeing.
- B. A list of recent senior appointments was received for information.
- C. The Council **approved** the request to award Emeritus status to Professor Hong Fan.

19.130 CHARITY COMMISSION SUBMISSION

The Council **noted** the annual return for 2018/19 that was submitted to the Charity Commission in May 2020, within the deadline set by the Charity Commission.

19.131 REPORT FROM THE HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

The Report of the meeting of the Health and Safety Committee held on the 6th July 2020 (attached as Appendix VI to the official copy of the Minutes) was **approved**.

19.132 RENAMING SCHOOLS

The Council **approved** the following proposals put forward by Professor Edwards:

- [a] To rename the current School of Languages, Literatures & Linguistics as the School of Languages, Literatures, Linguistics and Media;
- [b] To rename the current School of Music & Media as the School of Music, Drama and Performance.

19.133 VALEDICTION

The Chair **noted** that this was Mr Harry Riley's last Council meeting as he had accepted a position within the Civil Service. Thanks were extended to Harry for his contribution to the University and to the Students' Union. The Council wished him well in his future career.