

Bangor University

COUNCIL MINUTES

At a meeting of the Council held in the University on Friday, 12 February 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 Llion Jones, Mr Marc Jones, Sir Paul Lambert, Mrs Alison Lea-Wilson, Ms Julie Perkins, Dr Ian Rees, Professor Gareth Roberts, Professor Oliver Turnbull, Mr Henry Williams, Dr Lynne Williams, Mr Tudur Williams and Mrs Gwenan Hine (Secretary).

Apologies:

Mr Kailesh Karavadra, who provided comments prior to the meeting.

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 Professor Paul Downing, Assistant Pro Vice-Chancellor Research attended for item 20.48. Mr Mike Wilson, Head of Planning & Student Data, and Ms Taryn Rock, Director of Communications and Brand Marketing, attended for item 20.54.

20.45 CONGRATULATIONS

A. On the award of a Visiting Professorship:

Professor Lyndon Edwards, Nuclear Futures Institute, College of Environmental Sciences and Engineering

B. The Chair also noted the following achievements:

Tracking COVID-19 and other viruses in wastewater

Researchers from the University are to work with partners in Nigeria and South Africa to monitor the prevalence of COVID-19 in communities in both countries. The University has been instrumental in the development and application of Covid-19 monitoring in wastewater, and this is providing real-time evidence of levels of community infection. The team are now working with the Universities in the UK, USA, Nigeria and South Africa.

Bangor Professor included in New Year Honours List

Professor Sandy Toogood, an Honorary Professor at Bangor University's School of Education was awarded a British Empire Medal (BEM) for services to people with intellectual disabilities in the New Year Honours List.

Bangor Clinical Lecturer takes a lead role in Novavax trial

Dr Orod Osanlou, a Senior Clinical Lecturer in Medical Sciences (Pharmacology/Pharmacy) was involved in a global trial of Novavax, a new COVID-19 vaccine, which published very promising interim results recently. This was in his role as the Principal Investigator for the trial at Public Health Wales and Consultant in Clinical Pharmacology and Therapeutics at Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board.

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

20.46 DEATHS

The Chair referred to the recent deaths of:

Mrs Vera Owen,

Former member of staff Student Housing Office

Mrs Vivienne Annette Smith,

Former member of staff in Property and Campus Services

Miss Wenyan Ma,

Student in the School of Ocean Sciences

Mr Ray Davies

Honorary Lecturer, School of Computer Science and Electronic Engineering

Dr Osian Gwynn Ellis

Honorary Fellow

Miss Mara Ostafichuk,

Member of staff in the School of Health Sciences

Mrs Ruth Goggin

Former member of staff in the Registrar's Office and the Academic Registry.

Members fell silent in tribute to their memory.

20.47 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. Dr Llion Jones declared an interest in relation to agendum item 8: *Covid-19 – Addressing the Financial Challenges*.

20.48 RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK (REF) 2021 PRESENTATION

- A. The Chair welcomed Professor Paul Downing, Assistant Pro Vice-Chancellor Research to the meeting. Professor Spencer and Professor Downing provided the Council with an overview of, and a presentation on the mock REF exercise undertaken in October 2020. It was noted that the aim of the exercise was to provide a snapshot of the University's position for the REF2021 submission, due in March 2021. Following the University's codes of practice and relying on internal and external review, estimates of REF scores for the output, impact, and environment components of submissions to each of the 9 units of assessment were derived. In addition key remaining actions, and the steps to complete these, were identified.

The Council were informed that the results of the mock REF indicate that a best guess of the overall grade-point average (GPA) for REF2021 is approximately 5% higher than the GPA from REF2014. Professor Downing reported that whilst there is a reasonable degree of confidence around the modest increase in GPA, it was noted that it would be prudent to assume that it is unlikely to be sufficient to maintain the University's current league table position. Following questions from members the main institution-wide impacts of REF2021 were highlighted as being quality weighted research (QR) funding, which would depend on Welsh Government's determination of funding allocation formulae after the results are known, and the University's position in league tables, with knock-on effects on funding capture and student recruitment.

- C. The Chair thanked Professor Spencer and Professor Downing for their informative update which the Council noted and wished them well for the submission in March.

20.49 MINUTES

- A. The Minutes of the meetings held on 27 November 2020 were **confirmed**.
- B. An action log was provided noting progress on all outstanding Council actions. Council noted the progress reports and completed actions.

Minute 19.107: Performance Development Reviews (PDR)

The Director of Human Resources provided an update on the PDR completion rates noting that the overall completion rate was 80% at the closing date in November. It was

noted that the University's aspiration over the next two years would be to improve to 90% which would be above the sector norm.

