

Bangor University

## COUNCIL MINUTES

At a meeting of the Council held in the University on Friday, 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2019.

### Present:

Mrs Marian Wyn Jones (Chair), Mr Mark Barrow, Dr Tomos Dafydd, Professor Iwan 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, Professor Derec Llwyd Morgan, Miss Lleucu Myrddin, Ms. Ellen Parry-Williams, Miss Julie Perkins, Professor Gareth Roberts, Professor David Thomas, Professor Carol Tully, Professor Oliver Turnbull, Mr Tudur Williams, the University Secretary, the Director of Human Resources and the Director of Finance.

### Apologies:

Dr Myfanwy Davies, Mrs Alison Lea-Wilson, Dr Ian Rees

## 19.01 WELCOME

The Chair welcomed Professor Iwan Davies to his first meeting of the Council as Vice-Chancellor.

The Chair also welcomed Dr Myfanwy Davies, the new academic staff nominated member.

Following a recommendation from the Chair, it was **resolved** that that Professor Derec Llwyd Morgan be appointed as an independent member of the Council from 1 October 2019 for an initial term of 4 years. He was welcomed to his first meeting of the Council.

## 19.02 DEATHS

The Chair referred to the recent deaths of:

**Judge Eifion Roberts**, an Honorary Fellow of the University and a former Chair of Council; and

**Eirwen Read**, a former member of staff in the Drama Department and Human Resources.

Members stood in tribute to their memory.

## 19.03 CONGRATULATIONS

### On the award of an Honorary Chair:

Professor Mark Bellis; College of Human Sciences

Professor Chris Burton; School of Health Sciences

Mr Derek Nasset; School of Computer Science and Electronic Engineering

Dr John Idris Jones; School of Computer Science and Electronic Engineering

Emeritus Professor Bob Borsley; School of Languages, Literatures and Linguistics

## The Chair also congratulated:

**Dr Chris Staples**, from the School of Medical Sciences, who has been awarded a prestigious Future Leader Fellowship by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). He joins top researchers and innovators from across the country to receive investment designed to propel the next generation of scientific leaders, as they conduct cutting-edge research and develop their research independence.

It was reported that **WISERD** is one of four social science research centres in the UK to be successful in the highly competitive Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Centres Competition. WISERD will receive £6.3 million as reinvestment into the continuation of its civil society research – the third major funding to be awarded in WISERD’s ten-year history.

It was reported that a new data science hub for green energy is to be created at Bangor University, backed by £4.6m EU funds. The new **Smart Efficient Energy Centre (SEEC)** will develop joint research between Welsh and international organisations and businesses. It will investigate the options for using big data science to improve the efficiency of low carbon energy systems including nuclear, marine and offshore wind energy.

It was reported that Bangor University will be leading the development of **mental health provision through the medium of Welsh** for students across Wales, thanks to a successful bid for funding from HEFCW. A team of staff across the University came together with colleagues from partner institutions to develop an exciting portfolio of provision, which will be developed and launched over the next 10 months

### 19.04 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. There were no declarations of interest relevant to the agenda items discussed.

### 19.05 MINUTES

- A. The Minutes of the meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2019 were confirmed and signed.
- B. With reference to:
  - [1] **North Wales Growth Deal** (minute 18.101B2); the Vice-Chancellor reported that matters were developing positively and the Heads of Terms was in the process of being agreed and signed.
  - [2] **Auger Review** (minute 18.104[5]); the Vice-Chancellor reported that all the recommendations in the Auger Review have not found favour with current government. Some threat has subsided and it is likely that the proposed reduction in fee levels to £7500 will no longer proceed.

- [3] **Health & Safety Committee** (minute 18.116); the Director of Human Resources reported that a small working group has been established to consider long-term musculoskeletal absences. The group is evaluating work practices, alongside training and absence management arrangements, and an action plan is under development. The end of year statistics will be used to further evaluate trends and identify areas of concern and potential, which will then feed into the University initiative promoting the health and wellbeing of the entire University community.
- [4] **Alun Roberts Tower** (minute 18.5 B4); it was agreed that the briefing paper on risks and mitigation actions pertaining to the Alun Roberts Tower should be accelerated. It was noted that PACS had acted promptly to address recent concerns about the façade of the building. The College have prepared business continuity plans should the building need to be vacated.
- C. An action log was provided noting progress on all outstanding Council actions. Council noted progress and completed actions.

