



Bangor University

COUNCIL MINUTES

At a meeting of the Council held in the University on Friday, 23 July 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 Kailesh Karavadra, Sir Paul Lambert, Mrs Alison Lea-Wilson, Dr Ian Rees, Professor Gareth Roberts, Professor Oliver Turnbull, Dr Lynne Williams, Mr Tudur Williams and Mrs Gwenan Hine (Secretary).

Apologies:

Dr Karen Jones, Mr Marc Jones, Ms Julie Perkins and Professor Andrew Edwards

In attendance:

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

In addition Professor Jean White attended as an observer, and Ms Jeannette Strachan, SUMS Consulting attended for item 20.95.

20.91 WELCOME

Mr James Avison, Students' Union President and Mr Mabon Dafydd, UMCB President were welcomed to their first meeting as members of the Council. Professor Jean White was welcomed as an observer, and it was noted that Professor White would be joining the Council as an Independent Member in the autumn.

20.92 CONGRATULATIONS

A. On the award of Personal Chair:

Professor Rebecca Crane, School of Psychology

B. On behalf of the Council the Chair warmly congratulated Professor Crane.

20.93 DEATHS

The Chair referred to the recent deaths of:

Mrs Lorraine Day

Former member of staff in Human Resources

Professor Hinrich Siefken

Former Honorary Professor of German

Emeritus Professor Clare Wenger,

Former member of staff in the Institute of Medical & Social Care Research.

Dr Gareth Pierce

Chair of the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, and Bangor University graduate in Mathematics

Members fell silent in tribute to their memory.

20.94 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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. No declarations of interest were made in relation to the matters on the agenda.

20.95 HEALTH & WELLBEING

- A. The Council received an update on the Mental Health Step Change Audit and Implementation Plan, which had been undertaken on behalf of the University by SUMS Consulting. It was noted that HEFCW had provided additional allocations to Universities to implement health and wellbeing strategies in 2020/21, and in addition to inviting wellbeing and health funded projects the circular had required universities to develop wellbeing and health strategies and to adopt the Universities UK's (UUK) Step Change framework and Suicide-safer Universities. The Step Change report would deliver on a key part of HEFCW's requirements for funding and provided an objective assessment of the University's performance in this area. The assessment would also feed into the future development of the University's wellbeing strategies for students and staff.

It was reported that each section of the Step Change framework was assessed on a scale of 0-4 where 0 indicated 'not started' through to 4 being 'excellent practice'. The University had scored a 2/3 score, which indicated some elements were good practice with other elements having widespread good practice. Ms Strachan reported that this score put the University in the higher middle range, compared to others in the sector.

It was noted that there were a number of recommendations within the report, with a number of quick wins. The real community feel of the University was highlighted with Student Services being held in high regard by both staff and students, and the partnership working with the Students' Union across many projects was praised.

Three principle recommendations within the report were highlighted which were to make senior tutor and personal tutor training mandatory and refreshed annually, that health and wellbeing was evident in all other University strategies and that partnership working with the Health Board should be strengthened. It was confirmed that these recommendations were being taken forward.

Following questioning it was confirmed that SUMS Consulting would be continuing to work with the University in this area, and that work was ongoing in particular to ensure that international students are able to access the resources available to students around health and wellbeing.

- B. The Chair, on behalf of the Council, thanked Ms Strachan, Professor Callow and Mrs Hibbert for their informative presentation and updates, and the positive results from the report were welcomed by the Council. It was noted that the People & Culture Committee would be updated on these matters going forward, on behalf of the Council.

20.96 MINUTES

- A. The Minutes of the meeting held on 30th April 2021 were **confirmed**.
- B. An action log was provided noting progress on all outstanding Council actions. Council noted the progress reports and completed actions.
- C. In relation to Minute 20.77 [USS] the Interim Director of Finance reported that following the submission of the response to the UUK consultation, UUK had issued a further short consultation. The two areas for consultation were that:
- The requirement for pari passu security would be triggered where new secured borrowing was greater than 10% of net assets; and
 - The Moratorium on exits would be immediate with a rolling 20-year moratorium

The matter had been discussed at the Executive and a decision had been made that consistent with the University's previous response, the University would reject the counter proposal from the USS Trustee. It was noted that as the University had previously rejected pari passu security that it followed that it would reject further strengthening of this under the counter proposal.

