COUNCIL MINUTES

At a meeting of the Council
held in the University on 9 May 2024

Present:
Mrs Marian Wyn Jones (Chair), Professor Edmund Burke, Professor Rhiannon T. Edwards, Dr Ama Eyo, Mr Eric Hepburn CBE, Mr Celt John, Sir Paul Lambert, Ms Nyah Lowe, Professor Oliver Turnbull, Ms Julie Perkins, Dr John T. Prabhakar, Mrs Emily Rees, Dr Ian Rees, Mr Rheon Tomos, Professor David Viner, Professor Tim Wheeler DL, Professor Jean White CBE (for items 23.68 onwards), Ms Elin Wyn and Mrs Gwenan Hine (University Secretary).

Apologies:
Mr Atul Devani, Professor Andrew Edwards, Dr Aled Ll. Jones, Professor Paul Spencer, Professor Enlli Thomas and Professor Jean White (for items 23.57 – 23.67)

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, Ms Nida Ambreen, Incoming Students' Union President and Mr Gwion Rowlands, Incoming UMCB President observed the meeting.

Mrs Emma Marshall, Head of Development and Alumni Relations, for item 23.66, Mr Sam Dickins, Vice-President for Societies and Volunteering and Ms Josie Ball, Volunteering and Community Coordinator, Students Union, for item 23.67 and Ms Sue Moss, Academic Registrar for item 23.72.

The meeting was held in Reichel Hall, Bangor University and through Zoom.

23.57 WELCOME

The Chair of Council welcomed Dr John T. Prabhakar to his first meeting of the Council, it was noted that Dr Prabhakar had been appointed as a non-academic member of staff, replacing Mr Paul Wood who had recently retired.

In addition, it was noted that this would be Ms Nyah Lowe and Mr Celt John's last meeting, as their term of office as President and UMCB President comes to an end at the end of June. The Chair thanked Ms Lowe and Mr John for their participation and commitment to the Council over the last two years and, on behalf of members wished them well in the future.

Ms Ambreen and Mr Rowlands, incoming President and UMCB President respectively were welcomed to the meeting as observers.

23.58 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.

23.59 LEARNED SOCIETY OF WALES

The Chair of Council extended her congratulations, on behalf of Council, to the Vice-Chancellor, and to Professor Andrew Lewis, Professor of Composition and Professor Yueng-Djern Lenn, Professor in Physical Oceanography who are among 43 new Fellows of the Learned Society of Wales.

It was noted that election to Fellowship is a public recognition of academic excellence, and all Fellows have made an outstanding contribution to the world of learning and have a demonstrable connection to Wales.

23.60 DEATHS

A. The Chair referred to the recent deaths of:

- Len Roberts, Former Head Technician in the School of Ocean Sciences.
- Mohammed Nouman, Student in the School of Environmental and Natural Sciences.
- Hywel George, Former Member of the University Council.
- Ian Hardcastle, Former Director of Professional Partnerships, Bangor Business School.
- David Ellams, Former Lecturer, Bangor Business School.
- Betsan Rowlands, 'expert by experience' from time to time on the People Panel of the North Wales Clinical Psychology Programme.

Members fell silent in tribute to their memory.

23.61 MINUTES

A. The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 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.

Tribal Benchmarking Report (Minute 23.43B)

The Chief Financial Officer advised the Council, following a question from Mr Tomos at the previous meeting, that the data contained with the Tribal Benchmarking Report is used, alongside other data, to drive efficiency and financial performance. The

University is planning on repeating the benchmarking exercise in the future, once it has identified a suitable benchmarking group.

C. The latest update of the Council Workplan was noted. Following a request from the Chair, several minor amendments were noted and will be made prior to the Workplan being presented to the Council in July.

