Bangor University

COUNCIL MINUTES

At a meeting of the Council held in the University on Friday, 30 April 2021.

Present:
Mrs Marian Wyn Jones (Chair), Professor Iwan Davies, Dr Myfanwy Davies, Mr Atul Devani, Mr Iwan Evans, Mr Eric Hepburn, Dr Griff Jones, Dr Karen Jones, Dr Llion Jones, Mr Marc Jones, Mr Kailesh Karavadra, Sir Paul Lambert, Mrs Alison Lea-Wilson, Ms Julie Perkins, Dr Ian Rees, Professor Gareth Roberts, Professor Oliver Turnbull, Mr Henry Williams, Mr Tudur Williams and Mrs Gwenan Hine (Secretary).

Apologies:
Dr Lynne Williams.

In attendance:
Professor Nicky Callow, Mr Rob Eastwood, Professor Andrew Edwards, Mrs Tracy Hibbert, Dr Kevin Mundy, Professor Paul Spencer, Mrs Lorraine Westwood and Mr Lars Wiegand.

In addition Mr Mike Wilson, Head of Planning & Student Data attended for item 20.72.

20.68 WELCOME

Mr James Avison, Students' Union President elect, and Mr Mabon Dafydd, UMCB President elect were welcomed to the meeting. It was noted that Mr Avison and Mr Dafydd would be observing the meeting of the Council, prior to joining as members at the July meeting.

20.69 CONGRATULATIONS

A. On the award of an Honorary Professorship:

Professor Alex Anstey, MD, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, an Honorary Professor in the School of Health Sciences

Professor Peter Lepping, Consultant Liaison Psychiatrist, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, an Honorary Professor in the School of Health Sciences

Professor Horst-Michael Prasser,
Professor Emeritus, Department of Mechanical and Process Engineering, Institute of Energy Technology, Zürich. An Honorary Professor in the Nuclear Futures Institute, College of Environmental Sciences and Engineering.

Professor Lynda M Warren OBE, former Deputy Chair of the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM). An Honorary Professor in the Nuclear Futures Institute, College of Environmental Sciences and Engineering

On the award of a Visiting Professorship:

Professor Dewi Lewis, internationally recognised radioactive pharmaceuticals expert. Director of PHYSEGA Ltd and Visiting Professor, Nuclear Futures Institute, College of Environmental Sciences and Engineering

B. On behalf of the Council the Chair warmly congratulated the members of staff concerned.

20.70 DEATHS

The Chair referred to the recent deaths of:

Mr Malcolm Swann
Former Director of Estates

Mr Dai Lloyd Jones, MBE,
Former member of the University Council.

Mr Richard Parry-Jones former member of the University Council and an Honorary Fellow

Ms Sara Anest Jones,
Student in the School of Languages, Literatures and Linguistics

Mr Ray Footman
Former Chair Alumni Advisory Board, and Bangor University Alumnus of the Year 2017

Members fell silent in tribute to their memory.

20.71 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. Professor Gareth Roberts, and all members of University staff present declared an interest in relation to agendum item 20.77

20.72 DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN

A. The Vice-Chancellor informed the Council that the draft strategy had now been through the consultation and engagement process which had been agreed at the previous meeting of the Council, and the feedback had been considered by the Executive. Following consideration of the feedback received revisions to the draft strategy had been undertaken. Members received and considered a summary of the consultation and engagement process, the key areas of feedback received, and the revisions to the strategy in response to this feedback. In addition Mr Wilson provided the Council with a short presentation which outlined the progress to date, and the proposed next steps

B. The Chair, on behalf of the Council, thanked Mr Wilson for his informative presentation and his hard work in drawing together the strategy document. The depth of engagement from staff was noted by the Council, and in addition thanks was extended to the whole Executive for leading on the consultation process.

C. Following discussion the Council **approved** the revised Strategic Plan. It was noted that a formal launch of the Strategic Plan would be undertaken around the Council meeting in July, and the Council would also receive updates on some of the Sub-Strategies at the meeting.

20.73 MINUTES

A. The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2021 were **confirmed.**

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

20.74 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S BUSINESS

A. **Report from the Executive**

The Vice-Chancellor presented the report from the Executive Committee and in particular the following items were noted:

HEIW Tender Submission

The Council were updated on the status of the HEIW tender submitted a few months ago, with the outcome awaited in May. The Council were reminded of the importance of the tender as part of the University's wider strategic thinking in terms of medicine and subjects allied to medicine and the significant risk should the University not be successful, as was outlined to members at their last meeting. A further update would be provided at the July meeting of the Council.

