

Bangor University

COUNCIL MINUTES

At a meeting of the Council held in the University on Friday, 25 September 2020.

Present:

Mrs Marian Wyn Jones (Chair), Professor Nicky Callow, Dr Tomos Dafydd, Professor Iwan Davies, Dr Myfanwy Davies, Professor Andrew Edwards, Mr Iwan Evans, Dr Griff Jones, Dr Karen Jones, Dr Llion Jones, Mr Marc Jones, Sir Paul Lambert, Mrs Alison Lea-Wilson, Ms. Ellen Parry Williams, Miss Julie Perkins, Dr Ian Rees, Professor Gareth Roberts, Professor Paul Spencer, Professor Oliver Turnbull, Mr Henry Williams, Mr Tudur Williams, the Chief Operating Officer / University Secretary, the Director of Human Resources, the Director of Property and Campus Services, the Interim Director of Finance and Mrs Gwenan Hine (Secretary).

20.1 WELCOME

The Chair welcomed members to the first meeting of the 2020/21 academic year and noted that it remained a challenging landscape for the University, with Covid-19 numbers seeming to be on the rise again.

20.2 DEATHS

The Chair referred to the recent deaths of:

Reverend Dr. Elfed ap Nefydd Roberts,
Honorary Fellow of the University

Mrs Margaret Brown,
Former Senior Lecturer in Economics

John Meirion Morris,
Honorary Fellow of the University

John Walter Jones
Honorary Fellow of the University

Members fell silent in tribute to their memory.

20.3 CONGRATULATIONS

- A. On the award of a Personal Chair:

Dr Rasha Alsakka, Bangor Business School

Mrs Delyth Prys, Canolfan Bedwyr

Dr Sue Niebrzydowski, School of Languages, Literatures and Linguistics

Dr Alison Mawhinney, School of Law

Dr Richard Holland, School of Natural Sciences

- B. On the award of a Readership:

Dr Graham Ormondroyd, The Bio-Composites Centre

Dr Maziar Nezhad, School of Computer Science and Electronic Engineering

Dr Zengbo (James) Wang, School of Computer Science and Electronic Engineering

Dr Eben Muse, School of Languages, Literatures and Linguistics

Dr Guto Puw, School of Music, Drama and Performance

Dr Olga Golyshina, School of Natural Sciences

Dr Martin Skov, School of Ocean Sciences

- C. The Chair also noted the following achievements:

Marine Biology & Oceanography Student Tom Williams was praised for his immense bravery when he rushed into the sea to save a man. Dyfed Powys Police confirmed that there was no doubt that Tom and his friends had saved the man's life.

The extension to the **SEACAMS2 partnership** between Bangor University and Swansea University is to be given a further boost with the awarding of an additional £1.5M of EU funding from the Welsh Government which will enable research to continue until 2022. The work will contribute to the Low carbon, Energy and Environment sector.

Crab-shells could provide a new virucide for PPE. North Wales-based company Pennotec (Pennog Limited) are working with experts at Bangor University to develop a unique coating which has long-lasting virus-destroying properties. A material derived from waste crab-shells is being tested for use as a virucide for use on PPE and other medical devices.

Professor Julia Jones Professor of Conservation Science at the School of Natural Sciences featured among some of the world's leading scientists in the BBC programme Extinction: The Facts presented by Sir David Attenborough.

Laura Sanderson, a student at the University and a wild swimmer is visiting all 15 of the UK's national parks as part of a scientific expedition collecting hundreds of water samples, which will be analysed at Bangor University for the presence of microplastics.

Three graduates from Bangor University's MA Filmmaking course are celebrating this month as productions they've worked on reach the shortlist for a BAFTA Cymru

Award. **Lee Carson** contributed as crew on the major BBC adaptation of Bangor Honorary Fellow Phillip Pullman's acclaimed trilogy His Dark Materials, which is nominated for Best Television Drama amongst other categories. **Rory Farmer and Robert Zyborski** both contributed on camera to critically acclaimed Best Factual Series nominee, Ysgol Ni: Maesincla which followed pupils and teachers at the Caernarfon school in a heartwarming fly on the wall documentary.

Professor Judy Hutchings, The Centre for Evidence Based Early Intervention, School of Psychology has been presented with the Lifetime Achievement in Psychology award by the British Psychological Society Practice Board.

Wales Book of the Year 2020 update. **Zoe Skoulding** was successful in the Poetry Award with Footnotes to Water, and Alys Conran was placed runner up in the Rhys Davies Trust Fiction Award with her novel Dignity. **Ifan Morgan Jones** was awarded both the overall Llyfr y Flwyddyn award and the Golwg Barn y Bobl people's vote award.