20.97 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S BUSINESS

Report from the Executive

The Vice-Chancellor presented the report from the Executive Committee and updated members on higher education matters at a Wales and UK level. In particular the following updates were noted:

- A. Welsh Government Legislative Programme

Council members' attention was drawn to the inclusion of the commitment to establish a Medical School in North Wales as part of the recently published Welsh Government legislative programme. It was noted that a further update in relation to this matter was expected in the early autumn. The commitment was welcomed by

Council members as significant not only to the University but to the North Wales region.

B. HEIW

The Council noted that the Executive had recently considered an analysis of the outcome of the Health Professional Education and Training Services tender, along with growth opportunities. The Vice-Chancellor reported that the University was successful in 9 out of the 18 bids, including winning new areas of provision which are aligned with the vision for the future of the University, and advances its scope beyond North Wales including the award of the all-Wales Distance Learning programme for Nursing and a Dispersed Learning programme for Nursing which will be situated in Powys. It was noted that the outcome reflected the growing attention to (and acknowledgement of the benefits of) flexible and remote methods of learning across the health and care domains and aligned with both an expanded offer for students operating from the Wrexham campus and for the Medical School. In addition, it was noted that there were a number of growth opportunities for the University extending into the expansion of non-commissioned provision (e.g. around the prevention agenda). Work was also continuing on preparing for the Phase 2 commissioning round, and mapping the University's research strengths into teaching areas, as the University positioned itself as the University of choice in North Wales to study health, dentistry and medicine.

C. RWIF Funding

The Council were informed that HEFCW had announced in April 2020 the reintroduction of support for innovation and engagement activities in Welsh universities. The Executive had subsequently approved the University's RWIF strategy at its meeting on 23rd June 2020 which included plans to appoint to some key new roles supporting research activity and research governance.

D. International Matters

The Vice-Chancellor noted the continuing uncertain environment in relation to international students travelling to the UK, and the requirements for September in relation to quarantine.

In addition it was noted that the University had recently been successful in its bid to the Turing Scheme which is the UK government's scheme to provide funding for international opportunities in education and training across the world, with £250k awarded to assist students with international experience.

E. NSS Results

Professor Turnbull provided an update for the Council on the recently released 2021 NSS results. It was noted that overall there had been a dip in the satisfaction rate for the University, and as a consequence of this dip the University's ranking had also gone

down. It was reported that this was a common theme for both the UK and the Welsh HEI sectors which suggested that there was a significant impact generally on the NSS results for 2021 arising from the Covid-19 pandemic. Professor Turnbull highlighted a number of positive headlines amongst the results, but a small number of schools had seen their results decline, and it was confirmed that in relation to these Schools discussions were already ongoing with the relevant Heads, who were drawing together action plans to address the themes coming through from the data.

It was noted that the Council would receive a more detailed analysis in the autumn once further work on the detail had been completed.

20.98 STUDENTS UNION UPDATE

- A. The Council noted the update reports presented by the Students' Union and by UMCB under agenda item 5.
- B. In particular Mr Avison and Mr Dafydd highlighted the following points:
- The new Sabbatical Team for 2021/22 were now in post and a handover and induction programme had been completed;
 - Students had taken part in consultations for the Strategy 2030, and also the sub-strategies, which had proven useful. It was noted that the Students' Union was currently developing its own strategy, and was in consultation with staff in relation to its staffing resources following the Management of Change Policy;
 - Work was ongoing on the Undeb Bangor Activities Hub in the Ffriddoedd building which would allow the Students' Union to hold more student activities during the forthcoming academic year;
 - A total of 850 in person sessions, including sporting events, had been held since the end of April, leading to excellent feedback from students;
 - The UMCB annual report highlighted a number of fundraising activities, and awareness raising activities which had proven successful including Shwmae Sut Mae, Caru Amaeth and Taclo'r Tabw; and
 - The University had been successful once again in winning the Eisteddfod Rhyng Golegol.
- C. The Chair, on behalf of the Council, thanked both Mr Avison and Mr Dafydd for their reports.