### 19.06 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S BUSINESS

- A. The Vice-Chancellor reported a numbers of issues to the Council.
- [1] **Brexit**; The Vice-Chancellor noted that the government were concerned about employment in the case of a no deal Brexit and Universities need to be ready to deal with any upsurge in unemployment and upskilling the workforce. It was noted that Erasmus+ is likely to be administered through the British Council following Brexit, although it was unclear if this would proceed in a no deal scenario. Horizon Europe, the successor to Horizon 2020 had an increased budget of £120bn, but there was a lack of clarity about UK participation following Brexit; the UK was likely to have associate status and would have no direct influence over the funding agenda.
- [2] **Post Study Work Visa**; The recent good news about the introduction of a 2-year post study work visa for international students was noted. This was very important for international recruitment, particularly from certain markets, such as India.
- [3] **PCET**; There has been very little stakeholder engagement with the sector to date and concern has been expressed about the way it was developing. It was noted that there was only another 18 months in the current Senedd term and there was concern that legislation may be rushed.
- [4] **Civic Mission**; Welsh Government would like civic mission to become a measurable KPI for Universities in Wales. Professor Hunter is developing a civic mission strategy for Bangor University which would be presented to a later meeting of the Council.
- [5] **Diamond Dividend**; Concern was expressed that support for higher education may be waning in the Welsh Government and this raises questions over the likelihood of increased funding following implementation of the Diamond Review. The need to influence decision-makers and politicians was noted and the Chair requested working notes for Council members to understand the principles of Diamond to support lobbying.

- [6] **HEFCW Institutional Risk Review Letter**; The Council noted the HEFCW Institutional Risk Review Letter. The University has been assessed as moderate risk, with some deterioration since the prior year assessment. It was noted that there were no surprises and the Executive would provide the additional information and support the additional engagement requested by HEFCW. The responses required by 30 September have already been submitted to HEFCW and would be circulated to the Council for information.

### 19.07 STUDENTS' UNION UPDATE

- A. It was reported that 35 Bangor University students trekked up Africa's highest mountain, Mount Kilimanjaro, in September, in aid of the mental health charity Mind. The trip was assisted through an award from the Bangor Fund and Council congratulated the students for raising nearly £100,000.
- B. The Council received an update on the Students' Union's recent activities, campaigns and events. The President highlighted the Students' Union support for employability and the SU are looking to embed this in its activities. A volunteering and social impact report is under development; it covers over 50 activities and support the University's civic mission. Welcome Week and Serendipity had been successful and the SU had used the opportunity to promote its role in academic representation. UMCB noted enthusiasm from new students regarding learning Welsh and is reviewing the support available to students; an action plan for Welcome Week is under development as well and increased Welsh academic representation.

### 19.08 REPORT FROM THE EXECUTIVE

The Report of the meetings of the Executive held between July and September 2019 (attached as Appendix I to the official copy of the Minutes) was approved. The following was noted:

- [1] **Financial Sustainability**; Colleges and Professional Services have been issued with pay and non-pay budget envelopes, before 1 August 2019 for the first time in recent years. The Executive has considered consultation responses for the final two Business Cases for Change - PACS and the School of Education and decisions will be implemented in line with the Management of Change policy.
- [2] **Tuition Fees**; the Executive has agreed tuition fees for 2020/21. The Executive has also agreed a new scholarship scheme for International Students linked to discounted Halls places
- [3] **Dental Education**; a recent meeting with the Chief Dental Officer for Wales highlighted significant opportunities for Bangor University in the area of dental education.
- [4] **Review of Task Groups**; the decision-making structure beneath the Executive has been reviewed to ensure more focused strategic decision-making.

- [5] **Initial Teacher Education**; the Council noted the importance of training teachers for the local economy. The Vice-Chancellor reported that recruitment to ITE has been better than expected, and that recruitment to the Welsh medium stream was the highest for 5 years. Unfortunately, incentives to train in Wales are much lower than in England; this is an issue that needs to be conveyed to Welsh Government
- [6] **Research Excellence Framework**; The importance of embedding a culture of impact was noted.

