



Bangor University

COUNCIL MINUTES

At a meeting of the Council held in the University on Friday, 12 February 2021.

Present:

Mrs Marian Wyn Jones (Chair), Professor Iwan Davies, Dr Myfanwy Davies, Mr Atul Devani, Mr Iwan Evans, Mr Eric Hepburn, Dr Griff Jones, Dr Llion Jones, Mr Marc Jones, Sir Paul Lambert, Mrs Alison Lea-Wilson, Ms Julie Perkins, Dr Ian Rees, Professor Gareth Roberts, Professor Oliver Turnbull, Mr Henry Williams, Dr Lynne Williams, Mr Tudur Williams and Mrs Gwenan Hine (Secretary).

Bangor Professor included in New Year Honours List

Professor Sandy Toogood, an Honorary Professor at Bangor University's School of Education was awarded a British Empire Medal (BEM) for services to people with intellectual disabilities in the New Year Honours List.

Bangor Clinical Lecturer takes a lead role in Novavax trial

Dr Orod Osanlou, a Senior Clinical Lecturer in Medical Sciences (Pharmacology/Pharmacy) was involved in a global trial of Novavax, a new COVID-19 vaccine, which published very promising interim results recently. This was in his role as the Principal Investigator for the trial at Public Health Wales and Consultant in Clinical Pharmacology and Therapeutics at Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board.

- C. On behalf of the Council the Chair warmly congratulated the members of staff concerned.

20.46 DEATHS

The Chair referred to the recent deaths of:

Mrs Vera Owen,
Former member of staff Student Housing Office

Mrs Vivienne Annette Smith,
Former member of staff in Property and Campus Services

Miss Wenyan Ma,
Student in the School of Ocean Sciences

Mr Ray Davies
Honorary Lecturer, School of Computer Science and Electronic Engineering

Dr Osian Gwynn Ellis
Honorary Fellow

Miss Mara Ostafichuk,
Member of staff in the School of Health Sciences

Mrs Ruth Goggin
Former member of staff in the Registrar's Office and the Academic Registry.

Members fell silent in tribute to their memory.

20.47 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. Dr Llion Jones declared an interest in relation to agendum item 8: *Covid-19 – Addressing the Financial Challenges*.

20.48 RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK (REF) 2021 PRESENTATION

- A. The Chair welcomed Professor Paul Downing, Assistant Pro Vice-Chancellor Research to the meeting. Professor Spencer and Professor Downing provided the Council with

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noted that the University's aspiration over the next two years would be to improve to 90% which would be above the sector norm.

20.50 CHAIR'S BUSINESS

The Chair reported on two items of business which she had dealt with since the last Council meeting:

- A. Following a competitive recruitment exercise Mr Mark Condron was approved as a Professional Trustee to the Board of BUPAS.
- B. The Chair sent a letter to Dr David Blaney, HEFCW formally requesting an increase in the University's financial commitments threshold in order to access funding to support its research base via the Sustaining University Research Expertise Fund (SURE) scheme.

20.51 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S BUSINESS

- A. The Vice-Chancellor drew the Council's attention to a number of specific items of relevance to the Higher Education sector both in Wales and the UK. Further updates were also provided in the briefing paper circulated under agenda item 4. It was noted that there were a number of issues on the horizon which the Vice-Chancellor and the Executive would be monitoring over the coming months.

In particular it was noted that the Comprehensive Spending Review, and the outcome of the Augar Review, may have an impact on minimum entry requirements, student finance and foundation years. In addition, the level of the higher education budget assigned within the Welsh Government budget in early March will be crucial. The Sir Steve Smith update to the UK Government's International Education Strategy provides the University with opportunities to develop its own strategic thinking and to refresh its international strategy.

- B. The Chair thanked the Vice-Chancellor for his update and expressed her continued thanks to the whole Executive team for their leadership. The grateful thanks of the whole Council was also extended to all members of staff who continue to work hard to ensure that students continued to receive high quality education and a positive student experience.

20.52 STUDENTS UNION UPDATE

- A. The Council noted the updates presented by the Students' Union and by UMCB under agenda item 5. Mr Henry Williams and Mr Iwan Evans also highlighted the following key points:
 - The Sabbatical Officers election will be held in March, with campaigning taking place at the start of the month, and the outcome of the elections known by the third week

in March. It was noted that, in agreement with the Chair, the incoming President, and President of UMCB would be invited to shadow at the April Council meeting.

- To ensure that the Council remained briefed on the work of the Students' Union in representing the student voice on Council, discussions were ongoing to arrange a briefing for members from the Sabbatical team during the Spring. Council members welcomed this initiative which would provide independent members, in particular, with an oversight of the work of the Sabbatical Officers.
 - Discussions had been held with members of the University Executive around student rent rebates. It was noted that the University had provided all students in halls with a 10% rebate on halls fees.
 - A recent Q&A with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and the Pro Vice-Chancellors had been well received by students, and further Q&As were being considered.
- B. The Chair, on behalf of the Council, thanked both Mr Williams and Mr Evans for an informative report, for their hard work during the Semester and for their continued

Professor Callow outlined the risks of being unsuccessful in the tender process which would mean a drop in income and student numbers for those lots which the University did not win, however the submission was seen as strong and the team associated with the tender were cautiously optimistic.