20.99 ACHIEVING FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

- A. The Chief Operating Officer provided a final update to the Council on the restructuring exercise. It was noted that since the previous report to the Council in February, University staff had continued to meet regularly with the trade unions under the Memorandum of Understanding working towards removing the threat of compulsory redundancy. It had become clear that the financial forecasts for future years presented a much improved financially sustainable position without the need to deliver the final redundancies, and that all other opportunities to resolve these

through voluntary means had been exhausted. In the light of this, and the improving recruitment position for September 2021, the Executive had agreed to remove the threat of compulsory redundancy from the small number of remaining staff. In agreement with the trade unions, further consultation meetings were held with staff who remained unplaced to inform them that they would either stay in their existing role or to identify alternative posts or changed job descriptions. For the majority of staff affected, their existing job description and contractual position would remain unchanged. A joint statement from the university and the trade unions in this regard was communicated to staff on 24 June.

- B. The Chair welcomed the final update on this matter and thanked both members of the Executive and Trade Union representatives for their work over the last few months to bring the University to the position of no compulsory redundancies.

20.100 FINANCIAL FORECASTS

- A. Mr Eastwood advised the Council that the University was required to submit a financial forecast running up to July 2025 to HEFCW by the end of July 2021. The approach adopted by the University in compiling the forecast recognised that detailed work would be undertaken during the planning round, which would be completed later this year. It was noted that the Forecast facilitated the University's understanding of the likely funds available for investment over the coming years, and that this position would support the analysis and prioritisation of investment opportunities. Whilst recognising the risks remaining, the Forecast indicated a shift in approach for the University in that it would be in a position to consider the higher level of investment that would be required to support its strategic objectives. The forecast included investment in the estate, IT and staff costs whilst maintaining cash balances in excess of £20million at every year end. It was noted that this position had benefited from the actions taken in the restructuring exercise and improved income generation. Mr Eastwood reported that further improvement in cash generation remained an objective which would be considered during the planning round. Mr Eastwood informed the Council that the forecast was presented to the Finance and Strategy Committee on 9th July 2021, and that the Committee supported the submission of the Forecast to HEFCW.
- B. Following discussion and further consideration the Council **approved** the forecast for submission to HEFCW by the deadline date of 21st July 2021.

20.101 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- A. The Council noted the paper which outlined the current trends in relation to research funding. In addition Professor Spencer drew members attention to the increase in UK Government funding which was driven by the work of Professor Davey Jones and his team looking at public health monitoring of wastewater during the Covid-19 pandemic. It was noted that the University had c£41m of pending grant applications awaiting a decision which was more than double what would normally be expected, and it was possible that the continuation of the Covid-19 pandemic with additional demands on staff time, the demands of the Research Excellence Framework causing delays in

reviewing grants, and also the ability of funders to get calls and awards out had all contributed to this position. Professor Spencer noted that the University was confident it would recover its grant capture success. Following questioning it was confirmed that engaging with a variety of funding streams, both government and business, was important in this regard going forward.

- B. The Chief Marketing Officer provided the Council with an update on marketing and student recruitment progress. It was noted that Home Undergraduate numbers were looking more buoyant than they had been for some time, and it appeared that the University would go into the Clearing period in a stronger position. However there remained a degree of uncertainty around the position, with the growth in numbers being significantly driven by England domiciled applicants where the University had carried out a marketing drive. However, it was noted that very few of this year's applicants would have had the chance to physically visit the institutions, they have applied to which may result in applicants changing their mind during the Clearing process. In addition, it was noted that the Home postgraduate market, and the international markets continued to be uncertain, although it was noted that traditionally these markets were known to pick up later than the Home Undergraduate market.