In addition, **Caryl Bryn** a former student in the School of Welsh was also nominated in the Poetry category. She went on to win that award.

- D. On behalf of the Council the Chair warmly congratulated the members of staff and students concerned.

20.4 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. The following declarations were made:
- Mrs Marian Wyn Jones, as a member of Arts Council Wales, former member and current consultant of Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board in relation to minute 20.7B[1] and 20.8C
 - Dr Llion Jones, Dr Myfanwy Davies and Mr Tudur Williams as members of staff in relation to minute 20.12
 - Professor Nicky Callow, as an independent member of Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board in relation to minute 20.7B[1]

20.5 COVID-19: UPDATE ON UNIVERSITY RESPONSE

- A. Mr Gareth Wynn Jones, Head of Health and Safety attended the Council to provide an overview of the University's processes in relation to Covid-19.

- B. Members were apprised that considerable effort has been put in place over the summer to ensure that the campus was ready for the start of the academic year, and in particular in order to facilitate in person on campus teaching. The following points were noted:
- [1] The University's Covid-19 Risk Assessment document is regularly updated, and available publicly on the University's website. This headline risk assessment is supplemented by more detailed assessments for activities such as teaching and at a building level;
 - [2] A traffic light classification system is in use, which reflects the Test, Trace and Protect criteria for self-isolation, with activities being classed using a red, amber and green classification process. This approach allows the University to ensure that for timetabled events which are rated green, that they can be undertaken in a Covid secure way. For those activities which are classed red, and regardless of mitigation measures in place, the cohort will need to self-isolate if there was a Covid positive case. Amber activities are those which fall between, where the Test, Trace & Protect team would make a judgement on the need for self-isolation based on the information shared by the University.
 - [3] BCUHB has been excellent in supporting the University with establishing an on-site testing facility for students, which is currently located on the Deiniol Road site, but will shortly move to Ysbyty Enfys on the Ffriddoedd site. Capacity for testing at this facility can be increased to approximately 300 tests per day if demand requires it. The University has a small number of Covid positive cases which are unrelated to University activity. Staff who require testing are seen as key staff and are able to access any of the health board's testing stations across North Wales.
 - [4] The work undertaken by Professor Davey Jones' laboratory in the College of Environmental Sciences and Engineering, undertaking wastewater sampling from both the Ffriddoedd and St Mary's residential campuses is seen as a vital part of the management of Covid cases at the University. This initiative will enable the University to quickly identify whether there is an increasing viral load in the wastewater.
 - [5] Day to day management of student bookings for the testing facility, and also management of Covid positive cases is undertaken through a bespoke Portal which has been built for the University by IT Services. This unique resource in the sector in Wales provides the ability to identify all staff and students who may have attended an event where a person has subsequently reported as Covid-19 positive and be able to quickly identify the Covid risk profile of that event, allowing the University to work with the Test, Trace and Protect service.
- C. The Chair thanked Mr Jones for his presentation and noted that the Council were assured that appropriate processes were in place to manage any positive Covid-19 test

results reported. The Chair also thanked the Executive and all staff who had been working tirelessly over the summer to prepare for the return of students.

- D. The Council were apprised of the recent walk about undertaken by the Chair and the Chair of the Health and Safety Committee, alongside Executive members. The group were shown the work undertaken to ensure that the campus complied with all Welsh Government regulations on social distancing and both the Chair and Professor Roberts advised Council that they were assured by the arrangements put in place. It was noted that the arrangements would be kept under review over the coming months both in relation to changes in regulations and also in relation to how students and staff moved around buildings once the term had started.

20.6 PRESENTATION ON CORPORATE IDENTITY

- A. Ms Westwood was welcomed back to the Council to provide an overview of the work currently being undertaken to update the University's corporate identity.
- B. It was noted that this was not a rebranding exercise but an opportunity to portray the University in a different way, protecting and promoting its history and heritage. Ms Westwood had been working with an agency to develop a new clean and modern brand for the university, with a suite of assets for marketing and promotional materials. Current brand guidelines were 12 years old and weren't being used as often or as consistent as was required, in addition sub-brands were being created without proper oversight and a lack of colour palettes meant that there was an overuse of the colour red. Work had also gone on with a Welsh language copywriter to ensure that the messages in the Welsh language captured the essence of the message and weren't simply a copy of the English content. The Council were provided with a presentation outlining the suggested approach, with an emphasis on the using the shape of the university shield and crest throughout the suite of materials. A wider and stronger colour palette with inspiration taken from the local environment was outlined, with location photographs being used as an enhancement of learning and research. A number of design mock-ups were shared with the Council providing a fresh perspective on marketing the university.
- C. Ms Westwood was thanked for her inspirational presentation to the Council.

