



COUNCIL MINUTES

At a meeting of the Council
held in the University on 15 February 2024

Present:

Mrs Marian Wyn Jones (Chair), Professor Edmund Burke, Dr Ama Eyo, Mr Eric Hepburn CBE, Mr Celt John, Sir Paul Lambert, Ms Nyah Lowe, Dr Aled Ll. Jones, Professor Oliver Turnbull, Ms Julie Perkins, Mrs Emily Rees, Dr Ian Rees, Mr Rheon Tomos, Professor David Viner, Professor Tim Wheeler DL, Professor Jean White CBE, Mr Paul Wood, Ms Elin Wyn and Mrs Gwenan Hine (University Secretary).

Apologies: Mr Atul Devani, Professor Andrew Edwards, Professor Rhiannon T. Edwards, Professor Enlli Thomas and Professor Paul Spencer.

In attendance:

Mr Michael Flanagan (Chief Transformation Officer) and Mr Martyn Riddleston (Chief Financial Officer).

In addition, Dr Christian Dunn, Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Sustainability), and Mr Lars Wiegand, Director of Estates & Campus Services were in attendance for item 23.41.

The meeting was held in Cledwyn Conference Room 3, Bangor University and through Zoom.

23.39 WELCOME

The Chair of Council welcomed everyone to the February meeting of the Council.

It was noted that this would be Mr Paul Wood's last meeting, as he was retiring at Easter. The Chair thanked Mr Wood for his commitment to the Council over the last few years, and, on behalf of members wished him well in his retirement.

23.40 DEATHS

A. The Chair referred to the recent deaths of:

- Mr Trevor Williams, Member of Domestic Staff
- Mr Muhsen A M J A Alajmi, Student in the School of Computer Sciences and Engineering
- Mr Alwyn Owens, Former Senior Lecturer in Electronics, and former Head of School of Computer Science and Engineering
- Professor Bruce Wood, Emeritus Professor in the Department of Music, Drama and Performance
- Mrs Leah Owen, Alumni and 2023 Honorary Fellow
- Mr Rory Cramb, Former Student, MSc Environmental Forestry 2021/22

- Mr Matthew McPartland, BSc Zoology with Primatology Student, and Student Administration Staff Member
- Ms Peggy Williams, Former Lecturer in the School of Healthcare Sciences (1995 to 2000)
- Mr Emyr G. Williams, Pontio Arts Cinema Coordinator
- Professor Phillip Williams, Emeritus Professor, School of Psychology and Sport Science
- Reverend Professor Gareth Lloyd Jones, Professor and Head of School in the School of Theology and Religious Studies (1998 – 2003) and Emeritus Professor

Members fell silent in tribute to their memory.

23.41 CARBON REDUCTION APPROACH

- A. Professor Turnbull advised the Council that sustainability is at the heart of everything the University does, with a sustainability strategy that is wider than environmental and natural resources. It was noted that the University is currently ranked as the 18th most sustainable university in the UK, according to the People & Planet League Table.

It was reported that the Welsh Government has set out its legal commitment to achieve net zero emissions no later than 2050, and the University had also agreed 2050 as a target with the Council. However, significantly reducing the University's carbon emissions, and ultimately reaching net zero, will present challenges, with a number of issues being beyond the University's control, a situation which is common sector wide.

The University has identified three Key Action Pathways for focussed activity, and the Council were updated of the work taking place within each area:

- Built Environment
- University Travel
- Supply Chain

Dr Dunn also advised the Council that, as part of its Sustainability Strategy, and in partnership with the Students' Union, the University has set itself a target of significantly reducing its carbon emissions by the year 2025 through the *25 by 25* campaign. In addition, it was working on setting aside 30% of the campus to help wildlife, in accordance with the Wildlife Trust's *30 by 30* campaign.

Ms Wyn asked what the University's plans were in terms of electric car charging points, and whether there were any plans to provide charging points for staff. Mr Wiegand confirmed that the University had recently secured a grant to instal 40 additional charging points across the estate, and in terms of its fleet 80% of the vehicles are now electric. The Chief Financial Officer also noted that work was ongoing to provide a salary sacrifice scheme for staff to buy electric cars.

Professor Viner asked the following questions:

- Mr Wiegand confirmed that emissions from the University farm are embedded in the statistics presented.
- It was confirmed that the University purchases its energy through the Tec energy consortium, where the option to purchase green energy is possible. However, currently there does not seem to be enough interest from the sector to make it a viable option.
- The University hasn't yet compared the University's per capita emissions, but Mr Wiegand confirmed that it is something which the University will look at.

Mrs Rees welcomed the news that the University was bringing in a salary sacrifice scheme to purchase electric cars and asked that the University considers activities which may not have a financial payback but may have a reputational and /or an environmental payback.

Dr Eyo raised the issue of students with families living away from Bangor, and how the University is addressing this.

Ms Lowe echoed the points made, and welcomed the progress already made by the sustainability team particularly with regard to responding to student feedback. Ms Lowe also advised the Council that the Students' Union have signed up to the Green Impact Award.

In response to a question from Mr Tomos, the Chief Financial Officer confirmed that the University had run a local suppliers open day. In addition, it was reported that the Welsh Chief Financial Officers' network was currently working with HEFCW to provide funding for decarbonisation initiatives, and it is hoped that this will be available later in the year.

To close the session, the Vice-Chancellor confirmed that sustainability was at the heart of the University's 2030 strategy. The University is currently 64th in the World Sustainability Rankings, in addition to its first class position in the People & Planet rankings.

The Chair of Council thanked everyone who had contributed to the session, and welcomed the update provided, noting that it was heartening to hear the progress made.

23.42 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. No declarations of interest were made relating to the matters on the agenda.

23.43 MINUTES

- A. The Minutes of the meeting held on 27 and 28 November 2023 were **confirmed**.
- B. An action log was provided noting progress on all outstanding Council actions. The Council noted the progress reports and completed actions.

Transition to CTER (Minute 23.19)

The Chair drew attention to the statement from the Welsh Government that the transition from HEFCW to CTER would now take place on 1 August 2024.

Dr Ian Rees joins the meeting.

[Reserved Business (minute 23-27)]

Vice-Chancellor's Objectives (minute 23.28B)

The Chair congratulated the Vice-Chancellor on passing his Level 1 Welsh examination with full marks.

Memorandum of Understanding with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (minute 23.07)

The Chair reported that alongside the Vice-Chancellor she had met with the Chief Executive, and the Chair of Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board. In addition, work was progressing on the Memorandum of Understanding between both parties, which would incorporate opportunities to provide work experience outside the fields of health and medicine.

Tribal Benchmarking Report (minute 23.20)

Mr Tomos requested further information on how the data generated by the Tribal Benchmarking Report, which was presented at the last meeting, was translated into prioritisation of areas for investment. It was **agreed** that this would be provided for the next meeting of the Council.

[Reserved Business]

- C. The latest update of the Council Workplan was noted.

23.44 CHAIRS UPDATE

- A. The Chair provided an update on her activities since the last meeting of the Council.

Student Fees

In conjunction with Vice-Chancellors and Universities Wales, the Chairs of University Councils in Wales had been putting pressure on Welsh Government to raise the level of fees in Wales. A recent statement by the Minister for Education and the Welsh Language had confirmed that fees in Wales would rise to £9,250 which was good news, and long-awaited.

Athena Swan Silver Award

The Chair congratulated the University, and in particular Professor Morag McDonald and her team, on achieving the Athena Swan Silver Award. The Award was an acknowledgement of the hard work undertaken in the University across all areas of equality, diversity and inclusion. The University is only the second in Wales, and one of only 40 in the United Kingdom to hold the Award.

The Vice-Chancellor noted that the Award was a great achievement, which spoke to the University's principles, values and commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.

Alumni Success

The Council were informed of the recent news that an alumnus of the University, Carmen Smith, had been confirmed as the House of Lords' youngest peer. Ms Smith is Plaid Cymru's nominated member, on the retirement of Lord Wigley from the House of Lords.

140 Celebrations

The most up to date timetable for the events planned for the University's 140 anniversary was included for Council members' information. In particular, the Gala Dinner in October, and the Sir Bryn Terfel concert in November, were highlighted.

Political Parties' Manifestos on Education

Following a question from Sir Paul Lambert, the Chair confirmed that the potential education manifestos for parties across the political spectrum, was a topic of conversation at a recent meeting of the Executive Chairs of Universities UK. It was clear that both Chairs and Vice-Chancellors should take every opportunity to discuss possible policies with local Members of Parliament and Senedd Members.

23.45 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S UPDATE

- A. The Vice-Chancellor provided the Council with updates in several key areas.

23.46 RESERVED BUSINESS

23.47 EDUCATION AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE MATTERS

A. Update on 2022/23 Degree Classifications

Professor Callow advised the Council that normally in the February meeting members would be presented with the degree classification information. However, the HESA data, on which the report is based, is not yet available. It was hoped that the data would be available in April, and a report can be brought to the May meeting. The Council were reminded that they had received an update on degree outcomes at the November meeting, and Professor Callow was pleased to report that the interventions outlined in the action plan have been implemented.

B. Student Retention

Professor Callow presented the Student Retention Report for 2022/23. It was noted that the drivers of student retention and associated progression from each year of study are multi-faceted and can reflect unique circumstances. However, as a generalised model, student retention can be seen to involve three drivers, namely student experience, student and staff academic performance and student health and well-being. However, it is acknowledged that these are not totally independent of each other.

It was reported that the 2022/23 Retention Report highlights that the University has significantly improved its Home UG non-retention performance by 4%, with the figure dropping from 17% to 13%, exceeding the University's Institutional KPI (1.5% improvement). It was noted that the 4% improvement has resulted in 77 additional students being retained in comparison to last year. However, international UG non-retention has increased further by 1% to 18%, equating to a loss of 3 students in comparison to last year. Regarding PGT there has been a decrease in non-retention for both home (10%) and international PGT (3%). These improvements have resulted in 48 (home) and 44 (international) additional students being retained in comparison to last year.

In response to a question from Professor White, Professor Callow noted that she was in possession of data which mapped students who were first in family, and those who did not achieve the DDD entry grades and came through clearing. There did not appear to be any correlation between these two factors.

The Council **noted** the update on retention.

Professor Callow leaves the meeting.

23.48 STUDENTS' UNION STRATEGIC REPORT

- A. Ms Lowe and Mr John provided a report on activities since the last meeting of Council. The following items were highlighted in particular:

- A space has been identified in the Students' Union for a Queer Space and the space would be launching soon.
- A repair café, and clothes swap event had been extremely well attended, and the intention was to continue to run these events.
- The Sabbatical Officers elections would run over the forthcoming weeks, and it was hoped there would be a high level of interest from students.
- The Students' Union have continued to run the new Tell us Tuesday campaign. To date 5 events have been run, and the Students' Union have gathered close to 1000 student responses across those events.
- A Christmas Day celebration event was held, aimed at providing a space for students, specifically international students who would be staying in Bangor for the holidays. 90 students attended on the day, some bringing their families to the event.
- Following feedback from the Students Union, Student Services have worked in partnership to produce a business card style leaflet that is aimed at providing students with information on how to contact all the key support services across the University.
- The year long sexual health campaign continues, aimed at raising awareness of sexual health services in the Bangor area and removing the stigma associated with, and seeking support relating to sexual health matters.

Professor White asked whether events were also being planned around other cultural festivals, and Ms Lowe confirmed that events will be run at Easter and Eid Mubarak.

[Reserved Business]

The Chair, on behalf of the Council, thanked both Ms Lowe and Mr John for their informative updates and reports and welcomed the feedback on the continued positive working relationship with the University.

23.49 RESERVED BUSINESS

23.50 WELSH LANGUAGE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

- A. The Report of the meeting of the Welsh Language Affairs Committee held on 8 December 2023 (attached as Appendix IV to the official copy of the Minutes) was **noted**.

It was **agreed** that members of Council should receive the report submitted to the Welsh Language Affairs Committee from the Director of Canolfan Bedwyr, on Welsh-medium provision at Bangor University.

- B. In response to a question from Sir Paul Lambert, it was noted that the support of the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol in ensuring that students were able to study at least 40 credits through the medium of Welsh was essential. In addition, studying through the medium of Welsh was even more important for students following certain

programmes e.g., in health or education. Ms Wyn echoed this view, and noted that in other disciplines as well, such as in business, there was a positive benefit for students studying through the medium of Welsh.

23.51 RESERVED BUSINESS

23.52 JOINT ENGAGEMENT FORUM

The Report of the meeting of the Joint Engagement Forum held on 29 January 2024 (attached as Appendix VI to the official copy of the Minutes) was **noted**.

23.53 PEOPLE & CULTURE COMMITTEE

- A. The Report of the meeting of the People & Culture Committee held on 8 February 2024 (attached as Appendix VII to the official copy of the Minutes), was **noted**.
- B. At the recommendation of the Committee, the Council
 - **Approved** the Annual Research Concordat, which was appended to the minutes (minute 72).
 - **Agreed** that the staff whose fixed-term contracts were due to expire between 1 April – 30 June 2024 be dismissed by reason of redundancy should no suitable alternative employment opportunities be identified (minute 78).

23.54 SEALING

The Council **ratified** the sealing of documents listed in Agendum 12.

23.55 ORGANOGRAM

The Council **noted** the Organogram provided outlining the structure of the Executive Board, and their immediate reports.

23.56 CLOSING REMARKS

The Chair thanked members for an informative and productive meeting, with several key matters taken forward. Thanks was extended to the translation team for their assistance.