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.

20.102 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 matter:

[1] Pen y Ffridd: the Council were advised that a delay was incurred due to an application to the Land Registry to review the boundaries on the title plan. This has now been resolved and a copy of the updated register and title plan provided to the buyer's Solicitors.

- B. The report from the Director of Estates and Campus Services which provided an update on progress with the Estates Strategy and the stakeholder consultation process was noted. In addition an overview of the capital programme and the steps taken to address issues associated with governance and risk management were provided. An update was also provided on more general estates matters such as the carbon management strategy and the appointment of the measured term contractors for both Building Maintenance and Mechanical and Electrical works contracts, which addressed a number of issues identified in recent audits.
- C. A request from the Director of Estates and Campus Services seeking approval from the Council for the disposal of assets and to market a further asset in line with the valuation and advice from the Valuation Office Agency was considered. The Council noted:

- [1] that the University is required to comply with the Charities Act 2011 in respect of the disposal of land;
- [2] that a Surveyor's report had been obtained, in accordance with Section 119(1)(a) of the Charities Act 2011 and the Charities (Qualified Surveyor's Report) Regulations 1992;

D. Members of Council **confirmed** that for Ynys Faelog:

- [1] that they were reasonably satisfied that the valuer who prepared the report, is a member of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors has the relevant ability and experience to undertake the valuation of the property and area in question; and
- [2] that, in accordance with Section 118 of the Charities Act 2011 there are no connected persons involved in the sale; and
- [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.

E. The Council **agreed**:

- [1] that Ynys Faelog should be disposed of subject to finalisation of the contract; and
- [2] that Trewylan, Menai Bridge should be disposed of and the University should engage with selling agents and Solicitors;
- [3] that Glyndwr, Menai Bridge should be disposed of and the University should engage with selling agents and Solicitors; and
- [4] that Nantporth Boathouse should be disposed of and the University should engage with selling agents and Solicitors.

20.103 SCHOOL NAMES 2021/22

- A. Professor Turnbull noted that following the recent restructuring, the final names for Colleges and Schools were required to be presented to the Council for approval in line with University statutes XIV and XVI. The Council noted that consultation had taken place within Academic Schools and the proposed names had been presented to the Executive by the College Deans following this consultation. At its meeting on 15th June the Executive had agreed to recommend to the Council that the School names were approved.
- B. Following discussion the Council **approved** the final names for Colleges and Schools.

20.104 RESEARCH CONCORDAT: ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

- A. The Council received the Research Concordat Annual Progress Report, and Professor Spencer noted that in January 2020, the University had become one of the first universities in the UK to become a signatory to the new Researcher Development Concordat. It was noted that the Concordat was an agreement between stakeholders to improve employment and support for researchers and researcher careers in higher education in the UK, setting out three principles of environment and culture, employment, and professional and career development. The principles were underpinned by obligations for the four key stakeholder groups (institutions, funders, researchers and managers of researchers) to realise the aims of the Concordat.

The Council were informed that it was a signatory responsibility of the new Concordat that an annual progress report was presented to the University's governing body.

- B. The Council **noted** the Research Concordat Annual Progress Report.

20.105 REPORT FROM THE SENATE

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

20.106 FINANCE & STRATEGY COMMITTEE

- A. The Report of the meetings of the Finance and Strategy Committee held on the 28 May and 9 July 2021 (attached as Appendix III to the official copy of the Minutes) were **approved**.

- B. In particular the Council's attention was drawn to the following matters:

[1] Minute 2021-66 b (MSparc) Mr Eastwood reported that a letter had been received from the European Court of Auditors (ECA) regarding state aid funding received for MSParc, the contents of which were currently being considered by the University in discussion with WEFO. Mr Eastwood confirmed that the Council would be kept informed, through the Finance & Strategy Committee, in relation to any implications arising out of the ECA's letter.

[2] Minute 2021-67[c] Capital Projects: Project Management Framework: The Committee had agreed that members of Council would discuss the University's capital project management framework with the University Executive and relevant officers.

The Chair confirmed that a meeting had been held earlier that morning to discuss the matter and the proposal from the Executive to set up a Capital Programmes Scrutiny Group which would sit above the Estates Strategy Group and would include suitably experienced members of Council had been **agreed**.

Dr Griff Jones requested further information relating to the Pontio project which had been discussed at the Council Away Day in October 2020 and referenced in the minutes of the Finance & Strategy Committee. In particular further information was requested on any closure report, and the extent of the work still to be undertaken on the building. The Chair of the Finance & Strategy Committee noted that the report which came to the Finance & Strategy Committee looked at the much wider issue of the governance of capital programmes rather than specifically at Pontio.

Following discussion, the Chair requested that the Chief Operating Officer considered the most appropriate way to address Dr Jones' questions, and it was confirmed that the Finance & Strategy Committee would be updated as to the final outcome at a future date.

20.107 HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

The Report of the meeting of the Health & Safety Committee held on 2 June 2021 (attached as Appendix IV to the official copy of the Minutes) was **approved**. The In-Year Report, August 2020 – April 2021 was **noted**. The Chair of the Committee, Professor Gareth Roberts, thanked all members of staff who had worked tirelessly over the year on arrangements relating to the Covid-19 pandemic.

20.108 AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE

- A. The Report of the meeting of the Audit & Risk Committee held on the 10 June 2021 (attached as Appendix V to the official copy of the Minutes) was **approved**. Members' attention was drawn in particular to the audit programme for the next academic year.
- B. In particular the Council's attention was drawn to the following matters:
 - [1] Minute 617B Internal Audit Plan for 2021/22: The Council's attention was drawn to the agreed audit programme for the next academic year.
 - [2] Minute 621 Risk Management and Risk Appetite: The Council **approved** the revised risk appetite statement, presented as an appendix to the minutes.
- C. The Council received a report on the Corporate Risks Classified Residually as Extreme and High, and noted that currently 12 of the 23 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 series of workshops would be arranged for Council members during 2021/22, with one of the workshops being on risk.

20.109 WELSH LANGUAGE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

The Report of the meeting of the Welsh Language Affairs Committee held on the 14 June 2021 (attached as Appendix VI to the official copy of the Minutes) was **approved**.

20.110 NOMINATIONS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

- A. The Report of the meeting of the Nominations and Governance Committee held on the 14 June 2021 (attached as Appendix VII to the official copy of the Minutes) was **approved**, and the appointments to Committees and External Bodies **noted**.
- B. The Council considered and **ratified** the new and amended Ordinances presented to the Committee.

20.111 JOINT ENGAGEMENT FORUM

The Report of the first meeting of the Joint Engagement Forum held on 5 July 2021 (attached as Appendix VIII to the official copy of the Minutes) was **approved**. The Chair welcomed the establishment of the Forum and noted that the Forum would develop and mature into the new academic year.

20.112 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, the future of Collective Pay Bargaining and the Athena Swan Update.
- B. A list of recent senior appointments was received for information.
- C. The Council **approved** the request to award Emeritus status to:
 - Professor Chris Freeman

20.113 CHARITY COMMISSION SUBMISSION

The Council **noted** the annual return for 2019/20 submitted to the Charity Commission in May 2021, within the deadline set.

20.114 SEALING

The Council **ratified** the sealing of documents listed in Agendum 15.

20.115 STRATEGY 2030

- A. The Vice-Chancellor presented the final version of the Strategy 2030 document. The importance of the document in the current context within higher education was emphasised especially as universities come out of the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Vice-Chancellor noted that it was an ambitious yet achievable values-led strategy which outlined the University's direction of travel for the next decade, including growing interdisciplinary research activity, increasing student numbers, and transforming the way students learn, underpinned by financial sustainability.

- B. The Chair, on behalf of the Council, extended her thanks to the Vice-Chancellor and the Executive team for their leadership and energy over the past year, and to the whole staff and student community for their dedication during a year of challenges that could not have been anticipated.