PRIFYSGOL BANGOR UNIVERSITY

COUNCIL MINUTES

At a meeting of the Council
held in the University on 24 July 2024

Present:
Mrs Marian Wyn Jones (Chair), Ms Nida Ambreen, Professor Edmund Burke, Professor Rhiannon T. Edwards, Dr Ama Eyo, Mr Eric Hepburn CBE, Sir Paul Lambert, Ms Julie Perkins, Dr John T. Prabhakar, Mrs Emily Rees, Dr Ian Rees, Mr Gwion Rowlands, Mr Rheon Tomos, Professor Oliver Turnbull, Professor David Viner, Professor Tim Wheeler DL, Professor Jean White CBE and Ms Elin Wyn

Apologies:
Professor Nicky Callow, Mr Atul Devani, Mrs Gwenan Hine, Dr Aled Ll. Jones and Professor Paul Spencer

In attendance:
Mr Michael Flanagan (Chief Transformation Officer), Mrs Patricia Murchie (Chief Marketing Officer) Mr Martyn Riddleston (Chief Financial Officer) and Mr Mike Wilson (Chief Strategy and Planning Officer)

In addition:
Professor Andrew Edwards, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Welsh Language, Civic Engagement, Strategic Partnerships and EDI), for items 23.78 and 23.79), Dr Llion Jones, (Director of Canolfan Bedwyr), for item 23.78 and Professor Enlli Thomas (Pro Vice-Chancellor/Head of the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences), for items 23.78 and 23.79.

The meeting was held in the Marine Centre Wales, Bangor University and through Teams.

23.75 WELCOME

The Chair of Council welcomed members to the last Council meeting of the current academic year. Ms Nida Ambreen, Students' Union President, and Mr Gwion Rowlands, UMCB President were welcomed to their first Council meeting as members.

The Chair extended her thanks to members of Council for their flexibility, as the meeting had needed to be rescheduled initially due to the General Election and, at the last-minute, due to resurfacing works on College Road.

Members were advised that the meeting would be recorded for the purpose of the minutes. There were no objections noted. It was confirmed that the recording would be destroyed once the minutes were completed.

23.76 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. Sir Paul Lambert made a declaration of interest in terms of agenda item 23.83B (NSS Update) due to a family connection. **[Reserved Business]**

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

23.77 DEATHS

A. The Chair referred to the recent deaths of:

- **Tallie Brazier,** Recent Graduate in the School of Ocean Sciences
- **Professor Roger Eston,** Former Head of School in the School of Sport, Health and Exercise Sciences
- **Howard Wyn Jones,** Former Systems Support Technician, Digital Services
- **Claudia Williams,** Honorary Fellow
- **Omanchi Agbaji** MSci Psychology with Clinical and Health Psychology Student, School of Psychology and Sport Science
- **Professor Shanti Chakravarty,** Former Professor of Economics, Bangor Business School
- **Dr Justin Lloyde,** Former Teaching Assistant in the School of Social Sciences, and former Student in the School of Psychology
- **Norma Wyn-Jones,** Former Member of Staff in the School of Ocean Sciences

Members fell silent in tribute to their memory.

23.78 BRIEFING: WELSH LANGUAGE STRATEGY

A. The Chair invited Professor Andrew Edwards and Dr Llion Jones to provide a briefing on the Welsh Language Strategy. It was noted that the purpose of the briefing was to provide Council members with assurance that the University has a robust strategy for the Welsh language and to provide details of the plans in place for its successful implementation.

Dr Llion Jones provided the Council with background information and context. It was noted that the Welsh Language Strategy has been updated as part of a review of the sub-strategies underpinning the University's 2030 Strategy. Members were informed that 'Welsh Language and Bilingual Environment' is one of three pillars underpinning the Strategy. It was noted that the draft revised strategy was approved by the University Executive Board in March 2024, and an Action Plan has been developed and will be monitored by the Welsh Language and Culture Committee. The Action Plan

responds to the challenges that the University faces in delivering its strategic objectives for the Welsh language.

Dr Jones noted that he welcomed the opportunity to present to the Council at this time, due to the amount of work done over recent months in updating the Strategy and developing the Action Plan. Professor Edwards outlined the main challenges faced by the University in this area, the largest of which is Welsh-medium student recruitment. Members were advised that steps are being taken to address this issue and a sub-group of the Marketing and Recruitment Committee has been set up to specifically focus on this area. In terms of staff engagement with the Welsh language, it was noted that the impact of the pandemic, and the move to hybrid working has been challenging, and has resulted in a decrease in the use of the Welsh language, which would otherwise have naturally been used amongst colleagues in the workplace.

Dr Jones provided an overview of the Action Plan, and the Council were pleased to note that, of the 24 action points on the current Plan, 20 have been completed this year. Specific achievements were noted including the development of a mandatory course for staff on the University's Welsh Language Policy; the Welsh Language Awards night held to acknowledge the efforts of staff who support the Welsh language; the development of the new '*Y Gymraeg ym Mangor*' leaflet and the Welsh Jobs Fair run by students. Several current KPIs were also discussed. However, Dr Jones noted that although a great deal has been done, there is still a long way to go to ensure that the University remains a pioneer for the Welsh language locally, nationally, and globally.

B. As Chair of the Welsh Language Matters Committee, Ms Wyn asked whether the University could automatically register Welsh medium students on to Welsh-medium modules, as this was an approach taken in some other Welsh universities. Professor Edwards confirmed that this is something the University is currently working towards.

Dr Rees congratulated the University on the work done so far. With regard to the recruitment of Welsh-medium students a question was asked whether this should be a KPI within the Strategy. Professor Edwards informed the Council that there was a KPI within the Marketing and Recruitment Strategy which specifically monitors this area of recruitment.

The University was congratulated on the appointment of three College-based Welsh-medium Deans. Professor Edwards confirmed that this was a significant development which highlights the University's commitment to the importance of the Welsh language. It was noted that both Dr Jones and Professor Edwards will work closely with the Deans to grow subject areas through the medium of Welsh.

Following a question from Professor White around benchmarking with other Welsh universities, Dr Jones advised that the Welsh Government publishes a statistical bulletin each summer comparing Welsh universities. In the last version of the bulletin, it was noted that the University was responsible for over 40% of students studying at

least 40 credits through the medium of Welsh. In addition, the University performs better in terms of conversion to Welsh-medium provision. Professor Edwards also noted that whilst there remains some underperformance in key subjects such as business, efforts continue to increase numbers. This is particularly the case in new programme areas such as the North Wales Medical School, where the University was a recipient of Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol grant funding to appoint a Welsh-medium lecturer.

C. The Chair thanked Professor Edwards and Dr Jones for their informative presentation and congratulated them on the work undertaken to date. It was suggested that the relationship and overlap between the Welsh Language Strategy and the other strategies, could form the basis of a future update to the Council.

Dr Jones left the meeting.

23.79 PROPOSED SCHOOL OF WELSH

A. The Chair invited Professor Enlli Thomas to introduce the proposal from the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences to re-establish a School of Welsh. Professor Thomas gave a brief overview of the proposal, highlighting some of the many benefits of establishing the new School, which will bring together the Department of Welsh and Learn Welsh North West. It was noted that the creation of the new School would bring together a critical mass of staff, providing the opportunity to build on the successes in the field of Welsh scholarship, Welsh teaching provision, and would provide a golden opportunity to weave together academic and practical Welsh medium programmes. Establishing the School would also demonstrate the University's commitment to the Welsh language and to meeting the objectives set out in Strategy 2030, the Welsh Language Strategy and to the themes present in many of the University's other strategies.

It was noted that the proposal was raised by the Vice-Chancellor at the last Council meeting, where an agreement in principle to allow the University to move forward with the steps required to establish the School, was given. It was reported that since this meeting the proposal has been through a very positive consultation process with staff both in the School of Arts, Culture and Languages, and across the University. In addition, consultation has taken place with students, the Senior Leadership Group, and the Senate. Professor Edwards, as Pro Vice-Chancellor for the Welsh Language, welcomed the proposal, noting that the opportunities it would offer would be very positive for the University. The Vice Chancellor added that the proposal was an important strategic development for the University in terms of its heritage and history.

B. The Chair invited comments from members and Professor White requested clarification on the details and associated risks and liabilities. The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that the proposal was an internal reorganisation, involving two current departments within the School of Arts, Culture and Languages. The only direct additional funding required would be the Head of School allowance, and it was noted

that, on this occasion, it was likely that this would be an internal appointment. In addition, there may be small indirect costs around administration and planning. It was confirmed that all staff included in the proposal are Bangor University staff.

Dr Rees noted his support for the proposal but emphasised the need to ensure that Learn Welsh North West continued to receive the same recognition and opportunities as part of the new School.

Ms Wyn raised potential risks in terms of the Learn Welsh North West's funding, and the possibility of the Centre losing funding to another provider in the future. In addition, she sought reassurance that the proposal would not negatively impact on Canolfan Bedwyr. Professor Thomas acknowledged the points made and noted that the University needed to monitor how the Welsh language provision landscape developed over the coming year, referring also to the Welsh Language Education Bill. In addition, the Vice Chancellor added that the wider review of professional services would consider whether functions were in the right areas, and this would include in the context of the new academic school.

Ms Ambreen gave her support for the proposal and asked about the timeline for implementation. Professor Thomas confirmed that, should the proposal be approved by Council, the likely start date for the new school would be 1st September. In addition, it was reported that the long-term plan is to co-locate both units together, and this will be taken forward by the Chief Operational Officer in due course.

Mr Tomos referenced a very positive recent Estyn report on Learn Welsh North West. In addition, it was noted that bringing both departments together brought better recruitment opportunities for the University and highlighted the importance of the University in the community. Mr Tomos gave his support to the proposal, noting the robust consultation that has taken place and the support given by the Vice-Chancellor and the Executive Board.

The Chair noted the importance of retaining and protecting the Welsh ethos established within the School of Arts, Culture and Language over recent years, should the proposal to establish the School of Welsh be approved.

C. Following discussion, the Council **approved** the establishment of the new School of Welsh.

23.80 VERBAL BRIEFING FROM PRO VICE-CHANCELLOR / HEAD OF COLLEGE OF ARTS, HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Due to time constraints, it was **agreed** that Professor Thomas would attend the next Council meeting to give a short verbal update on the opportunities and challenges faced by the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences.

Professor Enlli Thomas left the meeting.

23.81 MINUTES

A. The Minutes of the meeting held on 9 May 2024 were **confirmed.**

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

Supplemental Charter and Ordinances (Minute 21.5C)

It was noted that the University Secretary had reported that the University had received the new Supplemental Charter from the Privy Council, and work has begun updating Ordinances.

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

Professor White asked for an update on when Council would receive a briefing on global engagement. The Vice-Chancellor advised that this had been delayed slightly due to the absence of the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Global Engagement. It was noted that, in the interim, duties have been re-distributed between Professor Edwards, Professor Turnbull and Professor Callow and key matters were being taken forward. It was **agreed** that an update would be brought to Council in September.

23.82 CHAIRS UPDATE

The Chair noted that, since the last meeting of Council, a new Labour government had been elected to Westminster. It was pleasing to note initial comments from Ministers around the financial challenges facing the higher education sector and maintaining the graduate route visa. In addition, changes are also being seen in Wales, with the resignation of the First Minister.

It was noted that HEFCW will officially come to an end on 31st July, with MEDR taking over as the new regulator from 1st August. A positive engagement event had been held recently, between MEDR and all post-16 education representatives attended by the Chair, the Vice-Chancellor, and other Executive Board members.

The HEFCW Funding Allocations document included for information in the meeting papers was **noted**.

23.83 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S UPDATE

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

<u>Financial Matters</u>

The Vice-Chancellor noted that the financial situation remains challenging across the sector, and further details on how the situation affects the University will be provided by the Chief Financial Officer later in the meeting.

Research Update

The Vice-Chancellor reported that HEFCW have recently announced the allocation for the next round of Research Wales Innovation Funding. It was noted that the funding is driven by several metrics in the statutory Higher Education Business and Community Interaction (HE-BCI) survey. The University's performance improved in the main key metrics (Collaborative Research and Contract Research), with an increase in allocation of 6%. However, HEFCW are applying a 6% reduction to all allocations, resulting in a cash flat settlement.

In addition, it was reported that the national Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) results have been released. The University's overall ranking was 10th out of the 53 Institutions, and the overall satisfaction score has also increased by 3% to 86%. The Vice-Chancellor extended his thanks to staff for this successful outcome.

[Reserved Business]

Visits and Events

Council were informed of the following visits and events since the last meeting:

- The Vice-Chancellor presented awards to over 20 colleagues who completed the Managers Programme, and congratulations were extended to all staff involved.

- The Students' Union Summer Ball was a huge success and very well attended. Thanks was extended to all staff involved in making the event such a success.

- The Vice-Chancellor reported that he had visited the Urdd Eisteddfod held in Maldwyn at the end of May, and the Royal Welsh Show in July. In both cases he was pleased to see so many staff, students and alumni visiting the stand. Preparations are now underway for the National Eisteddfod in early August, and Council members were encouraged to visit the University stand if attending.

- Graduation in early July was a positive and successful event once again. The University welcomed nine distinguished individuals to the University to accept an Honorary Degrees and Fellowships during the week, forging what will hopefully be the start of lifelong and mutually beneficial relationships.

B. **NSS Update**

Professor Turnbull was invited to provide a short update on the NSS results which were received recently.

Professor Turnbull reported that it was pleasing to note that Bangor's overall satisfaction is 80%, up 10% from 2023, with Schools across the University doing well, particularly in terms of overall satisfaction.

A more detailed report, along with an evaluation of the University's 2023/24 action planning, and the steps in place for 2024/25 will be presented at the September Council meeting.

The Chair congratulated the University on the overall positive results and noted the commitment to provide a more in depth briefing at the next meeting.

The positive results from the recent Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey were also noted.

C. **Review of the Effectiveness of Senate**

The Chair invited Professor Tim Wheeler to present his report on the Review and Effectiveness of the Senate. It was noted that the report, which had been developed over the last year, was produced following recommendations in the previous Governance Effectiveness Review. It was reported that an assessment was made against three dimensions of governance: Composition of the Senate, Structure of the Senate, and Senate Interaction.

The recommendations outlined in the report were noted as:

- Undertake a review of the structure, length, and content of Senate meetings to enable more discussion of strategic matters by members and to ensure that the needs of current and future students continue to be represented.
- To review the membership of Senate, bringing the total membership down to 30.
- Explore ways to include the wider Senate in supporting the implementation of the academic plan for teaching and research and to communicate a single vision and mission for the future of the University under new governmental arrangements.
- Undertake further development of student member training plans and resources to support identified developmental needs in a tailored way to support interaction and further develop knowledge and understanding.
- Explore ways for the Senate to widen awareness of its role with University members.

It was noted that the Report had been presented to the Executive Board, and to the Senate. A positive endorsement of the recommendations had been received from both meetings.

Following a question from Mr Tomos, Professor Wheeler confirmed that in terms of membership he had looked at best practice in other institutions. Given the membership was currently 60, he had decided to recommend 30, noting that 4 of the 30 members were co-options, which required Senate's approval to appoint.

The Vice-Chancellor noted the establishment of the Senior Leadership Group during 2023/24, which discussed strategic leadership issues. This Group, working alongside the Senate, was considered the appropriate governance structure for the University.

The Chair, and the Vice-Chancellor extended their grateful thanks to Professor Wheeler for undertaking a substantial amount of work.

Following consideration, the Council **approved** the proposals made in the Report.

D. The Council **noted** the reports from the Senate and the Executive Board.

Dr Ama Eyo left the meeting.

23.84 RESERVED BUSINESS

23.85 RESERVED BUSINESS

Dr Ama Eyo rejoined the meeting.

23.86 STUDENTS' UNION REPORT

The Chair of Council invited Ms Ambreen and Mr Rowlands, as the new Students' Union President and UMCB President to provide a verbal update on their priorities for the coming year.

The key points included:

- A proposed reduction in funding to the Students' Union from the University would be undertaken over a 3 year period, rather than the original 2 year proposal following discussions with members of the Executive Board. The Students' Union would undertake a full consultation during that period with students during that time to inform a new funding model for clubs and societies.
- Three new student trustees have been appointed, subject to ratification by the Trustee Board.
- The new Sabbatical Officer team have undertaken several team building and leadership training courses over the previous few weeks. Sabbatical Officers were also invited to take part in the recent graduation ceremonies. Officers enjoyed celebrating the successes of Bangor students and the Officers' speech was well received.
- Officers have spent time mapping their individual priorities and objectives. It was noted that one overarching issue is supporting students with the cost-of-living crisis. In addition, three key areas will be looked at during the year, which are loneliness, supporting mental health and wellbeing, and improving student safety.
- Work will continue on two major campaigns: a 'Together We Like' joint campaign between the University and the Students' Union, and 'Tell Us Tuesday'.

- Ms Ambreen has been involved in discussions with the University and the Health Board regarding a Healthy Weight Campaign and looks forward to taking this forward.
- Recognising the importance of continuity and effective leadership transition, the recruitment of senior representatives, who previously served as course representatives has been undertaken. This ensures that the senior representatives are fully integrated and ready to support incoming course representatives from the start of the academic year. The proactive approach enhances the effectiveness of the student representation system and facilitates smoother transitions between student leadership roles, as well as helping to reduce training costs.
- The Students' Union continues to work on a joint submission for the Quality Enhancement Review (QER).
- The Students' Union have been involved in the development of the University's Race Equality Action Plan, with several commitments from the Students' Union being included as part of the final action plan.
- Discussions are underway with the Bangor City Town Clerk to establish research bursaries aimed at supporting research students whose research has the potential to contribute to local high street revitalisation or initiatives.
- Study aid sessions, designed to provide additional support to students during challenging academic periods, have been held throughout the academic year.
- A Student Insight Report (SIR) on international students' needs was produced recently. The report will be submitted to the University soon and aims to help the University strengthen its understanding of issues faced by international students.
- Mr Rowlands noted that he wished to ensure that the voice of Welsh students is heard and that the opportunities are there for those wanting to study through the medium of Welsh.
- Promotion of the Welsh language both on an academic and on a social level will continue, as well as the highlighting of UMCB activities throughout the University and in the community.
- UMCB will continue to work with the University to promote the Welsh Language Strategy, and the recruitment of local Welsh students to the University.
- The 50th anniversary of the Welsh halls of residence – Neuadd John Morris Jones – is currently being planned.

The Chair thanked both Ms Ambreen and Mr Rowlands for their comprehensive reports. Mr Rowlands was also congratulated on his recent graduation.

23.87 AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE

A. The Report of the meeting of the Audit & Risk Committee held on 13 June 2024 was **noted**.

B. Sir Paul Lambert drew Council's attention to:

- The Corporate Risk Register: It was noted that due to the current financial climate, the financial risk has been elevated. There are 14 risks currently beyond the

tolerable risk range and risk owners will be required to continuously monitor these.

- The Health and Safety Report, submitted by the Chief Operating Officer, was noted for information (minute 796).
- 5 serious incidents were reported to the Charity Commission between January and May (minute 797).

23.88 JOINT ENGAGEMENT FORUM

A. The Reports of the meetings of the Joint Engagement Forum held on 8 May 2024 and 28 June 2024 were **noted**.

B. The Chair noted her appreciation for the consistent willingness of all Campus Trades Union representatives to actively participate in the Forum.

23.89 PEOPLE AND CULTURE COMMITTEE

A. The Report of the meeting of the People and Culture Committee held on 7 June 2024 was **noted**.

B. Dr Rees informed the Council that:

- The Committee had agreed the Statement on Slavery and Human Trafficking, and the Council **noted** the Statement which was appended to the minutes for information (minute 90).
- The Committee had agreed to request a deep dive into aspects of the Integrated Performance Report which were of relevance to the Committee (minute 101).

23.90 RESERVED BUSINESS

23.91 WELSH LANGUAGE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

A. The Report of the meeting of the Welsh Language Affairs Committee held on 23 May 2024 was **noted**.

B. Ms Wyn advised the Council that a new Co-opted Member, Dr Catrin Jones, had been welcomed to her first meeting. Other matters, including the Welsh Language Strategy and the proposed School of Welsh, have already been discussed as part of the meeting.

The Chair of Council thanked all Committee chairs for their dedication and contribution throughout the year.

23.92 SEALING

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

23.93 ANNUAL RETURN TO THE CHARITY COMMISSION

The Council **noted** the Annual Return to the Charity Commission and thanked those involved in completing the return on time.

23.94 CLOSING REMARKS

The Chair thanked members for an informative and productive meeting, with several key matters being considered and taken forward. On behalf of the Council the Chair thanked the Vice Chancellor, the Executive Board, and all staff for their work over the last twelve months. In addition, members of Council members were thanked for their contribution and engagement over the last year.

Thanks was extended to the translation team for their assistance, and to the University Secretary and Mrs Williams for their hard work during the year.

It was **noted** that the annual Council photograph, to be used in the Annual Report, will be taken at the September meeting. All members were encouraged to attend in person where this was possible.

It was **agreed** that Mrs Williams would circulate a list of Council and Committee dates for the coming academic year.