23.62 CHAIRS UPDATE

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

Attendance at University Events

The Chair reported that she had been privileged to attend several University events recently including those being held during the institution's 140th anniversary year:

- Both the Chair, and Ms Wyn (as Chair of the Welsh Language Affairs Committee) attended the inaugural Welsh Language Awards ceremony. It was noted that this was an inspirational event which celebrated members of staff's achievements in teaching, research and learning Welsh.
- The Chair attended the Student Volunteering event.
- The Distinguished Alumni lecture series have been extremely well received, with several lectures being held recently, providing variation in both content and style.
- The 140th Gala Concert, featuring the Bangor University Symphony and Chorus was held in April, and featured the premier of Dr Guto Pryderi Puw's new work, as well as a performance of Beethoven's 9th Symphony.
- The Chair also attended the meeting of the University Court on 10 April.

Chairs of Universities Wales (ChUW)

The Chair reported that the Chairs of Universities Wales (ChUW) met recently. Prior to the formal meeting a workshop with Price Waterhouse Coopers (PWC), which Vice-Chairs were invited to attend, was held on sustainable funding. As Wales was not included in the analysis undertaken by PWC for Universities UK, the session was used to reflect on, and compare the position of Welsh Universities with other UK nations, using the 2022/23 Financial Statements, which had proven extremely useful. This was echoed by Sir Paul Lambert, who, as Deputy Chair of Bangor University Council, had also attended the session.

It was noted that the next meeting of the ChUW Committee will be held in June, at Bangor University.

<u>Participation Rates</u>

It was reported that ChUW had also discussed the low participation rate (below 30%) in higher education in Wales, in contrast to, for example, 48% reported in Northern Ireland. In addition, the recent Education Policy Institute report raised concerns about

Welsh outcomes, with young people in Wales being the least likely to hold A-level equivalent qualifications.

Senedd Cross-Party Working Group and CTER

The Chair, as Chair of ChUW, attended a meeting of the Senedd Cross-Party Working Group, where the Chair, Vice-Chair and Chief Executive Officer of CTER provided an update on the implementation of CTER. No further update was provided on the date for the Commission's implementation, currently 1 August 2024.

Universities Wales

The Chair, as Chair of ChuW, met the new Chair and Director of Universities Wales, and expressed her wish to continue to develop the joint working between Universities Wales and ChUW. It was noted that opportunities for collaboration will be explored further.

The Chair's report included in the papers for the meeting was **noted**.

23.63 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S UPDATE

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

European Space Agency's Earth Observation Excellence Award 2024

The Vice-Chancellor extended his congratulations to Dr Iestyn Woolway, NERC Independent Research Fellow at the School of Ocean Sciences, who has won the European Space Agency's Earth Observation Excellence Award 2024. It was noted that the prestigious award celebrates the outstanding efforts of scientists who have advanced the innovative application of Earth observation data.

Universities HR (UHR) Award for Excellence

Congratulations were extended to the Chief People Officer, and the Human Resources team, who have been shortlisted for a 2024 UHR Award for Excellence at the annual UHR awards. The application, under the Wellbeing category, focussed on the development of the University's approach to supporting staff during the menopause.

Distinguished Alumni Lecture Series

Several Distinguished Alumni lectures have been held recently. These include Caradoc Jones, Dr Tiny Barsby, and George Buckley. In addition, an inaugural lecture was delivered by Professor Katrien Van Landeghem. One of the University's Honorary Degree recipients, Steve Backshall, also gave a lecture which was hugely popular attracting over 600 attendees.

Thanks was extended to all those who were willing to provide lectures and to engage with the University community.

Anglesey Freeport

The Vice-Chancellor advised the Council that the University (as a corporate body) has been invited to become a member of the Board overseeing the Freeport programme. The University and M-Sparc would each have one Director. It was reported that the Nominations and Governance Committee has agreed that Professor Andrew Edwards will become the University Director, and Mr Pryderi ap Rhisiart will become the M-Sparc Director.

23.64 RESERVED BUSINESS

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Mrs Emma Marshall, Head of Development and Alumni Relations, joined the meeting.