### 19.09 NORTH WALES GROWTH DEAL

- A. The Council considered a paper providing an update on the North Wales Growth Deal. The following points were noted:
  - [1] At its last Meeting, the Council considered a paper regarding the disposal of the Dean Street Site. It was agreed at that time that it was not possible to proceed with disposal of the site, and the University should explore alternative options for disposal of the asset that may produce a better return for the University.
  - [2] The North Wales Growth Deal provides a huge opportunity for Bangor University to contribute to economic growth in the region and to progress its own emerging academic and Estates strategies by intelligent co-investment, leveraging new UK and Welsh government funds via its own investment plans to Support Research excellence and innovation.
  - [3] The imminent signing of the Heads of Terms for the North Wales Growth Deal by both UK and Welsh governments and the partners within the North Wales Economic Ambition Board will be a significant step forward in crystallising earlier ambitions into concrete proposals and actions.
  - [4] Alongside the University's EIB funding, Growth Deal funds will provide co-investment in research facilities and associated infrastructure on both the Science Site and at M-Sparc. Although there has been some rethinking around the original STQ project, the core issues remain: addressing the future of the Alun Roberts Tower, the refurbishment of Memorial Building and the possibility of a new build on the vacant space behind Memorial.
  - [5] When consideration was given to the sale of the Dean Street site, the intention was to rapidly progress the refurbishment of the Alun Roberts Tower. This latter proposal may now be unrealistic in terms of timescale but more importantly in terms of investment return. The retention of the Dean Street site consequently becomes essential to both the overall science site development and any realistic assessment of the programming timescale, and decant space is likely to be critical in other developments arising from the new Estates Strategy.
  - [6] Currently, the Growth Deal project, the writing of Outline Business Plans and future full 5 Case Model Business Plans is being managed by a Growth Deal Steering Group chaired by the PVC Research. As we move closer to a fully developed project, appropriate governance arrangements will be required under the University's project governance framework. In addition, a small Task and End

Group chaired by the Vice Chancellor is taking responsibility for overseeing the integration of the NWGD activities with the wider Estates Strategy.

[7] The Vice-Chancellor sits on the North Wales Economic Ambition Board and as non-voting member and has been engaging with strategic decision makers. He has arranged meetings with all local authorities in North Wales in order to align our strategic thinking with other regional plans. There may also be opportunities for Bangor in the developing mid-Wales Growth Deal and it was noted that the Vice-Chancellor is in active conversation with Vice-Chancellor of Aberystwyth University.

B. The Council noted the University's continued commitment to the Growth Deal, and the current thinking around the development of the Deiniol Road Science site, and **agreed** to retain the Dean Street site in the short term.

### 19.10 STUDENT RECRUITMENT

A. The University Secretary reported the current position in relation to student recruitment. It was noted:

[1] The Executive has received regular weekly updates on student recruitment comparing the number of students admitted during August/September with the same point last year.

[2] Home/EU undergraduate and taught postgraduate numbers are expected to fall short of the target in the financial forecasts.

[3] Overseas undergraduate student numbers are ahead of last year and taught postgraduate students are significantly ahead of last year and approximately 210 students ahead of the target in the financial forecasts. Much of this growth is assumed to be due to changes in payments to agents.

[4] Based on current figures, it looks likely that the University will realise additional income of c£2.1m, compared to levels included in the financial forecasts. However there are additional costs of approximately £1m associated with additional agents' fees and voids in hall resulting in the shift in profile from Home/EU to overseas students.

[5] Risks still remain regarding the conversion from admission to enrolment, particularly in respect of the significant increase in overseas students, and retention. This will be monitored in the coming weeks.

B. The Vice-Chancellor noted the need to concentrate on the basic weakness in the core business of recruiting home undergraduate students. Professor Andrew Edwards has taken on the strategic brief for student recruitment and will be prioritising opportunities in Business and Law. A new recruitment strategy is under development, including fast tracking the development of foundation years, and the University is engaging strategically in partnership with UCAS to provide both insight and data led marketing support.

- C. Council members noted their concern about the Seren programme encouraging students to go to universities outside of Wales. Both the Vice-Chancellors and Chairs of Universities in Wales have raised their concerns directly with the Minister.
- D. The Council were pleased to note the upturn in overseas recruitment but noted the further contraction of Home Undergraduate recruitment is of significant concern. The Council requested a presentation from Professor Edwards on our recruitment strategy at its next meeting.