Virtual Open Days: Software

The Executive had given its approval for a more sophisticated virtual open day software package which would be beneficial not only for the current virtual open days, but also in order to continue with virtual open days as part of the offering for prospective students in the future.

Central Teaching Space Modelling

It was noted that the Executive had received a report from the Director of Estates and Campus Services (EACS) on Central Teaching Space Modelling. The pandemic, and the resultant need to look more holistically at space on campus, had led to the EACS team being pivotal in space provision and this had highlighted a number of challenges. The Executive had noted the need to better understand the way in which centrally managed teaching and learning space was being used, and how important it was to ensure the delivery of a first-rate experience. It had been noted that alongside investment in improved facilities should be a consideration of future requirements in relation to more innovative ways of teaching.

B. **Additional Updates**

Commitment to a Medical School in North Wales

The Vice-Chancellor reported the welcome commitment to the North Wales Medical School from the main political parties in Wales as part of their manifestos for the Senate elections.

Strategic Plan: Sub-Strategies

The Council were informed that work was ongoing on a number of Sub-strategies at the moment, with the relevant member of the Executive leading as appropriate. Consultation with staff would be undertaken in May, and further updates would be brought to the next meeting of the Council.

C. The Chair thanked the Vice-Chancellor for his update and expressed her continued thanks to the whole Executive team for their leadership. The grateful thanks of the whole Council was also extended to all members of staff who continue to work hard to ensure that students continued to receive high quality education and a positive student experience. The Chair noted that there would be an informal briefing session with the Vice-Chancellor prior to the next meeting of the Council, to provide an opportunity for members to receive updates on any relevant developments.

20.75 STUDENTS UNION UPDATE

A. The Council noted the update reports presented by the Students' Union and by UMCB under agendum item 5.

B. Mr Williams and Professor Turnbull presented an updated report on *Student Experience during Covid-19.* In particular the following points were highlighted:

- The updated report was an opportunity to highlight the actions that were requested by the Students' Union alongside the outcomes agreed with the University, as well as evidencing the effective joint working that has gone on throughout the academic year;

- The introduction of the Student Bulletin during the 2020/21 academic year has been successful, and provides the University with a vehicle to update students regularly on key items;

- The webinars and Q&A sessions with the Deputy and Pro Vice-Chancellors throughout the year have proven very popular with the student community;
- Students' mental health has been a priority over the year with further investment put into support services during the pandemic to support students. In addition the development of a University wide health and wellbeing strategy would provide further resilience in this area, and the Council would be updated on this strategy at its next meeting;

C. The Chair, on behalf of the Council, thanked both Mr Williams and Mr Evans for their reports, for their hard work during the Semester and for their continued positive engagement with the University. The willingness of the whole Sabbatical Officer team to engage with the University during unprecedently challenging times was gratefully acknowledged.

D. The Council **noted** the Students Union Strategy document which was included in the papers for information.

20.76 FINANCIAL REPORT

A. Mr Eastwood presented the outcome of the updated forecast to 31st July 2021 which indicated an improved financial position for the University compared to the forecast submitted to HEFCW in December 2020. It was noted that the Operating Surplus was forecasted to improve by £7.6m to a £0.4m surplus which was mainly driven by the increase in grants from HEFCW, though it was reported that many were restricted and required the University to incur capital expenditure. These grants resulted in a net increase in cash, compared to the December forecast, of £3.6m.

B. Council members welcomed the addition of a regular financial report. It was confirmed, following questioning that the University would have no difficulty in meeting the bank covenants during this financial year. In particular it was envisaged, subject to further discussion with EIB, that completion of the project related to the loan would be confirmed by the end of the financial year.

C. The Chair thanked Mr Eastwood for his paper, and the Council **noted** its contents.

20.77 UNIVERSITIES SUPERANNUATION SCHEME (USS) CONSULTATION

A. Mr Eastwood reported that following the decision by the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) to undertake a valuation as at 31st March 2020 the Trustee had issued an update on the 2020 Valuation dated 3rd March 2021 along with a large number of supporting documents. As a result of this Universities UK (UUK) were currently undertaking a consultation on the indicative outcome of the March 2020 valuation, based on a number of documents, which require the University to answer a number of questions by the 24th May 2021. It was noted that consultation with members of staff and Trades Union representatives was critical and were planned to take place during May.