23.66 DEVELOPMENT AND ALUMNI RELATIONS STRATEGY

A. The Chief Marketing Officer welcomed the opportunity to present the recently approved Development and Alumni Relations Strategy to the Council. It was noted that the Development and Alumni Relations Office continues to make good progress in this area, as was outlined in the February Council. The Development and Alumni Relations Strategy sets out the high-level approach to developing and implementing a programme for fundraising and alumni engagement to support transformation, innovation, teaching, and research. The Strategy provides an overview of the proposed approach in the context of an increasingly challenging financial landscape.

Mrs Marshall provided a detailed overview of the Strategy, and noted that there were three priority objectives which the Development and Alumni Relations Office was focussing on:

- Increase philanthropic donations to the University.
- Increase awareness of Development and Alumni Relations activity internally and engage leaders and academic colleagues in a culture for successful philanthropy.
- Develop an engaged 'alumni for life' community.

A discussion took place, and several comments were made:

- Has the Office considered using a QR code during graduation, which allows graduates to update their details, and make links with the Development and Alumni Office.
- The Office should consider using digital IT to raise money, such as crowdfunding.
- There are several opportunities to make the most of social media posts around the successes of our Alumni, which would generate further interest.

The Chair of Council thanked the Chief Marketing Officer, and Mrs Marshall for the helpful update and opportunity to comment on the Strategy.

Mrs Marshall left the meeting.

Mr Sam Dickins and Ms Josie Ball, Students' Union, joined the meeting.

23.67 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:

- UMCB won the stage competitions at the Eisteddfod Rhyng-gol, and thanks was extended to all the students whose hard work was reflected in the weekend's successes.
- During the annual conference of the National Union of Students for Wales UMCB presented a Name Change Policy which will result in the organisation being known as NUS Cymru going forward.
- The athletics teams are continuing to do well, and Bangor retained the Varsity trophy for the 8th consecutive year.
- The UMCB awards night will be held shortly celebrating the achievements of UMCB members.
- Y Lolfa, a student living room space, has recently opened in Pontio.
- The Annual Societies and Volunteering Awards were held recently.

Following a question from the Chair, the standout achievements from the last two years were noted as including:

- £2 meals, which have proven to be extremely popular.
- Working on the Student Led Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- Continuing with the sexual health campaign.
- The Christmas Day and Easter celebration events, in conjunction with the Cathedral and the International Student Support team.

B. **Student Volunteering**

Ms Lowe presented an update on Student Volunteering. It was noted that students at Bangor University have been volunteering for 72 years, starting with the first Tea Party in 1952 which still continues to this day.

It was noted that during the 2023/24 academic year:

- 36 volunteering projects were offered, with 70+ Project Leaders organising events, which include 13 partnerships with external organisations.
- 541 volunteers registered, and there were 553 individual applications for projects. 48 students achieved new Bronze, Silver and Gold Volunteering Hours awards.

- The Hot Meals Project has served approximately 760 free hot meals to members of the local community since September 2023.
- The Sblat Afterschool Kids Project has 7-8 children attend on a weekly basis.
- The student volunteers were celebrated as part of the University Court, where the High Sheriff Awards for Volunteering were presented.

The Chair thanked Ms Lowe, Mr Dickins and Ms Ball for their inspirational presentation.

C. The Chair, on behalf of the Council, thanked both Ms Lowe and Mr John for their engagement and commitment to the Council over the last two years. Both Ms Lowe and Mr John expressed their thanks to the Council, and to the University, for their continued commitment to students and the student experience. The Vice-Chancellor echoed the Chair's comments, noting that the University was proud of its student community, and appreciated the willingness of the Students' Union to work with the Executive Board for the benefit of all students.

Mr Dickins and Ms Ball left the meeting.

Professor Jean White joined the meeting.

