

COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held at 13:00 on 14 FEBRUARY 2020, at the Executive Boardroom, Visualisation Centre.

Present: Dr Emyr Roberts, Chair of Council (Chair); the Rt Hon Elfyn Llwyd, Deputy Chair of Council; Professor Elizabeth Treasure, Vice-Chancellor; Professor Tim Woods, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning, Teaching and Student Experience); Mr George Ashworth (via Skype); Mrs Samantha Blackie; Dr Hazel Davey; Ms Anne Davies (via Skype); Mr Tomos Ifan, UMCA President; Mr Ian MacEachern (via Skype); Mr Dhan Ramnatsing, AberSU President; Mrs Fiona Sharp (via Skype); Mr Mark Tweed; Ms Kath Williams; Professor Sir Robin Williams; and Professor Reyer Zwiggelaar.

In attendance: Mr Stephen Forster, Director of Finance and Corporate Services; Mrs Jean Jones, Head of the Vice-Chancellor's Office; Mr Geraint Pugh, University Secretary; and Mr Steve Thomas, Head of Communications and Public Affairs.

Apologies for absence had been received from Ms Meri Huws; and Mr Richard John.

41. MATTERS RAISED BY THE CHAIR

1. Welcome

The following were welcomed to the Council meeting:

1. Mark Tweed, who had commenced his term as an Independent Member on 01 January 2020; and
2. Steve Thomas, who had commenced as the University's new Head of Communications and Public Affairs on 27 January 2020.

2. Condolences

Sympathies were expressed following the deaths of:

1. Katie Evans, third year student at the Department of Law and Criminology;
2. Melanie Evans, former Music Assistant at the University Music Centre;
3. Professor John Wyn Owen CB, Honorary Fellow of the University;
4. Professor Maldwyn Mills, former member of staff in the then English Language and Literature department; and
5. Emeritus Professor Glanville Price, former Professor of Romances Languages in the then European Languages department.

3. Review of Governance of the Universities in Wales

1. Further to the update at the last Council meeting, Gillian Camm had completed her review of higher education governance arrangements in Wales. This review

had been commissioned jointly by the Chairs of Universities Wales (ChUW) and Universities Wales, with the full support of HEFCW. The report would be published on 19 February 2020, and a copy would be circulated to all Council members for information at that point.

2. In response to Gillian Camm's report, ChUW and Universities Wales had agreed a Governance Charter for Universities in Wales as well as a series of actions which every university in Wales had committed to implement. The Charter and action plan would also be published on 19 February 2020, and shared with Council members.
3. A fuller report would be presented to the next Governance and Compliance Committee (GCC) on how the University would go about implementing the actions (**ACTION:** University Secretary).
4. Briefing session
Briefing sessions on employability; and research into the Kindertransport 1938–39 to the UK had been held for Council members in advance of the formal meeting. Videos of these informal sessions would be made available via SharePoint for the benefit of those members not able to attend during the morning (**ACTION:** University Secretary).
5. Informal meeting of Independent Members
An informal meeting of Independent Members with the Vice-Chancellor had been held in advance of the formal governing body meeting. The Chair summarised the matters discussed during that informal meeting. All matters related to items to be discussed during the formal meeting and would be considered further under the appropriate agenda item.
6. Order of Business
In order to provide sufficient time for the strategic discussion on human resources, all other items requiring decisions would be promoted on the agenda so that they could be considered first.

42. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

NOTED

No conflicts of interest were declared in relation to the business to be transacted during the meeting.

43. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RECEIVED

Minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2019 (COU1920-079).

RESOLVED

That the minutes be confirmed as a correct record.

44. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

RECEIVED

A log setting out the progress made in taking forward decisions and actions agreed at the most recent Council meeting, and outstanding actions from previous meetings (COU1920-080).

NOTED

The updates provided in the decisions log.

45. DECISIONS TAKEN BETWEEN MEETINGS

RECEIVED

Report by the University Secretary (COU1920-081).

NOTED

1. The report detailed the instances since the last Council meeting when matters had been approved by members via correspondence, or by the Chair on behalf of Council.
2. The matter approved by members via correspondence was: the University's response to the HEFCW Consultation on an additional governing body assurance statement relating to quality.
3. The matter approved by the Chair of Council on behalf of the governing body was: the submission of the Fee and Access Plan 2018–19 Compliance and Effectiveness Report to HEFCW, on the recommendation of the Fee and Access Plan Working Group and the University Executive.

46. CORRESPONDENCE

1. Fee and Access Plan 2017–18

NOTED

On 16 January 2020, the Chief Executive of HEFCW had written to the Chair of Council to advise that the Funding Council's process to monitor compliance with and evaluate the effectiveness of the University's Fee and Access Plan for 2017–18 had been completed.

47. VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT

RECEIVED

Report by the Vice-Chancellor (COU1920-083).

NOTED

1. The report consisted of three key parts: a highlight report; a planning and student recruitment report; and a communications report.
2. Members welcomed the progress being made in improving the number of Home / EU undergraduate applications to study at the University. However, the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus over recent weeks was likely to impact on recruitment efforts in

China. The impact on other universities more dependent on recruiting students from China was also expected to lead to an even more competitive clearing cycle this year as those institutions attempt to fill their surplus places.

3. The University's Veterinary School, delivered jointly with the Royal Veterinary College, would be officially launched by the Welsh Government (WG) Chief Veterinary Officer on 28 February 2020. The Head of the new Vet School had also been appointed, with the successful applicant looking to commence in post in the near future.
4. A recent press coverage had highlighted the use of Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs) in the UK higher education sector. In response to a question by a Council member, the Vice Chancellor stated that she was not aware of any NDAs having been signed by the University outside of normal redundancy arrangements.
4. The new Head of Communications and Public Affairs would be working two days each week in Cardiff, to enable the University to better keep in touch with key stakeholders who are based in the capital.

