

Bangor University

# COUNCIL MINUTES

At a meeting of the Council held in the University on Friday, 8 July 2022.

**Present**:

Mrs Marian Wyn Jones (Chair), Professor Iwan Davies, Dr Myfanwy Davies, Mr Atul Devani, Mr Eric Hepburn, Mr Celt John, Dr Llion Jones, Mr Marc Jones, Sir Paul Lambert, Mrs Alison Lea-Wilson, Ms Nyah Lowe, Ms Julie Perkins, Dr Ian Rees, Professor Gareth Roberts, Professor Oliver Turnbull, Professor Jean White, Mr Paul Wood, and Mrs Gwenan Hine (Secretary).

**Apologies:** Mr Kailesh Karavadra and 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.

**Observing:**

Professor Rhiannon Tudor Edwards.

In addition, Mr John Jackson, Senior Planning Officer (Risk Management & Business Planning) and Ms Sarah Catterall from RSM attended for item 21.85 and Mr Sam Jackson-Royle, Director of International Operations and Admissions attended for item 21.92.

*The meeting was held in PL2, Pontio, Bangor University and through Zoom.*

**21.84 WELCOME**

The Chair welcomed Professor Rhiannon Tudor Edwards who was observing the meeting prior to taking up her membership on Council in August 2022, replacing Dr Lynne Williams as a member of Senate.

**21.85 CORPORATE RISKS: DEEP DIVE**

A. Mr Eric Hepburn, Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee introduced the corporate risk deep dive session noting that the risk management processes at the University were continually evolving and maturing, and the Audit & Risk Committee ensured that at each meeting it reviewed the highest-level corporate risks as well as any new risks or significant changes to the risk profile.

Ms Catterall subsequently provided the Council with a general overview of risk management processes and advised the Council on the reasons for managing risk and where the responsibilities lay in relation to risk management at each level of the University. In particular the role of the Council and the Audit & Risk Committee in providing assurances to members that risk management processes were working well were highlighted.

Following Ms Catterall’s presentation Mr Jackson provided the Council with an update on the specific procedures in place at the University. It was noted that in addition to regularly reviewing the corporate risk register the Audit & Risk committee mapped risks against the University’s risk appetite annually and the Chair and Secretary of the Committee held discussions with the Executive prior to agreeing the internal audit plan for the forthcoming academic year. Members were provided with an update on each of the highest-level corporate risks, with Mr Jackson providing information on the rationale for each score, highlighting any recent changes.

B. Following the presentations, a discussion ensued. In response to a question from Professor Jean White, Mr Jackson confirmed that the University had included Covid-19 as a cross cutting theme across all risks early in the pandemic and also confirmed that consideration would be given to amending this to a more general pandemic theme in future. In addition, Mr Jackson confirmed that work was continuing on mapping risk appetite, with recent changes being made to include the risk averse to risk hungry approach.

Sir Paul Lambert queried whether the University was able to confirm whether risk management was undertaken as an inherent part of day-to-day processes, or whether it was viewed as a separate process. Mr Jackson confirmed that the University was still in a transition stage with most areas of the University now inherently undertaking risk management as part of everyday processes, however it was also acknowledged that further work needed to be undertaken to educate areas of the University on how their locally identified risks fed into the overarching strategic risks. Management Committees at School and Professional Service level, along with Strategy and Task Groups were owning their risks and feeding into the corporate level register.

Ms Perkins welcomed the fact that the Council regularly discussed and considered themes relating to the highest-level risks, however noted that currently those around IT were not routinely discussed and suggested that the Council may needed to be sighted in more detail on these risks. Mr Wood responded by acknowledging that self-auditing was regularly undertaken within Digital Services, and in particular detailed work had recently been undertaken on the cyber security risks with the University with training from JISC being undertaken by senior staff and staff within Digital Services.

C. On behalf of the Council the Chair thanked Mr Hepburn, Mr Jackson and Ms Catterall for their informative presentation and noted the importance of ensuring that members were suitably informed on these crucial processes.

**21.86 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHANCELLOR**

A. The Chair reminded members that Professor Iwan Davies had indicated to the Council at the February meeting that it was his intention to step down as Vice-Chancellor at the end of August 2022. Following this announcement an Appointment Panel was convened to take forward the process of appointing a new Vice-Chancellor, and it was noted that the Panel consisted of the Chair of Council, the Chair of Finance & Strategy Committee, the Chair of Audit & Risk Committee, two members of the Senate, the President of the Students’ Union, and an Independent Advisor to the Panel (Professor Julia Buckingham). The Director of Human Resources and the Secretary to Council were in attendance.