### **19.11 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

- A. **Research Grants & Contracts;** It was noted that overall research grant capture is in line with the previous year and there has been a slight increase overall. It was noted that this needs to be seen in the light of the changing funding landscape. The 83% drop in EU grant capture is primarily caused by uncertainty over Brexit, but it was noted that WEFO are seeking additional bids for funding.
- B. The Council noted opportunities to re-engage with industry to lay a foundation for new industry led funding.

### **19.12 STUDENT EXPERIENCE REPORT**

- A. The Council considered the annual Student Experience Report from Undeb Bangor and the University's response. The President of Undeb presented the report to the Council. The Council noted:
  - [1] The content of the report is based on data from a variety of sources, primarily Undeb's own survey but also feedback from course reps and other sources such as the NSS. Each year, the University then provides a set of responses to the issues raised in the Undeb report. This forms a key element in the partnership working between the University and the Students Union and is in line with the requirements set out by HEFCW in relation to Student Voice.
  - [2] This year, the report contains a number of commendations and recommendations for the University in relation to a broad range of areas, including organisation & management, Panopto, assessment & feedback, student voice, the library and international students.
  - [3] The university congratulated the SU on an evidence-based report. The means by which the various issues are to be addressed are outlined in the University Response document which has been compiled by the PVC Education and Student Experience following consultation with relevant colleagues. The University Response has been shared with Undeb Bangor and they are content with the proposed actions.
  - [4] Under the Quality Assurance Framework for Wales, governing bodies are expected to provide an annual assurance on quality to HEFCW, by confirming a number of statements, including, that the governing body has considered a report on the annual dialogue between the institution and the student union.

- B. The Council noted the areas of commendation, and recommendation within the Undeb Bangor report, and noted the University's response contained within the Action Plan. It was particularly noted that a strategic focus on employability is required.

### 19.13 STUDENT SURVEYS

- A. The Council noted the recent performance in the National Student Survey (NSS), the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) and The Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES). The following points were noted:

- [1] Bangor's average satisfaction rate in the NSS was 88% placing us 9<sup>th</sup> in the UK's non-specialist universities and joint second in Wales. In the NSS Bangor has twenty subjects in the UK top twenty, and has nine programmes with 100% satisfaction. Some schools still have lower levels of satisfaction and this continues to be addressed.
- [2] The Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) is the UK higher education sector-wide survey to gain insight from taught postgraduate students about their learning and teaching experience. The survey overall response rate was 39% (33% in 2018). Of the 84 Institutions included in the survey, the University's global rankings are 16<sup>th</sup> overall, 7<sup>th</sup> for organisation, 8<sup>th</sup> for information, 9<sup>th</sup> for resources, 10<sup>th</sup> for skills development, 17<sup>th</sup> for teaching 36<sup>th</sup> for engagement and also 36<sup>th</sup> for assessment.
- [3] The Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) is the UK higher education sector-wide survey to gain insight from postgraduate research students about their learning and supervision experience. The survey overall response rate was 59% (54% in 2018). Of the 84 Institutions included in the survey, the University's global rankings at a glance are 52<sup>nd</sup> overall, 23<sup>rd</sup> for responsibilities, 28<sup>th</sup> for professional development, 29<sup>th</sup> for research culture, 49<sup>th</sup> for supervision, 54<sup>th</sup> for resources 63<sup>rd</sup> for progression and 80<sup>th</sup> for research skills.

- B. The Council **noted** the performance in the three student surveys and the actions underway to improve the student experience.

### 19.14 PROPERTY UPDATE

- A. The Council considered a paper providing an update on recent property sales. The Council noted:

- [1] The sales of Bryn Llinos, Neaudd Ogwen and Pen-y-Ffridd were proceeding as agreed at the last meeting.
- [2] The offer of £1,000,025 for Ynys Faelog, agreed at the last meeting, has been withdrawn.
- [3] The Selling Agents acting on behalf of Bangor University have received a new offer in respect of Ynys Faelog. The agents have sought confirmation of funding to support this offer and are confident that the sale will proceed.



B. The Council agreed:

- [1] that Ynys Faelog should be disposed of to Mr James Marshall for £950,000, subject to finalisation of the contract; and
- [2] that in accordance with Section 118 of the Charities Act 2011, there are no connected persons involved in the sale.
- [3] that, in accordance with Section 119(1)(c) of the Charities Act 2011, members were satisfied that the terms on which the disposition is proposed to be made are the best that can reasonably be obtained for the University and in line with the advice provided by the VOA and that the sales can proceed.

