**Report from the Meeting of the Council, 8 February 2019.**

*[The full minutes will be available when approved at the next meeting of the Council.]*

**Appointment of a Vice-Chancellor**

The Council noted that since its last meeting, in early December, the Vice-Chancellor announced that he would be retiring at the end of December 2018. In the light of Professor Hughes’ immediate retirement, a new interim Vice-Chancellor was needed and given the speed of developments, it would have been challenging to call a full Council Meeting in Bangor at such short notice. Ordnance XXXII notes that the Chair of Council has authorisation to decide urgent matters on behalf of the Council body but it was the Chair's view that Council Members needed to be consulted, where possible, on an issue of such significance. To that end, the Chair and Secretary called each lay council member to consult them on this proposal. The majority were contactable and they all expressed their full support for the proposal to appoint Professor Graham Upton as Interim Vice-Chancellor from 1 January 2019.

Regarding the appointment of a permanent Vice-Chancellor, an Appointment Committee has been established and will have met on 3 occasions prior to the Council meeting. Following an election, the Senate nominees were Dr Myfanwy Davies, Professor Morag McDonald and Professor Carol Tully. As agreed at the last meeting of the Council, the Chair was authorised to appoint two lay members, in addition to the Chair, as the Council’s representative on the Committee – Prof Gareth Roberts, Deputy Chair, and Dr Griff Jones were appointed to the Committee. Ruth Plant has been appointed to the Committee by the Students’ Union.

Following a procurement process, Anderson Quigley were engaged to assist with the appointment. Ed Pritchard, a Partner of the firm (and also a Bangor graduate) is leading for Anderson Quigley, along with an Associate Partner, Professor Sir Deian Hopkin. They have conducted a range of discussions with local stakeholders, staff, students and Council members, in order to both form the role particulars, and also to be able to accurately promote the role and the University to the potential candidate market. They met with the Appointment Committee on 7 February 2019 and presented their findings to the Council.

The timetable for the appointment process was outlined and it was hoped that an appointment could be made in early May 2019. Anderson Quigley would work with the University to agree the final assessment process, but it was expected that it would involve the wider University community, as appropriate.

There was some discussion about the remuneration for the role and it was noted that it should be possible to appoint at a lower salary than the previous Vice-Chancellor. However, it was felt that remuneration should not be a distraction in the recruitment process. Any salary would need to take consideration of the financial situation faced by the university, whilst remaining competitive.

The Council agreed that the next Vice-Chancellor should have a deep appreciation of and commitment to the Welsh Language and culture. It was agreed that the appointee should ideally be bilingual or must be willing to learn the Welsh language so that they can discharge their formal duties with confidence in a bilingual environment.

**Report from the Executive**

The Report of the meetings of the Executive held between December 2018 and January 2019 was approved. The following was noted:

* The Executive has agreed to develop a regular electronic newsletter to share positive news and communicate more effectively.
* There is an urgent need to develop an Estates Strategy and to appoint a new Director as soon as possible.
* The Executive is re-introducing a planning round and resource allocation to increase transparency and accountability. A paper outlining an Academic Strategy Framework was circulated to Council members.
* The University will implement the Real Living Wage from May 2019.

Other items of Executive business were discussed under other agenda items.

**Achieving Financial Sustainability**

At the last Council meeting on 30 November 2018, the Council considered and formally approved a series of plans for restructuring the Academic Domain and certain Professional Services in order to deliver the necessary savings and place the University’s finances on a firm and stable path for the future. In approving the plans, the Council recognised that: (i) those plans were subject to meaningful consultation with the University’s recognised Trades Unions (under S188 TULRCA 1992) and staff and students, which had to be completed before any final decisions on those proposals could be made or any implementation carried out, and (ii) those plans could change as a result of consultation.

The Council received a paper providing an update on progress in achieving financial sustainability since the last Council meeting.

During the week commencing 10 December 2018, the University launched the formal consultation by issuing Business Cases for Change to the Trades Unions, staff in those areas being restructured, the Students’ Union and external stakeholders (where relevant). In addition to consulting on the Business Cases for Change, all staff were given the opportunity to put forward their own ideas and suggestions on how to make the University more financially sustainable. Following a number of extensions, the formal consultation was due to close on 8 February 2019.

The Executive has agreed a number of actions to review costs and benefits and to identify savings in the loss-making areas of Commercial Services, in Bangor College China, and across all Professional Services that had not developed a Business Case for Change. The Vice-Chancellor noted that no area of the University would be protected from the need to consider savings.

It was noted that 15 applications for Voluntary Redundancy have been approved to date - and a number of other applications are under consideration. The approved applications for Voluntary Redundancy will deliver sustainable salary savings of over £500,000 per year.

As stated previously, no decisions have yet been made. Following the close of the consultation, the Executive will give detailed and careful consideration to all of the responses received and decide on what changes, if any, should be made to the plans for restructuring in light of the feedback. The decisions of the Executive and the final agreed structures will be formally communicated to the Trades Unions, staff in the areas being restructured and the Students’ Union in accordance with the University’s HR Policies and Procedures. An extended meeting has been arranged with the Trade Unions at the end of February to discuss the financial position and future strategy and financial sustainability in more detail.

An oral report was provided updating Council members on discussions which have taken place since the paper was produced.

As of 7th February, the University had received a total of 184 responses to the Business Cases for Change. The two areas that attracted most comments were Chemistry and Learning Disability Nursing. The Vice-Chancellor was pleased at the level of engagement with the process and noted that a number of counter proposals and concerns had been received, alongside alternative proposals such as investing in new programmes in certain areas to capitalise on market demand and generate new income streams for the University. A very helpful feedback document had also been received from the Students’ Union following focus groups and extensive consultation with students.

In addition to responding to the Business Cases, staff were also given the opportunity to put forward their own ideas, suggestions and comments on how to make the University more financially sustainable, and 34 responses had been received to date.

An equality impact assessment has been undertaken on the business cases and two working groups have been established to consider the impact on Welsh medium activity and equality & diversity more generally. Concern was expressed about staff leaving through voluntary redundancy but it was noted that these were all in line with the existing business cases.

The Council were pleased to note the progress to date, and the Chair agreed to give further consideration to how decisions going forward could be scrutinised. The need to balance speed of decision-making and the need for scrutiny was noted.

**Student Recruitment**

The Council received information on the latest number of applications and acceptances to Bangor University courses for 2019/20 and a sensitivity analysis set against the November 2018 Financial Forecasts. An action plan for recruitment was also considered.

It was noted that Home/EU Undergraduate applications are 14% lower than at the same point last year. There is generally a downwards trend across all schools although the situation is variable. Home postgraduate and overseas applications are relatively stable.

Application numbers to Bangor University have been on a downward trend for several successive years. There are a number of factors which appear to have caused this decline, most prominently the lifting of the cap on numbers, and aggressive growth by other universities, investment in high quality facilities by our competitors, an increase in marketing spend by our competitors, and a demographic dip. 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.

Many of the challenging issues listed above are outside Bangor’s control, and it was agreed to focus on a number of actions which can be delivered by existing staff, at modest cost, and focus on Bangor ‘unique selling points’.

An action plan has been developed including: greater involvement of academic staff members and students; improved social media; expanding the range of open days and visit days; focusing on areas of high visitor numbers in North Wales; approving and delivering new programmes; front-loading the UK marketing campaign; engaging with Alumni to generate awareness and support for Bangor recruitment drive; focus on a smaller number of international markets; introducing work placements for all students; reviewing our approach to Conditional and Unconditional Offers; and identifying possible Masters conversions. It is hoped that this range of actions will both increase application numbers, and improve our conversion figures.

The Council noted the positive steps being taken to address the shortfall and noted the desire from the student body to contribute. It was agreed to take a fresh look at external advice and develop a clear strategy and a coherent co-ordinated approach to marketing and student recruitment. It was also agreed to consider pooling resources across the University, both centrally and within the colleges.

**Bangor College China**

The Council considered a paper outlining investment in the project, tuition fee income, costs and benefits to Bangor University.

For students studying in China, tuition fees are charged at BCC and 33% of the tuition fee is transferred to Bangor University’s account in China. The operation is entirely self-funding and the salaries of all Bangor University teaching at BCC and all travel and subsistence costs for visiting staff are met by the BU China budget. A cash surplus of c£200k arose in 2017/18 that is held in a CSUFT operated bank account. The cumulative surplus held is c£500k at July 2018. The University is examining the option of repatriating some cash to UK, but need to obtain detail on previous year tax declarations and payments before an approach can be finalised.

It was noted that net tuition fee income for students transferring to Bangor University was forecast to be £802k in 2018/19.

Other income directly paid to Bangor University covers the Deputy Dean’s salary which is funded from the UK, and travel expenses within the UK. It is estimated that approximately £70k of Bangor-based staff time is associated with the project.

The Council were pleased to note that the College covered its costs both in China and in the UK, but were keen to see increased benefit from the project, where possible. It was noted that Professors Turnbull and Edwards were visiting BCC in March.

**Nuclear Futures Institute**

The Council considered a paper providing an overview of the current position and future model for sustainability for the two research groups supported by the Sêr Cymru programme and which form the heart of the University’s capacity and long-term potential.

The Predictive Modelling Group will deliver a Boiling Water (BWR) predictive modelling programme which would develop the infrastructure to deploy the latest numerical techniques to make full and optimal use of both the thermal hydraulic experimental facilities, and data from and associated with Advanced Boiling Water Reactors (ABWR). The group faces challenges in the recruitment of suitable scientists to the team. However, the group have submitted in excess of £2.8m of research grant proposals to UK and EU funders and is leading a further proposal to UK government with an expected value of circa £2.2m to be submitted imminently. The group have also already engaged extensively with Universities, sector bodies and UK and Welsh Governments within the period.

The Materials for Extreme Environments Group has established itself more quickly and has fully recruited its team. The group’s research programme is operative across fuels and materials and addresses thermal hydraulics in theoretical and experimental contexts. In addition to the infrastructure commissioning, the group have submitted in excess of £750k of research proposals and have, been successful in securing a highly prestigious Collaborative EPSRC Doctoral Training Centre. The Centre is a joint project between Bangor University, Imperial College London, Cambridge University and Bristol University and will deliver a number of PhD students for the group and enabling engagement with the nuclear supply chain. The team have secured PhD studentships with Westinghouse, Research Masters studentships with Horizon Nuclear Power and in their time at Bangor have already published 8 papers and a book since joining the University.

It was noted that funding is not reliant on the delivery of the Wylfa Newydd project. Whilst the pause is regrettable in terms of regional ambition, the research interests of the research groups insulate against impact on the University as the research programmes address future generations of nuclear technology more than the current known technology.

It was noted that a funding decision relating to the North Wales Growth Deal was further delayed. The University is optimistic that most of its bid will be funded as they fit the UK Government science and innovation agenda.

**Property Disposals**

The Council has approved in principle for the disposal of a number of assets including the Nantport Boathouse, Ynys Faelog, Part of the Studio at Y Felin Tysilio, Neuadd Ogwen, and Bryn Llinos. It was agreed in each case that guidance will be sought from Valuation Office Agency and a formal recommendation on each case will be submitted to Council for approval.

The Executive agreed to recommend to the Council to dispose of Y Felin Tysilio at the earliest opportunity.

Following valuation of these properties, the Council agreed:

* to confirm approval to proceed with the disposal of Ynys Faelog and to engage with the selling Estate Agents and Solicitors, and to ring-fence part of the capital receipt for the replacement Boat Storage Compound with access improvements on the SoS site;
* to confirm approval to proceed with the disposal of Neuadd Ogwen, once vacant, and to engage with the selling Estate Agents and Solicitors;
* to confirm approval to proceed with the disposal of Bryn Llinos and to engage with the selling Estate Agents and Solicitors;
* to confirm approval to proceed with the disposal of Y Felin Tysilio and to engage with the selling Estate Agents and Solicitors, following advice from the Executive about how to package the sale of the house and studio to get best value;
* to confirm approval to proceed with the disposal of Nantporth Boathouse and to engage with the selling Estate Agents and Solicitors; and
* to confirm approval to proceed with the disposal of Land at the School of Ocean Sciences Menai Bridge and to further engage in discussions with the adjoining owner of the Mostyn Arms.

**Bilingualism**

In the context of the University's plans for restructuring and implementing cuts, the Council agreed to honour these underlying principles:

* That the academic provision should not be rationalized in a way that weakens the teaching experience through the medium of Welsh or reduces the number of Welsh-medium credits available to students on individual courses.
* The support for students studying through the medium of Welsh and their rights to services through the medium of Welsh should be protected in the same way as the support and services for students studying through the medium of English.
* That there is a transparent process of scrutinizing the impact of the restructuring plans on the numbers and percentages of Welsh speakers in the different fields.
* That the Welsh language is safeguarded as a language of work in the University.

**Health & Safety**

The Council approved the recently revised Health and Safety Policy Statement. The statement is a statutory document and has been updated to better reflect a desire of the University to enable and promote inclusivity and safeguards those with additional needs and to utilise health and safety risk assessments and controls to promote inclusivity and support reasonable adjustments that, where reasonably practicable, enable participation and safeguards those with additional needs.

The Policy is supported by a detailed ‘Responsibilities and Arrangements’ document, which will be reviewed over the coming months and be brought to Council for approval.

**Students’ Union**

The Council received an update on Students’ Union activities. The SU were thanked for their contribution to the recent consultation.