The Director of Human Resources outlined to members of Council the steps undertaken by the Panel to take forward the appointment process, as set out in Ordinance 29. Recruitment consultants, Perrett Laver, were engaged early in the process, and following a consultation exercise with the University community, and an engagement exercise with potential candidates a long-listing, and short-listing process was undertaken, followed by interviews in June 2022.

In response to a question from Mr Celt John the Chair confirmed that Mr Avison and Mr Dafydd had both been included as part of the appointment process, Mr Avison on the Panel and Mr Dafydd as a member of one of the stakeholder groups. It was acknowledged that as the appointment had occurred at the end of the term of office of the 2021/22 President and UMCB President that the incoming Sabbatical Team had not had the opportunity to be part of the process.

B. Following consideration the Council **approved** the recommendation of the Appointment Panel, and Professor Edmund Burke FREng was duly appointed as Vice-Chancellor.

C. It was noted that Professor Burke intended to move to the Bangor area as soon as possible, and that a Welsh language tutor had already been identified in order that Professor Burke could start learning Welsh.

Dr Llion Jones noted the importance of ensuring that the University had processes in place to support succession planning and the leadership aspirations of senior staff within the University. The Chair confirmed that a leadership programme was under development, led by the Director of Human Resources.

**21.87 CONGRATULATIONS**

A. On the award of an Honorary Professorship:

* **Dr Marcus Dahlfors,** Reactor Analysis and Core Supervisor Lead, TVO, Helsinki, Finland as Honorary Professor in the Nuclear Futures Institute**.**
* **Professor John Idris Jones,** re-appointed as Honorary Professor in the Nuclear Futures Institute and the School of Computer Science and Electronic Engineering.

B. On behalf of the Council the Chair warmly congratulated those listed.

**21.88 DEATHS**

A. The Chair referred to the recent death of:

* **Dr Stephen Marriott**, a former Senior Lecturer in the School of Computer Science and Electronic Engineering

B. Members fell silent in tribute to their memory.

**21.89 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 made in relation to the matters on the agenda.

**21.90 MINUTES**

1. The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 May 2022 were **confirmed.**
2. An action log was provided noting progress on all outstanding Council actions. Council noted the progress reports and completed actions.

**21.91 CHAIR’S UPDATE**

Council **noted** the Report from the Chair which included an update on a meeting of the Looking Forward Group, a meeting of the PCET Change Board, the CUC Executive Committee, and the Chairs of Universities Wales Committee meeting.

**21.92 INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY**

A. Professor Turnbull and Mr Jackson-Royle provided the Council with an update on the International Strategy. It was noted that through the implementation of the Strategy the University had set out its vision to be globally ambitious, to play a key role in international education and research partnerships, to enable broader international influence and connectivity for North Wales, and to play an active role in a globally responsible Wales.

Mr Jackson-Royle advised members that the University would establish and develop Bangor Global Partnerships resulting in an increase in the scale and size of its transnational education operations globally resulting in an increase in income and global reach of the University’s operations. The University was looking to grow international student recruitment resulting in an increase in the international student population both on and off campus providing a globally influenced experience for students and thus helping deliver a competitive recruitment offer. In addition, the University was looking to increase the proportion of students engaging in mobility programmes through a reduction in barriers to entry and participation. Underpinning the strategy was the University’s drive to embed internationalisation across the institution developing social impact and producing global graduates, leading to the promotion of greater student satisfaction whilst creating an environment that is attractive to both staff and students of the highest calibre.

B. Sir Paul Lambert noted the importance of ensuring that appropriate due diligence processes were in place when considering which countries to expand into and Professor Turnbull confirmed that processes had been developed to ensure that the University made strategic, market driven decisions in relation to the areas of the World under consideration.

Professor Jean White requested further information on the risk profile for the current TNE arrangements in place and Mr Jackson-Royle confirmed that changes had been made to arrangements during the academic year which had resulted in a recruitment and financial risk assessment being undertaken each year on TNE partnerships. The assessment included expectations for the partnerships in terms of both income and student numbers both at the start and the end of each financial year. Following a further question from Professor White, Professor Andrew Edwards confirmed that there were no current concerns regarding the TNE partnerships in place, and that in relation to Bangor College China significant improvements had been made following the 2020 quality assurance audit and the subsequent appointment of an Executive Dean Bangor College China and Director of International Relations. In addition, Management Boards for each partnership were in place and met regularly, chaired by Professor Edwards.

Following a question from Dr Ian Rees, Mr Jackson-Royle confirmed that as a result of the changes in the University’s engagement internationally there were opportunities not only to recruit more students but also to increase the markets that the University operated in. In addition, the data was showing that numbers of international students were on the increase again, following the pandemic. In terms of profitability, and following questions from Professor Tim Wheeler, it was confirmed that Mr Jackson-Royle was working to increase volume and pricing without increasing costs by working on a more efficient basis, and that the current largest markets for the University were South Asia and the Middle East, and it was noted that the University used agents approximately 60% of the time. Mrs Lea-Wilson enquired whether the University had links with Visit Wales, and it was confirmed that through Global Wales, who are a close partner, the University can align its target markets with their target markets.

Ms Nyah Lowe noted that with the current cost of living crisis it was important to ensure that international students were also supported by the University should they get into financial hardship whilst at the University. Professor Turnbull reported that every student, be they international or UK based had access to the University’s Hardship Fund.

C. The Chair thanked Professor Turnbull and Mr Jackson-Royle for an excellent presentation and complemented the University on its vision in relation to the International Strategy.

**21.93 VICE-CHANCELLOR’S UPDATE**

**A.**  **Reports from the Executive and the Senate**

The Vice-Chancellor presented the reports from the Executive Committee and the Senate, which were **noted.**

**B. Freedom of Speech Bill**

The Vice-Chancellor provided an update on the Freedom of Speech Bill which was currently making its way through the UK parliament and noted that, whilst education was a devolved matter in Wales, ensuring that higher education institutions maintained their values and principles remained important.

**C. The Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Bill**

It was noted that the Bill had recently had its fourth reading and was now in the four-week hiatus prior to moving to Royal Assent. The Vice-Chancellor noted that the Bill would bring about a major change in post-16 education in Wales, which included further and higher education, apprenticeships and sixth forms. The establishment of the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research, as the independent regulatory body responsible for the funding, oversight and regulation of tertiary education and research in Wales would also replace the current Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW).

**C. Closing Presentation**

The Vice-Chancellor offered a number of reflections in terms of responding to the future. It was noted that the University had facilities and talent which were of a special quality both in terms of location, in terms of research and in terms of teaching and learning. The changes made during the pandemic and as the University emerged from the pandemic were outstanding, with the student experience at Bangor being sector leading ingrained in a safe community environment. The Vice-Chancellor wished the University well for the future.

**21.94 STUDENTS UNION UPDATE**

A. Ms Lowe and Mr John presented the reports of the work undertaken by Undeb Bangor and UMCB since the last Council meeting. The reports were **noted**.

B. In addition, Ms Lowe highlighted the following items which would be a focus during the year:

* The cost-of-living crisis, noting that students would be heavily impacted by the rising cost of energy, food, and transport;
* Transitioning into life after Covid, and focusing on student mental health and wellbeing, providing 24-hour study spaces, and enhancing the learning environment particularly for international and disabled students;
* Sustainability, both economic and environmental;
* Recognising students who take part in extracurricular activities;

Mr John highlighted the following key issues for UMCB during the forthcoming academic year:

* The refurbishment of the Welsh residential hall, Neuadd JMJ;
* Leading the celebrations for St David’s Day both at the University and in the local community and engaging in conversations with the University around marking St David’s Day in the same way as Cyngor Gwynedd;
* Enhancing the *Ffrind Cymraeg* project which allows Welsh learners to have conversations with Welsh speaking students to practice their Welsh;

C. The Chair, on behalf of the Council, thanked both Ms Lowe and Mr John for their informative updates and reports.

**21.95 FINANCIAL AND RECRUITMENT REPORTS**

**A. Finance & Strategy Committee**

The Reports of the meetings of the Finance & Strategy Committee held on the 13 May and 24 June 2022 (attached as Appendix I to the official copy of the Minutes) were **noted**. Thanks was extended to the Interim Director of Finance and the Director of Strategy, Planning and Research for their diligent work across this area.

**B. Four Year Forecast**

Sir Paul Lambert advised the Council that the Finance & Strategy Committee was recommending that the Four-Year Forecast to July 2026 was approved for submission to HEFCW.

**C. UPDATE ON STUDENT RECRUITMENT**

The Council **noted** the update on Student Recruitment.

**21.96 ESTATES UPDATE**

A. Mr Wiegand provided the Council with an update on the Capital Programme 2022-26 four-year planning process, and the four priority programme areas.

B. The Chair thanked Mr Wiegand for his clear and helpful update.

**21.97 JOINT ENGAGEMENT FORUM**

The Report of the meeting of the Joint Engagement Forum held on 22 June 2022 (attached as Appendix II to the official copy of the Minutes) was **noted.**

**21.98 PEOPLE AND CULTURE COMMITTEE**

A. The Report of the meeting of the People & Culture Committee held on 20 May 2022 (attached as Appendix III to the official copy of the Minutes) was **noted.**

B. Dr Rees drew the Council’s attention to the update provided by Professor Edwards and Mrs Hibbert on the Staff Survey, noting that the process undertaken had been detailed and sophisticated and had highlighted some key areas of improvement and other areas for further consideration which were currently being taken forward. It was noted that a further update would be brought to the People & Culture Committee in the autumn.

**21.99 NOMINATIONS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

A. The Report of the meeting of the Nominations & Governance Committee held on 20 May 2022 (attached as Appendix IV to the official copy of the Minutes) was **noted.**

B. The Committee’s attention was drawn to the decision to extend Professor Gareth Roberts’ term on Council for a few months to facilitate succession planning arrangements, and thanks was extended to Professor Roberts for his willingness to continue as a member during this time.

**21.100 REMUNERATION COMMITTEE**

The Report of the meeting of the Remuneration Committee held on 24 May 2022 (attached as Appendix V to the official copy of the Minutes) was **noted.**

**21.101 HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE**

A. The Report of the meeting of the Health and Safety Committee held on 13 May 2022 (attached as Appendix VI to the official copy of the Minutes) was **noted.**

B. The Council were advised that the Committee were recommending the approval of the Health and Safety Policy Statement contained in the papers and following discussion the Statement was **approved**. In addition, the Health and Safety Annual Report was **noted.**

**21.102 WELSH LANGUAGE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

The Report of the meeting of the Welsh Language Affairs Committee held on 17 June 2022 (attached as Appendix VII to the official copy of the Minutes) was **noted.**

**21.103 AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE**

A. The Report of the meeting of the Audit & Risk Committee held on the 10 June 2022 (attached as Appendix VIII to the official copy of the Minutes) was **noted**.

B. Mr Hepburn informed the Council that following the procurement process over recent months the Audit & Risk Committee had received a recommendation for a preferred organisation for the Internal Audit contract. The Committee were recommending to the Council the appointment of TIAA as Internal Auditors and following discussion the Council **approved** the appointment.

**21.104 WIDENING ACCESS STRATEGY**

The Council **noted** the Widening Access Strategy which had recently been approved by the Executive. It was reported that the Strategy was designed to provide a comprehensive approach to widening access beginning with early years aspiration raising, through to successful and sustainable long-term careers beyond higher education. Based on a community of practice, the strategy covered aspiration raising and recruitment, successful transition, and career progression. It was noted that it was a HEFCW requirement that the University had a Widening Access Strategy in place and the Strategy had been shared with them.

**21.105 CHARITY COMMISSION RETURN 2021**

The Council **noted** the most recent Annual Return to the Charity Commission which was submitted on time.

**21.106 VALEDICTION**

The Chair of Council **noted** that this would have been Dr Lynne Williams’ last Council meeting as she was retiring from the University. The Chair, on behalf of the Council, thanked Lynne warmly for her dedication and support to the University and to the Council.

As the Vice-Chancellor’s final meeting of the Council ended the Chair, on behalf of the Council, expressed her thanks and great appreciation to Professor Iwan Davies for his visionary and inspired leadership over the past three years, a period of time which was unprecedented in its challenges around Covid-19, but a period which had seen the University achieve fantastic performance in REF2021 and in the NSS. Professor Davies’ success in delivering on the establishment of the North Wales Medical School was noted, as well as his tireless work in raising the University’s profile with politicians at UK and Wales level. The Council were indebted to Professor Davies for all he had achieved and hoped that he would remain a friend of, and an ambassador for the University, and the Chair wished Professor Davies well for the future.