20.7 MINUTES

- A. The Minutes of the meeting held on 10th July 2020 were **confirmed**.
- B. With reference to:

[1] **Medical School for North Wales** [Minute 19.108A]; the Vice-Chancellor informed the Council that an announcement was due in the next few days from the Welsh Government confirming its support to the establishment of a Medical School for North Wales and appointing a Task and Finish Group to test the feasibility of the work already completed, with a timeline for reporting in the summer of 2021. The

Council welcomed this update and the Chair thanked the Executive, and in particular Professor Callow for their detailed work in bringing this to fruition.

[2] **Draft Supplemental Charter** [Minute 19.121]; it was reported that the University had made an informal application to the Privy Council, but a response had not yet been received. It was noted that the process would then require the Charter to return to the Council for final deliberation, prior to being submitted to the Privy Council for approval. It was further noted that the Court, at its meeting on 5th August 2020 had discussed the draft Charter and had approved the content, supporting the Council's application to the Privy Council.

[3] **Welsh Language Strategy Committee** (Minute 19.122); it was noted that the proposed membership and terms of reference of the Welsh Language Strategy Committee would be brought to the next meeting of the Nominations and Governance Committee.

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

20.8 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S BUSINESS

A. The Vice-Chancellor noted that in the time since the previous meeting of the Council there had been a period of great uncertainty in relation to the summer's A level results, and in addition the University had managed a challenging but positive clearing campaign during August. It was noted that the implications arising out of this year's decision to cancel written examinations needed to be fully understood in relation to UCAS processes next year, and it was clear that this would be a live issue for the University over the course of the next few months.

B. The Council noted the recent publication of a number of league tables. The Vice-Chancellor reported that the University had not made as much of an improvement in key tables as had been hoped for with the improvement in the Guardian league table being only 3 positions. The position in the Times league table was, however, slightly better with an improvement of 8 places. Improving the University's position in league tables was seen as a significant priority for the University going forward, and the Vice-Chancellor would shortly be convening a Group to focus on improving the situation over the next few years.

C. The University had been in discussions with the other University based Arts Centres in Wales, and with the Welsh Government, around the legacy of Covid-19. The Welsh Government has stated its long-term ambition to see around 30% of Welsh workers working from home or near from home, including after the threat of Covid-19 lessens, and the Arts Centres should work collaboratively to provide opportunities for these home workers to have social opportunities at a local level. Discussions were at an early stage and it was vital that the University continued to engage.

20.9 STUDENTS UNION UPDATE

- A. The Council noted an update on the Students' Union's recent activities, campaigns and events. In particular the following points were noted:
- [1] **Undeb Bangor Website** : A new Undeb Bangor website was developed over the summer and went live at the beginning of September.
 - [2] **Green Impact Excellence Award**: The Students' Union has been awarded the Green Impact Excellence Award, achieving the highest score in the Green Impact Students' Union Awards 2019-20.
 - [3] **Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic**: It was reported that throughout the pandemic the Students' Union had maintained online communication links remotely with the student community and continued to provide services online including academic advice, representation support and course reps.
 - [4] **Q&A with the Executive**: A live Q&A with members of the Executive was arranged where questions about the forthcoming academic year were answered. 150 questions were submitted in advance, and over 4,000 views of the video have been noted.
 - [5] **Welsh-medium Student Mental Health Support**: Work has been ongoing on the creation of a Welsh medium student mental health support website which is due to launch in the coming weeks. Many UMCB students have been involved creating content for the website, which will be an important step forward in ensuring that students have access to services in their first language.
- B. The Chair, on behalf of the Council, thanked both Mr Williams and Mr Evans for an informative report.

20.10 STUDENT RECRUITMENT UPDATE

- A. Members were reminded that the University had prepared three financial scenarios for this year's HEFCW financial forecasts, which were considered by the Finance & Strategy Committee at its meeting in June. The paper provided an update on the current position in relation to home / EU and international student recruitment numbers and sets out the current data against the baseline scenario, the HEFCW best case scenario and the HEFCW worst case scenario.
- B. The number of students admitted (i.e. those expected to enrol) have been tracked daily since the beginning of August, with likely outcomes extrapolated from previous-year trends, and accounting for known issues arising in the unusual circumstances arising during the current year (e.g. re-grading of A-levels; significant increase in clearing offers).
- C. Currently the University is set to recruit c70 more Home / EU undergraduate students more than last year, and c 250 students in addition to the most favourable scenario

modelled. This was a considerable improvement given that projections have been 8% down on last year throughout the majority of the recruitment cycle. For Home / EU postgraduate students the University is set to recruit c115 more students than last year, and c185 students in addition to the most favourable scenario modelled.