#### **19.15 AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE**

- A. The Report of the meeting of the Audit & Risk Committee held on the 11<sup>th</sup> September 2019 (attached as Appendix II to the official copy of the Minutes) was approved.
- B. With particular reference to Minute 530B (**Capital Project – Science & Technology Quarter (STQ)**); the Committee were concerned about the substantial shortfalls identified in the report and the Chair has discussed the report with the new Vice-Chancellor.
- C. The Council received and noted the Internal Audit Strategy for 2019/20 to 2021/22 prepared following consultation with members of the University Executive and the Committee, covering all extreme and high level risks on the Corporate Risk Register.

#### **19.16 HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE**

- A. It was noted that the University Health and Safety Policy Statement was revised and approved by Council in February 2019. This Policy Statement is supplemented by a Responsibilities and Arrangements document that details the role and accountability of each level of the organisation, in line with the National Standard published by the Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA). The Council considered and **approved** a number of changes to this document.
- B. The Council noted the Summary of the headline accident and ill-health statistics for the 2018/19 academic year. It was noted that further detail will be provided in the Annual Health and Safety Report, which will be considered at its next meeting. It was noted that RIDDOR reportable injuries will be reported in full to the next meeting.

#### **19.17 STRATEGY & PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE**

- A. The Report of the meeting of the Redundancy Committee held on the 21<sup>st</sup> June 2019 (attached as Appendix III to the official copy of the Minutes) was approved.

## 19.18 REDUNDANCY COMMITTEE

- A. The Report of the meeting of the Redundancy Committee held on the 12<sup>th</sup> July 2019 (attached as Appendix IV to the official copy of the Minutes) was approved.
- B. The Council approved the recommendation that the staff whose fixed term contracts were due to expire between 1st August 2019 and 31st January 2020 be dismissed by reason of redundancy should no suitable alternative employment opportunities be identified.

## 19.19 HUMAN RESOURCES MATTERS

- A. The Council received a report on Human Resources matters. The following points were noted:

[1] **National Pay Award:** At the final negotiating meeting for 2019-20 UCEA made a final pay offer with a modelled sector-level cost of 1.85%. The unions then invoked the disputes procedure. The trade unions are currently balloting their members for industrial action over the final outcome. UCU and UNISON ballots opened on Monday 9 September and will close on 30 October. Unite has confirmed one aggregate ballot for strike action to run from 23 September to 31 October. In the meantime, UCEA has advised employers that it regards the pay negotiations as concluded and that they should implement the pay uplifts offered with effect from 1 August 2019 as and when their payroll systems will allow.

Bangor's financial forecasts allowed for a general 2% pay award, plus increments where appropriate. Beyond this, no allowance for pay progression was made. Based on the UCEA recommendation, the Executive has agreed to implement the pay award with effect from October. It is hoped that the trade unions that are in dispute will not regard this payment as provocative as this is not the University's intention. It is simply that Bangor University does not feel it right to make employees wait to receive a pay increase for the several more months.

It should also be noted that this would coincide with the implementation of the 9.6% employee contribution rate for around 1,000 staff arising from the final settlement of the USS 2018 Valuation. This outcome is in line with the 'Option 3' supported by most employers and involves the 'sharing' of additional USS costs in the 65/35 ratio agreed by the JNC on 12 September. This has already been communicated to USS members via email in a bulletin from the USS Trustee.

[2] **Coaching/Mentoring:** It was noted that internal and external coaching provision is available for staff upon request. The University has also launched two mentoring schemes for academic staff. The purpose of both schemes is to provide a member of staff with advice, guidance and encouragement regarding their work and future career planning. The content of these mentoring discussions is confidential. Training sessions have been provided for all mentors and mentees.

- B. The Council agreed to award Emeritus status to Professor Mike Beckett.

C. A list of recent senior appointments was received for information.

### **19.20 SEALING**

The Council ratified the sealing of documents listed in Agendum 14.

### **19.21 STRATEGIC DISCUSSION**

Following the formal Council meeting, presentations were received from the Vice-Chancellor and members of the Executive regarding longer-term strategy for the University.