20.50 CHAIR'S BUSINESS

The Chair reported on two items of business which she had dealt with since the last Council meeting:

- A. Following a competitive recruitment exercise Mr Mark Condron was approved as a Professional Trustee to the Board of BUPAS.
- B. The Chair sent a letter to Dr David Blaney, HEFCW formally requesting an increase in the University's financial commitments threshold in order to access funding to support its research base via the Sustaining University Research Expertise Fund (SURE) scheme.

20.51 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S BUSINESS

- A. The Vice-Chancellor drew the Council's attention to a number of specific items of relevance to the Higher Education sector both in Wales and the UK. Further updates were also provided in the briefing paper circulated under agenda item 4. It was noted that there were a number of issues on the horizon which the Vice-Chancellor and the Executive would be monitoring over the coming months.

In particular it was noted that the Comprehensive Spending Review, and the outcome of the Augar Review, may have an impact on minimum entry requirements, student finance and foundation years. In addition, the level of the higher education budget assigned within the Welsh Government budget in early March will be crucial. The Sir Steve Smith update to the UK Government's International Education Strategy provides the University with opportunities to develop its own strategic thinking and to refresh its international strategy.

- B. 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.

20.52 STUDENTS UNION UPDATE

- A. The Council noted the updates presented by the Students' Union and by UMCB under agenda item 5. Mr Henry Williams and Mr Iwan Evans also highlighted the following key points:
 - The Sabbatical Officers election will be held in March, with campaigning taking place at the start of the month, and the outcome of the elections known by the third week

in March. It was noted that, in agreement with the Chair, the incoming President, and President of UMCB would be invited to shadow at the April Council meeting.

- To ensure that the Council remained briefed on the work of the Students' Union in representing the student voice on Council, discussions were ongoing to arrange a briefing for members from the Sabbatical team during the Spring. Council members welcomed this initiative which would provide independent members, in particular, with an oversight of the work of the Sabbatical Officers.
 - Discussions had been held with members of the University Executive around student rent rebates. It was noted that the University had provided all students in halls with a 10% rebate on halls fees.
 - A recent Q&A with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and the Pro Vice-Chancellors had been well received by students, and further Q&As were being considered.
- B. The Chair, on behalf of the Council, thanked both Mr Williams and Mr Evans for an informative report, for their hard work during the Semester and for their continued positive engagement with the University.
- C. The Chief Operating Officer provided the Council with an update on the current situation in relation to the £40m funding from HEFCW to address student hardship arising out of the pandemic. It was noted that all Higher Education Institutions in Wales were working towards agreeing a general approach to the distribution of the funding in order to ensure consistency between the Welsh universities. The student services sector group AMOSSHE had recently discussed the matter and had considered categories for the allocation of the funding, these were currently being considered by HEFCW. In the meantime discussions were ongoing both within the University and with the Students' Union on the processes necessary to administer the funding.

20.53 PROVISION OF HEALTH PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING SERVICES (HEIW) PHASE 1

- A. Professor Callow and Dr Williams provided the Council with an overview of the work which had been undertaken on the Provision of Health Professional Education and Training Services Phase 1 tender submission in late January to Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW), the commissioner of health and medical training for Wales.

It was reported that a previous tender exercise in 2012 had resulted in the University winning the tender for nursing provision across North Wales. The Council noted that the invitation to tender had been launched by HEIW in October 2019, and since that time Dr Williams had led a group comprising of members of the Executive, the College of Human Sciences and the School of Health Sciences to prepare for the submission. Key themes of the tender are interdisciplinary education, compassionate leadership and the Welsh Language. In total the University had submitted bids for 15 lots, which, if successful would realise around £300m of funding over the lifetime of the contract.

Professor Callow outlined the risks of being unsuccessful in the tender process which would mean a drop in income and student numbers for those lots which the University did not win, however the submission was seen as strong and the team associated with the tender were cautiously optimistic.

It was noted that the outcome of the tender is expected in May 2021, and should the University be successful there were a number of developmental areas to be taken forward quickly such as staff appointments, infrastructure, software and remote campus modelling. In preparation for the bid the School of Health Sciences had already been investing in digital solutions such as purchasing a placement management system and procuring an e-portfolio system. It was noted that this was a growth area in terms of student numbers and that a creative and innovative marketing plan would need to be developed to capitalise on this growth in the market.

- B. The Chair thanked Professor Callow and Dr Williams for their leadership over the last two years in preparing the bid and noted that the Council could take great comfort from the quality of the submission.