- D. In relation to international students the University is set to recruit c230 students, meeting its baseline scenario, but c230 students fewer than last year. For international postgraduate students the situation is that the university is set to recruit c480 students fewer than last year (c80 students lower than the University's baseline scenario).
- E. Overall, this puts the university at around £3m over the baseline at the current time. It is hoped that the retention figures will prove better than projected. It was noted that this is still early days and that the University was monitoring the enrolment figures on a regular basis.

20.11 COVID-19 GOVERNANCE OVERSIGHT GROUP

The Chair presented the minutes of the meeting of the Covid-19 Governance Oversight Group held on 11th August 2020 (attached as Appendix I to the official copy of the minutes), which were *noted*.

20.12 ADDRESSING THE FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

- A. The Vice-Chancellor presented his paper on Addressing the Financial Challenges, and reminded Council that at the last meeting on 10 July 2020, the Council had considered an update on the financial challenges associated with Covid-19 and had noted that the pandemic presented the most profound operational and economic challenge for the University in its entire history. The University has now responded to the immediate operational challenges associated with Covid-19, but it was now necessary to consider fully the implications of the pandemic on the future operations of the University and on its capacity to respond.
- B. It was noted that at its meeting on the 7th September 2020 the Finance & Strategy Committee agreed that:
 - [1] The University needs to reduce its annual recurring operating costs by c. £13m each year subject to the remaining uncertainties outlined in the paper;
 - [2] The Executive should immediately commence a short period of consultation, to give staff/students an opportunity to put forward proposals that could identify the savings required;
 - [3] Should this not identify the necessary level of savings, the University would develop detailed plans to deliver sustainable savings to be presented to the Council meeting on 25 September 2020;

- C. The Council were apprised that a number of consultation meetings have since been held with Trade Union representatives, and feedback has been received from staff suggesting options that the University might consider, in order to identify the necessary savings. However, having considered this feedback, the Executive has concluded that these will not deliver savings of sufficient magnitude, and that the consultation should proceed to a second phase to consult on business cases which would seek to reduce overall staff numbers, subject to the agreement of the Council.
- D. The Council received a summary of the four business cases, including detailed overviews of the proposed changes across academic and professional service areas from Professor Turnbull and Dr Mundy. In addition, Mr Eastwood outlined the current financial position and the projected numbers for the next two years. It was stressed that the five strategic pillars outlined to the Council at its meeting in July would underpin all of the work currently being undertaken. An over-arching document summarising the strategic approach to addressing the financial challenges, which will be provided to staff alongside the Business Cases for Change, was **noted**.
- E. A detailed discussion ensued and the following points, in particular, were made:
- Cash flow figures should be represented without including the EIB loan so that the figures are clearer for Council members to consider;
 - There was concern, given the responses in the Staff Survey, that the University was embarking on yet another restructuring exercise so soon after the previous ones and members sought reassurance from the Vice-Chancellor in relation to the strategic direction and planning processes;
 - Concern was expressed that the timetable associated with the proposed restructuring exercise seems to be rushed, which may impact on student experience, staff and student wellbeing, and student recruitment;
 - Specific concerns were raised in particular around proposed amalgamations of areas of professional services. It was confirmed that at the current time these are proposed changes, and are the subject of consultation;
 - The impact of the changes on the Welsh language and Welsh language provision, and members were reassured that the impact on the Welsh language would be front and centre to all discussions around the structure proposed;
 - Asset disposals were being considered amongst other financial measures;
 - The importance of ensuring that students were also kept fully informed and were part of the consultation process was stressed;
 - Communication with staff, students and external stakeholders was seen as essential during this period;
- F. Having considered all the information presented, and following detailed discussion the Council:

[1] **Formally approved** the plan submitted for restructuring the academic domain and professional services, recognising that such plans are subject to ongoing consultation with the University's recognised trades unions (under s188 TULRCA 1992) and with staff and students, which must be completed before any final

decisions on those proposals are made or any implementation carried out, and furthermore that as a result of such consultation, those plans could change.

- [2] **Noted** that it has confidence that the plans are necessary to deliver the necessary savings and place the University's finances on a firm and stable path for the future.
- [3] **Resolved**, in accordance with Statute XX paragraph 10(2), that it is desirable that there should be a reduction in the Academic Staff (a) of Bangor University as a whole; or (b) of any Faculty, Department, School or other similar area of Bangor University, by way of redundancy. The Council also make clear that this determination does not pre-judge the outcome of S188 consultation with our unions.
- [4] **Resolved**, in accordance with Statute XX paragraph 11(1), to appoint a Redundancy Committee to be constituted in accordance with sub paragraph (3) of paragraph 11(1) to give effect to its decision by such date as it may specify and for that purpose: (a) to select and recommend the requisite members of the Academic Staff for dismissal by reason of redundancy; and (b) to report their recommendations to the appropriate body (the Council).