It was noted that the paper submitted to the Council provided a summary of the initial valuation and the consultation documentation, and also included the written response to the consultation from the Universities College Union (UCU).

B. Sir Paul Lambert, as Chair of the Finance & Strategy Committee informed the Council that the approach outlined by Mr Eastwood was supported by extensive discussions in an extraordinary meeting of that Committee.

C. Following discussion the Council **noted** the draft response, which would be amended following consultation. It was **agreed** that the Chair of Council, along with the Chairs of the Council Sub-Committees would approve a final response in due course. The Chair confirmed that a further update would be provided to the Council on the outcome.

20.78 ESTATES MATTERS

A. The Council considered the updates provided in the Action Log in relation to property sales. In particular the Director of Property and Campus Services drew the Council's attention to the following matters:

[1] Ynys Faelog: Council were advised that unfortunately the sale of Ynys Faelog had fallen through due to a change of circumstances relating to the proposed buyer. Estates and Campus Services would now proceed to re-valuing and re-marketing the property.

[2] Discussions were ongoing with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board regarding handing back Canolfan Brailsford (Ysbyty Enfys) for the start of the next academic year. The scope of work for the decommissioning exercise had been agreed and was currently out for tender by the Health Board.

[3] Good progress was being made on the draft Estates Strategy. The Senior Management Group had been briefed on the vision, and a staff consultation event was now in the diary for the end of May, with consultation with students being planned for June and wider consultation with external stakeholders also being scheduled. A further update on this would be brought to the next meeting of the Council.

[4] It was noted that as part of the redevelopment of the Deiniol Road site positive engagement had been undertaken with the College of Environmental Sciences and Engineering. The project was progressing well and was currently in a standstill period relating to the appointment of a design team. It was noted that the Alun Roberts Tower included in the scope of work and was scheduled for demolition as part of the wider project plan.

20.79 DEGREE OUTCOMES STATEMENT

A. The Council received the 2018/19 degree outcome statement and it was noted that currently, in Wales, it wasn't a requirement to publish the Statement however that HEFCW expected Welsh HEIs to do so.

Professor Callow reported that HEFCW's Quality Assessment Framework for Wales (2020) placed a responsibility on the Council to ascertain that the University meets standards set out in the Framework. In addition, and having ascertained that the standards are met, the Council is required to approve the annual quality statements. It was noted that those relevant to quality assurance are as follows:

- The governing body has received a report taking account of the external quality assurance review, and an action plan has been put in place and implemented as appropriate, in partnership with the student body;

- The methodologies used as a basis to improve the student academic experience and student outcomes are, to the best of our knowledge, robust and appropriate;

- For providers with degree awarding powers: The standards of awards for which we are responsible have been appropriately set and maintained; and

- The governing body has effective oversight of degree outcomes and academic integrity.

The Council were reminded that within the 2019/20 annual quality report and accompanying statement (approved by Council on the 27th Nov 2020), reference was made to the University's 2018/19-degree outcome statement, and an impending review of our degree algorithm.

B. Following discussion the Council **approved** the 2018/19 Degree Outcomes Statement.

C. In addition the Council **noted** the degree classification report 2019/20 which included sector benchmarking, conclusions from the degree algorithm review and detail on the impact of the *Force Majeure* regulation.

20.80 ANNUAL EQUALITY REPORT 2019-20 / GENDER PAY GAP REPORT

A. Professor Nicky Callow and Mrs Tracy Hibbert presented the Annual Equality Report 2019-20 which set out the equality monitoring data of all staff employed in the 2019 – 2020 academic year including comparisons with the HEI sector and trends as required by the Equality Act 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty.

B. The Council **approved** the Annual Equality Report 2019-20.

B. The Gender Pay Gap report was received and **noted** by the Council. In particular it was noted that the requirements for reporting on Gender came into force on 6 April 2017, but do not apply to public authorities in Wales. However, following discussions at the Equal Pay Working Group and as agreed with the Trades Unions it was reported that the University voluntarily publishes its Gender Pay Gap Report. The Council noted that the University's Gender Pay Gap stands at 13.9% mean and 7.2% median. The Office for National Statistics provisional data published for 2020 indicated that the UK median gap was 15.5% putting the University's gap for the same period lower. However whilst the University's median gap is significantly lower than the provisional national gap further work needed to be done to reduce/eliminate the gap. In addition the Council were informed that the University also voluntarily publishes its Ethnicity Pay Gap with data indicating BAME employees mean pay being 10.6% higher than white employees and similarly BAME median pay being 34.2% higher.