20.54 DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN

- A. The Vice-Chancellor introduced the draft Strategic Plan to the Council. It was noted that the Council had been provided with three themed Away Days covering the strategic pillars and cross cutting themes over the last few months, as well as a recent briefing session which provided context on how the Plan had been developed. This was a first opportunity for the Council to provide feedback on the document, which would return to Council in April following consultation. The Council were informed that the Plan has been developed by the Executive and Executive leads have been identified for each of the pillars and themes. A Strategic Framework has also been developed, providing a hierarchy that sits beneath the over-arching strategy comprising sub-strategies, the University's annual business planning processes and a performance monitoring framework. Professors Turnbull, Callow, Edwards and Spencer provided members with briefings on their respective areas, drawing out the key points included under each pillar and cross cutting theme.
- B. Following the presentations from the Vice-Chancellor and the Executive leads members of Council made a number of comments and suggestions. In particular the following points were made:
- Members welcomed the clear strategic direction contained within the Plan;
 - The University's commitment to bilingualism and to Welsh medium provision was welcomed. It was noted that the commitment needs to be stated throughout each aspect of the draft Plan including in the mission statement. The unique bilingual ethos of the University was noted as a key selling point for the University, which drew students from across the World to study at Bangor;

- The Student's Union were pleased to note the clear inclusion of student experience as a pillar and suggested further consideration on incorporating this across all themes;
- The sustainability aspirations within the plan needed to be more clearly stated within the mission statement;
- The aim of the University to work internationally, regionally and locally needs to run throughout the Plan, and not just in the section on civic mission and bilingualism.

Following the discussion, the Vice-Chancellor confirmed that a period of consultation would be undertaken over the next few weeks, as outlined in the consultation framework provided to the Council at its recent briefing. In addition to consultation with internal and external stakeholders, members of Council would be provided with an opportunity to provide more detailed feedback into the process.

The Chair drew the discussion to a close and paid tribute to the hard work undertaken by everyone who had contributed to bringing the draft document before the Council. The sense of ambition presented by the Plan was welcomed by the members.

- C. Following discussion the Council **approved** the draft Strategic Plan to go out for consultation prior to returning to the Council at its meeting in April 2021.

20.55 COVID-19: ADDRESSING THE FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

- A. The Council was reminded that at its meeting in November 2020 it was informed that under the auspices of the Section 188 letter, parallel processes were running in order to achieve the savings required and also to mitigate or avoid any compulsory redundancies. The restructuring process had proposed changes within each of the Colleges and within Professional Services, and Business Cases for Change had been circulated to both staff and students as well as to members of the wider community for consultation over a six-week period. During this period regular consultation meetings were held with the recognised trades unions in order to both understand the financial situation facing the University and to explore how compulsory redundancies could be avoided

The Director of Human Resources informed members that whilst progress has been made, primarily by Voluntary Redundancies, there were still savings of approximately £2m to be made equating to approximately 9 posts in the academic domain and 45 posts within Professional Services. Discussions were continuing to try and realise the savings through voluntary means. In addition, and in relation to non-pay the Council noted that the University has committed to reduce its non-pay expenditure by £3m per annum from 2021/22 onwards

- B. The Council **noted** the update contained in the report, and the next steps outlined.

20.56 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] The renewal of the licence with the Crown Estate to facilitate the sale of Nantporth Boathouse was ongoing.
 - [2] The disposal of the Pen-y-Ffridd site was ongoing, although it was reported that the outline planning application by the prospective buyer had been refused. The prospective buyers had appealed, and a decision was due in April.
 - [3] The sale of Ynys Faelog was progressing, with the renewal of the licence with the Crown Estate ongoing in order to facilitate exchange of contracts.
 - [4] The exchange of contracts on the sale of Y Felin Tysilio was due imminently.
 - [5] In relation to Capital Developments the work on the Anatomy Lab is due for completion in April, and project boards / teams are being established to oversee the development of the science and innovation campus on Deiniol Road, as well as the Professional Services stream.

20.57 ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL ACCOUNTS

- A. The Council received and considered the Audited Statement of Accounts for 2019/20, which had been recommended for approval by the Finance & Strategy Committee and had been considered by the Audit and Risk Committee. It was noted that:
- [1] Recognising the disruption that has occurred over the last year arising from the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly in reference to satisfying the going concern requirements, HEFCW had extended the deadline for publication of the 2019/20 annual accounts to the end of February 2021.
 - [2] The going concern review had been much more extensive than in a normal year, owing to the impact of Covid-19, and the ongoing restructuring programme.
 - [3] There had been a restatement of the 2018/19 accounts to recognise a surplus in respect of the University's local pension scheme (BUPAS) on the University's balance sheet.
 - [4] Financial performance is better than anticipated, the cashflow statement is the key aspect of financial performance and net cash inflow from operating activities showed a small improvement on the previous year. The accounts showed an operating surplus under FRS102 of c£11m. Cash generated from

operations showed an improvement to £1212.4m, and cash and short-term investments held as at 31st July 2020 was £32.8m.

- [5] There was a positive outcome from the External Auditors, with the going concern assumption demonstrated until the end of 2021.
- [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 2019/20 be approved and signed by the Chair of Council, the Vice-Chancellor and the Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee and lodged with HEFCW.
- [2] That the Letter of Representation to the Auditors be signed by the Chair of Council.

C. Following a recommendation from the Finance and Strategy Committee (at its meeting on 4th February 2021) relating to the Sustaining University Research Expertise (SURE) funding the Council **resolved** to execute, deliver and perform the Agreement relating to SURE, and in particular to:

- [1] Approve the terms of, and the transactions contemplated by, the SURE funding. It was noted that this comprises of a loan of £1,051,000 as part of total funding of £1,065,826 over a 10-year period with interest charged at 0.55% per annum.
- [2] To authorise Mr Robert Eastwood, Director of Finance (Interim) to execute the Agreement; and
- [3] To authorise Mr Robert Eastwood (Director of Finance (Interim), on Council's behalf, to sign and/or despatch all documents and notices (including the Utilisation Request) required to be signed and/or despatched by Council under or in connection with this Agreement.

20.58 UNIVERSITY TRENDS AND SCHOOL PROFILES

The Council **noted** the University Trends and School Profiles information which was provided as a reference document for members. It was reported that the document would be uploaded to the Knowledge area on Boardpacks. Dr Mundy informed the Council that in future the KPIs will be presented to the Finance & Strategy Committee, who will consider them on behalf of the Council.

20.59 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- A. Professor Spencer outlined to the Council the key points relating to the research grants and contracts data provided. Some overarching trends were outlined, and the Council's attention was drawn, in particular, to the significant downturn in structural funds grants which was EU funding no longer available to the University. The University's recent success in winning funding through UK industry was noted, with academics moving to capitalise on these opportunities post Brexit.
- B. The Chief Marketing Officer provided the Council with an update on student recruitment. It was noted in particular that overall UCAS applications to the University had improved by 29% since last year and were up by 21% over 2 years. The University was outperforming its competitor group and the UK sector. Applications from England domiciled applicants were continuing to increase, up 4% since last year, and up 35% over 2 years. A dip in applications in early January had recovered, with applications now 15% higher than last year, a similar increase to the competitor group and UK sector, and 8% higher than two years ago. As had been expected the significant decrease in EU applications continues, with a drop of 35% since last year, however international applications have recovered and are now 33% higher than last year, and 51% higher than two years ago.

It was **agreed** that a further update on student recruitment would be presented to the Council at its meeting in April.

20.60 REPORT FROM THE EXECUTIVE

A report from the meetings of the Executive held between November 2020 and February 2021 (attached as Appendix I to the official copy of the Minutes) was received.

20.61 REPORT FROM THE SENATE

A report from the meetings of the Senate held between November 2020 and February 2021 (attached as Appendix II to the official copy of the Minutes) was received.

20.62 FINANCE & STRATEGY COMMITTEE

The Report of the meetings of the Finance and Strategy Committee held on the 15th January and 4th February 2021 (attached as Appendix III to the official copy of the Minutes) were **approved**.

20.63 HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

The Council received the In-Year Report: August 2020 – January 2021 from the Health & Safety Committee (attached as Appendix IV to the official copy of the Minutes) which was **noted**.

20.64 AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE

The Report of the meeting of the Audit & Risk Committee held on the 4 February 2021 (attached as Appendix V to the official copy of the Minutes) was **approved**.

20.65 REDUNDANCY COMMITTEE

The Report of the meeting of the Redundancy Committee held on the 25th January 2021 (attached as Appendix VI to the official copy of the Minutes) was **approved**.

20.66 NOMINATIONS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

- A. The Report of the meeting of the Nominations and Governance Committee held on the 22nd January 2021 (attached as Appendix VII to the official copy of the Minutes) was **approved**.
- B. The Council's attention was drawn to the role definitions annexed to the minutes, and in particular the Committee's agreement to appoint Professor Gareth Roberts to the new role of Deputy Chair / Senior Independent Governor for the remainder of his term on the Council.

20.66 HUMAN RESOURCES REPORT

- A. The Council received a report on Human Resources matters and **noted** the update in relation to the Bangor Benefits scheme and the National Pay Awards.
- B. A list of recent senior appointments was received for information.
- C. The Council **approved** the request to award Emerita status to:
- Professor Nancy Edwards
 - Professor Carol Rumens

and Emeritus status to:

- Professor Huw Pryce
- Professor Raimund Karl
- Professor Steven Price

20.67 SEALING

The Council **ratified** the sealing of documents listed in Agendum 21.