23.68 AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE

A. The Report of the meeting of the Audit & Risk Committee held on 14 March 2024 was **noted**.

B. Sir Paul Lambert drew Council's attention to the University's Corporate Risk Register included for information, and the Risk Appetite Statement included for consideration and approval.

The Council were advised that the risk relating to external funding, regulatory and statutory / legal regimes has been revised to reflect recent changes to policy in terms of Visa regulations, fee regimes and the inflationary financial impact.

It was noted that, in relation to the global engagement risk, an update would be provided at the July Council.

It was confirmed that the risk around buildings, and maintenance of buildings was being regularly reviewed as the capital programme is revised.

It was noted that a comprehensive review of risk management throughout the University was undertaken in 2023, and the outcomes of that review are currently being implemented. One of those outcomes was to undertake a new approach to defining the institutional risk appetite, incorporating tolerable levels of risk-taking. The Strategic Risk Committee agreed the approach, and it was subsequently discussed iteratively at the Executive Board and agreed at the Audit & Risk Committee in March.

Following discussion, the Council **approved** the Risk Appetite Statement.

23.69 JOINT ENGAGEMENT FORUM

The Chair provided a verbal update on the meeting of the Joint Engagement Forum, held on the 8 May 2024, and noted that the minutes would be presented to the next meeting of the Council. It was noted that the University Secretary had outlined to Campus Trades Union members the agenda for the Council meeting, and the Vice-Chancellor had provided an update on the financial challenges. The Chair expressed her appreciation for the willingness of all Campus Trades Union representatives to actively participate in the Forum.

23.70 NOMINATIONS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

The Report of the meeting of the Nominations and Governance Committee held on 18 March 2024 was **noted**. The Council **approved** the updated Scheme of Delegation and Decision-Making Powers.

23.71 RESERVED BUSINESS

23.72 QUALITY ENHANCEMENT REVIEW: UPDATE

A. Professor Callow, along with Ms Moss and Ms Lowe, provided a briefing on the University's Quality Enhancement Review (QER), which is due to take place in December 2024. It was noted that the QER requires an evidence base to be submitted at least 12 weeks in advance of the review team visit in December. The evidence base will consist of a self-analysis, jointly submitted by the University and Students' Union, along with up to 120 items of evidence. It was noted that the University will be the first to use the Quality Assurance Agency updated methodology. At the conclusion of the review the University will be provided with a judgement on its quality assurance and quality enhancement processes, along with any commendations, and this will be a public document.

   It was noted that, from a regulatory and reputational perspective, it is important that the University gains a positive quality assurance judgement and quality enhancement statement from the 2024 QER. In addition, as Wales did not participate in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2023, the importance of the QER process in Wales is heightened.

   The Council were advised that a project plan is in place to deliver a high-quality submission, with several workstreams in progress to complete the self-analysis, produce case studies and scrutinise potential evidence for the submission. Ms Lowe confirmed that the Students' Union are fully embedded in the development of the self-analysis and evidence base and have chosen to submit jointly rather than separately into the QER.

B. Following a question from Professor White, Professor Callow confirmed that work was ongoing in relation to the student experience in Wrexham, particularly in relation to

clinical placements. However, data from the National Student Survey shows that the University's students are satisfied with the placements taking place. A new director of Student Engagement has been appointed within the School, and work is taking place to enhance the current experience. In addition, and following Professor White's question, it was noted that any internal audit work undertaken would duplicate the work which Professor Callow is leading in this area.

The Chair of Council thanked Professor Callow, Ms Moss, and Ms Lowe for their presentation, which has provided the Council with assurance that the preparations for the QER are being appropriately managed.

23.73 SEALING

The Council **ratified** the sealing of documents listed in Agendum 11.

23.74 CLOSING REMARKS

The Chair thanked members for an informative and productive meeting, with several key matters taken forward. Several members noted the improvement in the quality of papers being submitted. Thanks was extended to the translation team for their assistance.