It was noted that the outcome of the tender is expected in May 2021, and should the University be successful there were a number of developmental areas to be taken forward quickly such as staff appointments, infrastructure, software and remote campus modelling. In preparation for the bid the School of Health Sciences had already been investing in digital solutions such as purchasing a placement management system and procuring an e-portfolio system. It was noted that this was a growth area in terms of student numbers and that a creative and innovative marketing plan would need to be developed to capitalise on this growth in the market.

- B. The Chair thanked Professor Callow and Dr Williams for their leadership over the last two years in preparing the bid and noted that the Council could take great comfort from the quality of the submission.

20.54 DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN

- A. The Vice-Chancellor introduced the draft Strategic Plan to the Council. It was noted that the Council had been provided with three themed Away Days covering the strategic pillars and cross cutting themes over the last few months, as well as a recent briefing session which provided context on how the Plan had been developed. This was a first opportunity for the Council to provide feedback on the document, which would return to Council in April following consultation. The Council were informed

- The Student's Union were pleased to note the clear inclusion of student experience as a pillar and suggested further consideration on incorporating this across all themes;
- The sustainability aspirations within the plan needed to be more clearly stated within the mission statement;
- The aim of the University to work internationally, regionally and locally needs to run throughout the Plan, and not just in the section on civic mission and bilingualism.

Following the discussion, the Vice-Chancellor confirmed that a period of consultation would be undertaken over the next few weeks, as outlined in the consultation framework provided to the Council at its recent briefing. In addition to consultation with internal and external stakeholders, members of Council would be provided with an opportunity to provide more detailed feedback into the process.

The Chair drew the discussion to a close and paid tribute to the hard work undertaken by everyone who had contributed to bringing the draft document before the Council. The sense of ambition presented by the Plan was welcomed by the members.

- C. Following discussion the Council **approved** the draft Strategic Plan to go out for consultation prior to returning to the Council at its meeting in April 2021.

20.55 COVID-19: ADDRESSING THE FINANCIAL C7 (s)ingan

20.56 ESTATES MATTERS

- A. The Council considered the updates provided in the Action Log in relation to property sales. In particular the Director of Property and Campus Services drew the Council's attention to the following matters:
- [1] The renewal of the licence with the Crown Estate to facilitate the sale of Nantporth Boathouse was ongoing.
 - [2] The disposal of the Pen-y-Ffridd site was ongoing, although it was reported that the outline planning application by the prospective buyer had been refused. The prospective buyers had appealed, and a decision was due in April.
 - [3] The sale of Ynys Faelog was progressing, with the renewal of the licence with the Crown Estate ongoing in order to facilitate exchange of contracts.
 - [4] The exchange of contracts on the sale of Y Felin Tysilio was due imminently.
 - [5] In relation to Capital Developments the work on the Anatomy Lab is due for completion in April, and project boards / teams are being established to

operations showed an improvement to £1212.4m, and cash and short-term investments held as at 31st July 2020 was £32.8m.

- [5] There was a positive outcome from the External Auditors, with the going concern assumption demonstrated until the end of 2021.
- [6] The Letter of Representation, being an annual requirement by the auditors and including additional statements that the Council are confident that future income and saving targets will be met, was also considered.

B. After full consideration, it was **resolved**:

- [1] That the Accounts for 2019/20 be approved and signed by the Chair of Council, the Vice-Chancellor and the Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee and lodged with HEFCW.
- [2] That the Letter of Representation to the Auditors be signed by the Chair of Council.

C. Following a recommendation from the Finance and Strategy Committee (at its meeting on 4th February 2021) relating to the Sustaining University Research Expertise (SURE) funding the Council **resolved** to execute, deliver and perform the Agreement relating to SURE, and in particular to:

- [1] Approve the terms of, and the transactions contemplated by, the SURE funding. It was noted that this comprises of a loan of £1,051,000 as part of total funding of £1,065,826 over a 10-year period with interest charged at 0.55% per annum.
- [2] To authorise Mr Robert Eastwood, Director of Finance (Interim) to execute the Agreement; and
- [3] To authorise Mr Robert Eastwood (Director of Finance (Interim), on Council's behalf, to sign and/or despatch all documents and notices (including the Utilisation Request) required to be signed and/or despatched by Council under or in connection with this Agreement.

20.59 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- A. Professor Spencer outlined to the Council the key points relating to the research grants and contracts data provided. Some overarching trends were outlined, and the Council's attention was drawn, in particular, to the significant downturn in structural funds grants which was EU funding no longer available to the University. The University's recent success in winning funding through UK industry was noted, with academics moving to capitalise on these opportunities post Brexit.

- B. The Chief Marketing Officer provided the Council with an update on student recruitment. It was noted in particular that overall UCAS applications to the University had improved by 29% since last year and were up by 21% over 2 years. The University was outperforming its competitor group and the UK sector. Applications from England domiciled applicants were continuing to increase, up 4% since last year, and up 35% over 2 years. A dip in applications in early January had recovered, with applications now 15% higher than last year, a similar increase to the competitor group and UK sector, and 8% higher than two years ago. As had been expected the significant decrease in EU applications continues, with a drop of 35% since last year, however international applications have recovered and are now 33% higher than last year, and 51% higher than two years ago.

It was agreed

20.64 AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE