

Bangor University

## **COUNCIL MINUTES**

At a meeting of the Council held in the University on Friday, 29<sup>th</sup> November 2019.

### **Present:**

Mrs Marian Wyn Jones (Chair), Mr Mark Barrow, Professor Iwan Davies, Dr Myfanwy Davies, Professor Andrew Edwards, Dr Peter Higson, Professor Jerry Hunter, 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, the University Secretary, the Director of Human Resources the Director of PACS, the Director of Finance and Mrs Gwenan Hine (Secretary).

### **Apologies:**

Dr Tomos Dafydd and Mr Tudur Williams.

### **19.22 WELCOME**

The Chair welcomed Dr Ian Rees, Independent Member, and Mr Lars Wiegand, Director of Property and Campus Services (PACS) to their first meeting.

### **19.23 CHAIRS BUSINESS**

The Chair reported, with regret, that Professor Derec Llwyd Morgan had informed the Secretary of his intention to withdraw from being a member of the Council for personal reasons.

### **19.24 DEATHS**

The Chair referred to the recent deaths of:

**Dr Harry Angus**, former Senior Lecturer in Chemistry

**Olwen May Davies**, former Principal Senior Lecturer, Normal College

**Professor Frank Palmer**, former Professor of Linguistics

**Robert Owen Morris**, an Honorary Fellow of the University

**Darren Wood**, Lecturer in the School of Health Sciences

**Professor David Last**, Emeritus Professor, School of Computer Science and Electronic Engineering

Members stood in tribute to their memory.

## 19.25 CONGRATULATIONS

### On the award of an Honorary Chair:

Professor Karen Hughes, College of Human Sciences

### The Chair also congratulated:

**Delyth Prys, Dewi Bryn Jones a Stefan Ghazzali** from the Language Technologies Unit, who were presented with a Giving Voice Award by the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT). The Lleisiwr project, funded by the Welsh Government, had developed software to create personalized synthetic voices to help patients who were about to lose their own voices. The project enabled voice banking in Welsh and English so that a digital version of the voices could be built.

**Prof Chris Collins**, Head of the School of Music & Media, who has been elected President Elect of the Incorporated Society of Musicians. Professor Collins would be acting as a member of the Society's presidential trio until April 2020, when he would become President.

It was also reported that two recent **Athena SWAN** applications from the Bangor Business School and the School of Psychology had been successful. The Bangor Business School is the first School from the College of Arts, Humanities & Business to hold an award. The School of Psychology has held a Bronze award since 2016 and was successful in renewing this award. These awards recognise the University's and Schools' ongoing commitment to gender equality for staff and students.

## 19.26 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:
  - [1] Dr Karen Jones, Non-Executive Director of MSparc and Morlais (in reference to the North Wales Growth Deal);
  - [2] Professor Carol Tully, Director of Undeb Cyf

## 19.27 MINUTES

- A. The Minutes of the meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> October 2019 were confirmed and signed.
- B. With reference to:
  - [1] **North Wales Growth Deal** (Minute 19.09); it was reported that the Deal had now been approved, and work would commence on the five case business plan. The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that the Council would receive regular updates.

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

### 19.28 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S BUSINESS

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

- [1] **Strategic Development Day**; it was noted that the event, held on the 28<sup>th</sup> November, which included four key note speakers had been a productive and informative day. Matters arising out of the discussions would be taken forward, and further events would be held in due course.
- [2] **Medical Education**; the significance of the debate in relation to medical education and the aspirations of the University, along with the importance of engagement with key stakeholders was noted. There had been a change in how the University was engaging with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board and a Memorandum of Agreement between both parties would be submitted to the Council for discussion, in due course.
- [3] **Higher Education Landscape**; The uncertain climate in the lead up to the general election, and the commitments within the main political parties' manifestos were highlighted, with student fees likely to be a major issue irrespective of the outcome of the election.
- [4] **Review of Governance in Wales**; The report from the Gillian Camm review of governance in Welsh universities was expected in December, following which the University would need to assess the recommendations in relation to its governance processes.
- [5] **HEIW Tendering Process**; Health education is an integral part of the University, and its contribution to North Wales, and it was noted that the University is currently working with Wrexham Glyndwr University to prepare the Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) joint bid for Summer 2020.
- [6] **League Table Position**; The UK's main three university league tables (The Complete University Guide, The Guardian University Guide and The Times Good University Guide) have a huge impact on the University's reputation, and ultimately on its ability to recruit students. It was essential that the university optimises data returns, giving consideration to the resultant impact on league tables. It was noted that an Action Plan was now in place to take forward this key work, looking at how we drive up performance in the key areas.

### 19.29 STUDENTS' UNION UPDATE

The Council received an update on the Students' Union's recent activities, campaigns and events. It was noted that the General Election was currently one of the Union's main priorities, and in particular raising awareness with students that they are able to register to vote either in Bangor or at their home address. The Students' Union are hosting a hustings event the following week involving candidates for the Arfon constituency.

The student led Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy had been launched the previous week, which was the culmination of positive collaboration between the University and the Union.

Sustainability and the environment were still major concerns for students and a variety of initiatives are ongoing in this area. It was noted that the Students Union, along with the University were finalists in the recent Green Gown Awards for the Think Before You Drink (Ystyried Cyn Yfed) initiative, working alongside the University's catering department.

A survey looking at the experiences of first year Welsh students was currently being undertaken and it's hoped that the results will enable Undeb Myfyrwyr Cymraeg Bangor (UMCB) to assist future first year students to settle at the University during the crucial first weeks.

UMCB have raised awareness of the Welsh Language Commissioner's '*I have a Right*' campaign aimed at educating Welsh-speaking students and staff of their rights when working and studying in Wales. A 'Rights Day' will be held at organisations across Wales on the 6th of December.

### 19.30 REPORT FROM THE EXECUTIVE

The Report of the meetings of the Executive held between October and November 2019 (attached as Appendix I to the official copy of the Minutes) was noted, and in particular the following were highlighted:

- [1] **School Reviews;** the review of the School of Law and the Bangor Business School have been completed, and actions were being taken forward. The reviews of the remaining Schools will be undertaken in due course.
- [2] **Casualisation;** currently 59% of staff are on short term contracts, which represents a reduction from the previous figure of 65%. It was reported that the figure is not uncommon for a research active University. Work is ongoing with the unions to review casualisation and gender pay gap issues. It was noted that these issues form part of the industrial action currently being undertaken.
- [3] **Renewable Energy;** it was noted that as part of its sustainability commitment, the Executive have approved a proposal to switch to 100% renewable sources. The University declared a climate emergency in October, and Council members requested that the University ensure contracts were considered against a sustainability template and that the University's investment portfolio should be scrutinised to ensure continued ethical investment.
- [4] **International Agents;** it was noted that the University's relationship with its international agents was closely monitored, with agent agreements in place, and regular training provided, both overseas and in Bangor.
- [5] **Charity Commission;** the Chair of Council, the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee, and the Vice-Chancellor (as Trustees of the University) along with the University Secretary and the Head of Governance and Compliance met with the Charity Commission to discuss the reporting of serious incidents. The Executive had agreed that going forward there would be a monthly standing agenda item to discuss any issues that may require reporting to the Charity

Commission, to coincide with meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee where such incidents should also be reported.

- [6] **UCAS Media**; The Executive had agreed to a proposal to sign up to a partnership with UCAS for media and insight, which was seen as an opportunity to develop a productive relationship, specifically looking at both current and new programme areas, through access to insight and intelligence data. In addition work was ongoing on the University's brand (including the website, open days etc) to ensure that the University was doing everything possible to respond to the recruitment challenge. Consultants had been engaged to work with key stakeholders to take this work forward.

### **19.31 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2018/19**

- A. An analysis of performance against the Key Performance Indicators for 2018/19 was considered. The Council noted the University's performance against its strategic plan, particularly noting areas where risks were identified. The following points were noted:

- [1] Information is now provided at School-level rather than College-level to provide a better indication of how performance varies across the Schools.
- [2] Student satisfaction results in the National Student Survey, the PTES and PRES had dipped slightly, however the University remained in the UK top ten for student satisfaction.
- [3] The University is at the lower end of the TRAC peer group B for UKRI Research Income, but at the upper end of the group for non-UKRI sources.
- [4] Overseas student numbers show the University as faring well relative to the sector over the period, in particular when compared against its competitor group, and the significant decline generally in the Welsh sector.
- [5] A comprehensive programme of work was ongoing in all these areas, and it was noted that a number of initiatives will take a few years to make a difference to the Key Performance Indicators.

- B. The Council were pleased with overall progress against the strategic plan and the Key Performance Indicators and approved the document for submission to HEFCW.

### **19.32 STUDENT RECRUITMENT**

- A. Professor Andrew Edwards gave a presentation on the University's latest recruitment position for 2019/20. In particular it was noted that:

- [1] The majority of student enrolments were now confirmed, with a small number of additional forecast enrolments where it is known that the student is in attendance. Overall the University was likely to enrol 7,656 students, 187 more than forecast, however a decline of 165 compared with the previous academic year.

- [2] Work was ongoing, using UCAS media and insight data, to target students, and to understand student behaviour. Consideration is been given to developing a training package for staff who work on open days and applicant days to share best practice throughout the University, and reviews have been undertaken on recent open day and applicant day experiences. A key focus going forward will be the recruitment of Home/EU students, and the work ongoing with UCAS media would be valuable in this regard.
  - [3] Steps are being undertaken to refresh and review current programmes, and to consider new programmes
  - [3] Currently Home/EU Undergraduate applications for 2020/21 were 20% lower than this time last year. It was early days but the decline will persist without targeted intervention.
  - [4] The introduction of further foundation years, to compliment those already offered was seen as a crucial development.
  - [5] The recruitment campaign for a new Director of Marketing, with specific emphasis on recruiting an individual with strong marketing skills, who also has key experience in international partnerships, was currently ongoing.
- B. The Council noted the challenges that lay ahead, and the actions which were currently underway to address the recruitment situation.

### **19.33 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

The Council received and noted data concerning student recruitment, research grants and contracts awarded, and quarterly financial performance indicators.

### **19.34 REPORT FROM THE FINANCE & RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

- A. The Report of the meeting of the Finance and Resources Committee held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2019 (attached as Appendix II to the official copy of the Minutes) was approved.
- B. It was noted that a joint meeting of the Finance and Resources and Audit and Risk Committees had been held.
- C. At the request of the Chair of Finance & Resources Committee, the Director of Finance gave a presentation on the progress and challenges in achieving Financial Sustainability. It was noted:
  - [1] that overall the University does not currently generate a large amount of cash, as whilst cash balances look fairly healthy (£30m) the Council were reminded that EIB money is included in this figure, for investment and capital infrastructure, until 2021. Concern was expressed about the level of the University's cash balances beyond 2021 and the need to generate further cash reserves to ensure sustainability was noted.

- [2] That there were growing budgetary challenges and risks including an estates maintenance background, USS contributions increases, and a possible pay award of over 2%.
- [3] That the 'Diamond Dividend' was factored into the forecast, with a resultant circa £3m per annum increase in the HEFCW grant.

### 19.35 FINANCIAL ACCOUNTS 2018/19

A. The Council received and considered the Audited Statement of Accounts for 2018/19, which had been recommended for approval by the Finance & Resources Committee and had been considered by the Audit and Risk Committee. It was noted that:

- [1] Pension movements dominate the final results for 2018/19, in particular £18.8m relating to the revision of the pension position for USS, which reflects the outcome of the 2017 USS Valuation.
- [2] Operating results were better than Q3 predictions. Whilst pay costs were £0.5m over target, this included £1.4m in voluntary severance payments.
- [3] There was an underlying improvement in EBITDA from £15.0m to £16.1m, and closing cash balances were ahead of predictions at £29.9m.
- [4] Covenant tests have been met for EIB and Santander in all categories as at 31<sup>st</sup> July 2019. There remained the potential to fail on the Santander facility in July 2020, however if the EIB level tests are adopted (as proposed) this would enable a covenant test pass.
- [5] There was a positive outcome from the External Auditors, with the going concern assumption demonstrated until the end of 2020.
- [6] The Letter of Representation, being an annual requirement by the auditors and including additional statements that the Council are confident that future income and saving targets will be met, was also considered.

B. After full consideration, it was **resolved**:

- [1] That the Accounts for 2018/19 be approved and signed by the Vice-Chancellor, the Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee and Director of Finance and lodged with HEFCW by the end of the day.
- [2] That the Letter of Representation to the Auditors be signed by the Chair of Council.

### 19.36 PRESENTATION BY THE DIRECTOR OF PACS ON PRIORITIES

A. The Director of PACS gave a short presentation on the key priorities for PACS over the next

12 months, which were noted as:

- Reinvigorate & develop the potential within the PACS team;
- Restore confidence and trust in capital investment through an updated project management delivery model;
- Develop an achievable 10 year Estates Strategy aligned with strategic vision;
- Maintain delivery of statutory compliance, progress and undertake planned preventative maintenance; and
- Establish the University as a leader in the wider Bangor community and build relationships with external organisations.

B. The Council noted the contents of the presentation and were pleased to receive the assurances.

### **19.37 ALUN ROBERTS BUILDING**

A. The Director of PACS presented a paper on the current situation relating to the Alun Roberts Building. The Council noted the information provided on the short, medium and long-term plans for the building.

B. Concerns was expressed regarding the current structural condition of the building, in particular following the near miss incident in August 2019 which had been previously reported. Members were assured that a structural engineers report had been undertaken which confirmed that there was no immediate danger to staff and students.

C. Members agreed to approve the current proposals for the building.

### **19.37 CAPITAL PROJECT MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES**

A. The Director of PACS presented a paper on the Capital Project Management Principles. The revised Project Management Framework will define project governance in the wider context of the university, with both Client and Project teams having established roles and responsibilities, structure, process maps and defined deliverables.

B. The Council approved the proposal as a way forward to enable the updating of the Project Management Framework.

### **19.38 ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE**

A. The University Secretary presented the paper on Academic Governance and the Council noted the information received over the past year to provide further assurance. These included receiving reports from the Senate, Key Performance Indicators relating to education, student experience and research, and the full NSS results.

B. The Council considered the Student Charter and Relationship Agreement, both of which had been reviewed in the past few months.

C. The Council noted the Quality Assurance Annual Report, 2019.



- D. In the light of the information provided, the Council agreed the five annual assurance statements for submission to HEFCW.

#### **19.39 REPORT FROM SENATE**

The Vice-Chancellor presented the report from the Senate meeting held on the 8<sup>th</sup> October 2019.

#### **19.40 FUNDRAISING ANNUAL REPORT**

The Council noted the contents of the Fundraising Annual Report. It was reported that consultants had been engaged to undertake a wider review of fundraising activities over the next few months.

#### **19.41 PREVENT ANNUAL REPORT**

- A. The University Secretary provided the Council with an update on the progress with implementing and embedding the requirements of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 and the *Prevent* duty. The Council noted that this remains high on the agenda for relevant Strategy and Task Groups, Committees, and individual Officers and noted the policies and procedures in place and actions taken to raise awareness over the past year. It was noted that the University has made no formal referrals to the multi-agency Channel process during the academic year 2018/19, or the start of the 2019/20 year.
- B. The Council **approved** the Annual Report for submission to HEFCW.

#### **19.42 SLAVERY AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING STATEMENT**

The University Secretary presented the University's annual statement on Slavery and Human Trafficking. The Council **approved** the statement which is to be appended to the University's Accounts for 2018/19.

#### **19.43 TACKLING RACIAL HARASSMENT: UNIVERSITIES CHALLENGED**

- A. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) presented the University's response to the recent Equality and Human Rights Commission report *Tackling Racial Harassment: Universities Challenged*. It was noted that the recent report had provided a prompt for the University to review its procedures in relation to racial harassment of staff and students. An overview of current provision within the University was provided, which showed that there were many positive arrangements already in place. In addition, the report provided some future considerations to be taken forward.
- B. The Council noted the report and the University's response.

#### **19.44 AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE**

- A. The Report of the meeting of the Audit & Risk Committee held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2019 (attached as Appendix III to the official copy of the Minutes) was approved.

- B. The Council received and noted the External Audit Management Letter and the management response.
- C. The Council noted the Committee's Annual Report and agreed that it be submitted to HEFCW.

#### **19.45 HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE**

- A. The Report of the meeting of the Health & Safety Committee held on the 6<sup>th</sup> November 2019 (attached as Appendix IV to the official copy of the Minutes) was approved.
- B. The Council received and considered the Annual Health and Safety Report 2018/19. The Chair of the Health and Safety Committee highlighted the salient points taken from the Annual Report, together with key performance indicators.

#### **19.46 BILINGUALISM COMMITTEE**

- A. The Report of the meeting of the Bilingualism Committee held on the 6<sup>th</sup> November 2019 (attached as Appendix V to the official copy of the Minutes) was approved.
- B. With particular reference to:

[1] Min 423 (**Membership & Terms of Reference**); It was **resolved** that the name of the Committee be changed to the Welsh Language Affairs Committee and that the Committee's membership and Terms of Reference be amended as per the Appendix to the Minutes, including that an Annual Report would be provided to the Council, at the end of each academic year.

#### **19.47 NOMINATIONS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

- A. The Report of the meeting of the Nominations and Governance Committee held on the 18<sup>th</sup> November 2019 (attached as Appendix VI to the official copy of the Minutes) was approved.
- B. With particular reference to:

[1] Min 179 (Membership of Council and its Committees); it was **resolved** that:

- Mr Marc Proudlove-Jones be reappointed to the Finance & Resources Committee from the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2020 for a further term of 4 years.
- Mrs Alison Lea-Wilson be reappointed to the Audit & Risk Committee from the 1<sup>st</sup> August 2019 for a further term of 4 years.
- Dr Tomos Dafydd be reappointed to the Welsh Language Affairs Committee from the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2020 for a further term of 4 years.
- The Vice-Chancellor be appointed as a Director of MSParc Limited.

- C. The Council **agreed** that Dr Ian Rees be appointed to the Finance and Resources Committee from 1<sup>st</sup> December 2019 for an initial term of 4 years.

- D. The Council noted the legal briefing, attached as an Appendix to the Minutes of the Committee, from the University's lawyers on the work which is ongoing to modernise the University's Charter, Statutes and Ordinances.

#### **19.48 HUMAN RESOURCES MATTERS**

- A. The Council received a report on Human Resources matters, and in particular noted that:

- [1] Fifty two applications for voluntary redundancies have been approved, producing sustainable savings of approximately £2.3m. Most of the business cases for change have now been implemented, with a further two having some individual cases left to settle. It was noted that the Voluntary Redundancy Scheme will close on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2019.
- [2] UCU has announced strike action from 25<sup>th</sup> November in accordance with its mandate for industrial action, and a number of measures were in place to mitigate the effect of the industrial action to ensure that learning outcomes are delivered. The University expects to be able to ensure that the necessary material can be delivered across its academic programmes.
- [3] There had been an increase to the Real Living Wage in November 2019, of 30p per hour.
- [4] A Staff Survey will be launched in January 2020, following a tender exercise to identify a provider.
- [5] The University will roll out unconscious bias training shortly, and all staff will be required to complete either a face to face or an online training course.
- [6] The implementation of the pay award in October 2019 coincided with the implementation of the 9.6% employee contribution rate for staff in the USS Pensions Scheme.

- B. A list of recent senior appointments was received for information.

#### **19.49 SEALING**

The Council ratified the sealing of documents listed in Agendum 23.