20.13 ESTATES ANNUAL REPORT

- A. Mr Wiegand presented the Estates Annual Report to Members. The Council were reminded that one of its primary responsibilities was for the University Estate. In addition, HEFCW's Financial Management Code includes a section on prudent management of the Estate and noting that Governing Bodies should receive an annual report outlining Estates' performance. The Report provided members with information on key facts and figures, the transformational programme undertaken within the department, the work undertaken to meet the University's development needs, information on energy and the environment and procurement activities.
- B. The Chair thanked Mr Wiegand for the detailed Report, and Council **confirmed** that the document provided assurance in relation to this primary responsibility.

20.14 STUDENT SURVEYS

- A. The National Student Survey (NSS)

Professor Turnbull presented the outcome of the National Student Survey, which is an annual survey, aimed at final year undergraduates, which gathers students' opinions on the quality of their courses. The data helps to inform prospective students' choices, provides data that supports institutions in improving the student experience, and supports public accountability. It was noted that the University has 19 subjects in the UK top twenty and has 6 programmes with 100% satisfaction. Overall, the satisfaction rate is 85%, putting the University 28th in the UK, and 3rd in Wales.

It was reported that over the last few years the University has had a string of successful NSS outcomes, including above sector benchmark, and UK top-10 performance, both as a University and for a number of our subject areas. The University was disappointed to see a drop in overall satisfaction across the Institution (from 88% to 85%), including in some of its programmes and subject areas. It was reported that there are two substantial factors that appear to have contributed to this outcome which were the strike action over the response period in February and March, and also the effect of Covid-19 and the transition to fully online learning. Professor Turnbull outlined actions to mitigate the drop in overall satisfaction including training opportunities, enhancement of the Virtual Learning Environment, modernising curriculum content and staff/student action planning events.

B. The Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES)

Professor Callow outlined that the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) is the UK higher education sector-wide survey to gain insight from students about their learning and teaching experience. A total of 1667 PGT students across the university were given the opportunity to take part in the PTES 2020. The survey response rate was 31% down from 39% the previous year. The overall satisfaction with their studies was 78%. The University was ranked 48th overall, out of a total of 68 participating institutions.

C. The Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)

Professor Spencer outlined the outcome of the Postgraduate Research Experience Study, which is the UK higher education sector-wide survey to gain insight from postgraduate research students about their learning and supervision experience. A total of 786 PGR students from across the University were given the opportunity to take part in PRES 2020. The survey response rate was 54%, down from 59% in 2019, and overall, the University was ranked 10th out of a total of 45 participating institutions.

D. The Council **noted** the outcome of the three surveys and Professors Turnbull, Callow and Spencer were thanked for their contribution.

20.15 HUMAN TRAFFICKING STATEMENT

The Chief Operating Officer and University Secretary presented the University's annual statement on Slavery and Human Trafficking. The Council **approved** the statement which is to be appended to the University's Accounts for 2019/20.

20.16 REPORT FROM THE EXECUTIVE

A report from the meetings of the Executive held between July 2020 and September 2020 (attached as Appendix II to the official copy of the Minutes) was received.

20.17 FINANCE & STRATEGY COMMITTEE

The Report of the meeting of the Finance and Strategy Committee held on the 7th September 2020 (attached as Appendix III to the official copy of the Minutes) was **approved**.

20.18 AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE

The Report of the meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee held on the 9th September 2020 (attached as Appendix IV to the official copy of the Minutes) was **approved**.

20.19 HUMAN RESOURCES MATTERS

- A. The Council received a report on Human Resources matters and **noted** the update in relation to the National Pay Awards and the Real Living Wage.
- B. A list of recent senior appointments was received for information.
- C. The Council **approved** the request to award Emeritus status to Professor Gary Carvalho.

20.20 REPORT FROM THE HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

An interim report from the Health and Safety Committee was **noted**, as the Committee hadn't met since the last Council meeting (attached as Appendix V to the official copy of the Minutes).

20.21 VALEDICTION

The Chair **noted** that this was Ms Ellen Parry Williams' last Council meeting as she had completed her two terms as an independent member on the Council. On behalf of the Council the Chair thanked Ellen warmly for her dedication and support to the University over the course of many years.