20.81 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

A. The Council noted the paper which outlined the current trends in relation to research funding. In addition Professor Spencer updated the Council on the recent decision by the UK Government to reduce, in-year, the Official Development Assistance (ODA) funding by £120m. It was reported that this funding was distributed by virtually all the funding Councils and all such grants would have an overseas partner or beneficiary. The University is currently aware of 8 grants that are affected, and the in-year savings requested range from 50% to 20%. Professor Spencer reported that four of the projects were due to finish during the academic year, and four were being led by other UK HEIs. Following the announcement different funders were applying different methodologies and had different deadlines to submit revised plans, however current indicates that no staffing changes were anticipated, but overheads will be impacted, and the University has been able to mitigate the impact of the announcement by using the Covid-19 support funds available alongside some significant restructuring of research plans. The Council were advised that it wasn't yet clear whether the same level of cuts would be imposed in the next financial year.

B. The Chief Marketing Officer provided the Council with an update on marketing and student recruitment progress. An update on full-time student recruitment and how this compares against the levels of student recruitment for future years assumed within the University's financial forecasts, and an update on total student enrolments (new entrants and returning students) and the associated impact on tuition fee income were received. In particular it was noted that applications and offers made are significantly

higher than this point last year (+19% and +21%, respectively). Increases over two years are also significant. Mrs Westwood reported that the last twelve months have been a period of identifying and focusing on quick wins which can deliver early results; an in depth review of operations and restructuring to provide a foundation for success; a move towards a strategic, planned and pro-active approach to marketing and student recruitment which delivers. The Council noted that the focus of the report was mainly UK focused, which was a deliberate choice early in the process due to Covid completely disrupting international recruitment and because international recruitment had performed well in recent years so didn't have the same critical issues that UK recruitment had.

The Council welcomed the positive news in relation to student recruitment and noted the work which now needed to take place to convert the numbers into registered students in September 2021.

20.82 REPORT FROM THE SENATE

A report from the April 2021 meeting of the Senate (attached as Appendix II to the official copy of the Minutes) was received.

20.83 FINANCE & STRATEGY COMMITTEE

A. The Report of the meetings of the Finance and Strategy Committee held on the 12 March and 21 April 2021 (attached as Appendix III to the official copy of the Minutes) were **approved**.

B. In addition the Council **approved** the recommendation from the Committee relating to the Health & Medical School for North Wales, that £0.5m in-year spend is allocated to the project.

20.84 HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

The Report of the meeting of the Health & Safety Committee held on 10th March 2021 (attached as Appendix IV to the official copy of the Minutes) was **approved**.

20.85 AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE

A. The Report of the meeting of the Audit & Risk Committee held on the 15 March 2021 (attached as Appendix V to the official copy of the Minutes) was **approved**.

B. The Council received a report on the Corporate Risks Classified Residually as Extreme and High, and noted that currently 13 of the 21 risks on the University's Corporate Risk Register were classified residually extreme or high, i.e., following the application of the University's control mechanisms, those which would cause major or critical impact, and likely or almost certainly come to fruition in the next 1-3 years. The provision of the report was welcomed, and it was **confirmed** that a deep dive exercise based around a

few of the higher scoring risks would be undertaken either for the July or September meeting of the Council.

20.86 NOMINATIONS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

The Report of the meeting of the Nominations and Governance Committee held on the 16th April 2021 (attached as Appendix VI to the official copy of the Minutes) was **approved**.

20.87 WELSH LANGUAGE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

The Report of the meeting of the Welsh Language Affairs Committee held on the 8th February 2021 (attached as Appendix VII to the official copy of the Minutes) was **approved.**

20.88 HUMAN RESOURCES REPORT

A. The Council received a report on Human Resources matters and ***noted*** the update in relation to the National Pay Awards 2021/22.

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

C. The Council ***approved*** the request to award Emeritus status to:

- Professor Alan Shore

20.89 SEALING

The Council **ratified** the sealing of documents listed in Agendum 20.

20.90 VALEDICTION

The Chair of Council noted that this was Mr Williams and Mr Evans' last meeting of the Council as President of the Students' Union and President of UMCB respectively. On behalf of the whole Council the Chair thanked both for their willingness to work with the Council and the University and their leadership and wished them both well for their future careers.