48. HEALTH AND SAFETY UPDATE

RECEIVED

Report by the Health, Safety and Environmental Manager (COU1920-084).

NOTED

The report provided a summary update on health and safety, drawing on the fuller report which would be presented to GCC on 19 March 2020.

49. REPORT BY ABERYSTWYTH UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' UNION

RECEIVED

Report by Aberystwyth University Students' Union (AberSU) (COU1920-085).

NOTED

1. The report provided an update on developments at AberSU since the last meeting of the University's Council.
2. At the AberSU Senedd meeting on 04 November 2019, AberSU members had agreed to lobby the University to affiliate with Electronics Watch, a European-wide labour rights monitoring organisation for the electronics industry. It was clarified that the University was already affiliated through the purchasing consortium used to procure electronic equipment.
3. Members queried the arrangements in place at AberSU with respect to use by students of their own vehicles on Union-related business, and of the minibuses managed by AberSU. The University had offered copies of its *Driver Safety Handbook* to AberSU since the principles set out could be equally applied at AberSU.

50. FINANCIAL MATTERS

1. Financial Update

RECEIVED

Report by Deputy Director of Finance, Mark Godsell (COU1920-086).

NOTED

The report set out the University's financial performance to the end of Quarter 1 (31 October 2019), together with an update on key variances. Members discussed the report, and were advised that the institution was forecast to meet its agreed budgetary outturn for the current academic year.

2. Sustainability Implementation Plan

RECEIVED

Report by the Director of Finance and Corporate Services; the Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development; Assistant Director of Finance Mark Godsell; and Management Accountant Mark Davies (COU1920-087).

NOTED

1. The Sustainability Implementation Plan (SIP) encompassed several streams of work, all with the aim of improving the efficiency, effectiveness and financial sustainability of the University. The three main strands were: change efficiencies; developing a strategic vision; and delivering the longer-term strategic plan for the University.
2. The report confirmed that £11.8m in recurrent savings would now be achieved against the original SIP target of £11.4m. Members considered the report in detail, which proposed that the SIP be formally closed, now the savings required had been achieved.
3. The Vice-Chancellor was congratulated on her leadership in the successful implementation of the SIP. However, members were reminded that it was essential that the University continued to manage its underlying cost base. The steps taken as part of the SIP also meant that it was now appropriate to start implementing business and cultural improvements within the institution.
4. The University Executive had decided to end the University's current Voluntary Severance (VS) scheme to coincide with Council formally agreeing to close the SIP. It was felt that closing the VS scheme would send an important signal to staff.
5. Members were advised that work was already underway on a 'lessons learned' review of the SIP process. A report, which was expected to focus on the processes relating to the delivery of SIP, would be presented to the next GCC meeting.

RESOLVED

6. To formally close the SIP programme relating to the delivery of the recurrent financial target of £11.4m (**ACTION:** Vice-Chancellor).

51. STRATEGIC MATTERS

1. Revisions to Key Performance Indicators' targets

RECEIVED

Report by the Head of Planning (COU1920-088).

NOTED

1. A one-year review of the University's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) had been undertaken, which had led to a series of recommendations to adjust some stretch targets, change the Executive ownership of some KPIs, and to introduce a new colour coding system for KPI reporting.
2. The report had originally been presented directly to Council on 25 November 2019. However, members at that meeting had requested that the Resources and Performance Committee (RPC) scrutinise the recommended revisions to KPI targets. RPC in turn had considered the report at its meeting on 30 January 2020.
3. While RPC were generally content with the revisions proposed, it was recommended that the Home / EU undergraduate intake target remain unchanged, and that more stretching targets are proposed for those KPIs where the University was already meeting its targets.
4. It was recognised that, now that the SIP has been formally completed, the University should look to drive staff behaviours on the basis of the delivery of the 2018–23 Strategic Plan and its associated KPIs.

RESOLVED

5. To approve the proposed revisions to KPI targets, subject to retaining the current Home / EU undergraduate intake target (**ACTION:** Head of Planning).
 6. That revised, more stretching targets are proposed for those KPIs where the University was already meeting its targets (**ACTION:** Head of Planning).
2. Key Performance Indicators

RECEIVED

Report by the Head of Planning (COU1920-089).

NOTED

The report presented current data points for the KPIs which had been agreed by Council to monitor the delivery of the institutional Strategic Plan.

52. **FFRIDD/GARN LEASE**

RECEIVED

Report by the Reader in Upland Agroecosystems (COU1920-090).

NOTED

1. The University had originally entered a 12-year lease with the WG with respect to Pwllpeiran in September 2013. There was now an opportunity to take on a further lease for the Fridd/Garn parcel of land adjacent to Pwllpeiran.

2. While this proposal had been under discussion between WG and the University for a considerable period, a formal agreement had not yet been reached. Nevertheless, the Fridd/Garn land had already been used for fieldwork by IBERS and Geography and Earth Sciences students.
3. The matter had been considered by RPC on 30 January 2020 where members had recommended that Council approve the lease, subject to clarification regarding the need to repair some fencing. Assurances had since been received that the improvement works required could be set against the proposed annual rent.

RESOLVED

4. To approve the proposal to enter a five-year lease for the Ffridd/Garn parcel of land with WG, to run in parallel with the remainder of the main holding lease for Pwllpeiran (**ACTION:** Reader in Upland Agroecosystems).

53. POLICY MATTERS

1. Revisions to Endowments

RECEIVED

Report by the Director of Development and Alumni Relations; and Temporary Financial Accountant Alan Graham (COU1920-091).

NOTED

1. The report proposed revisions to the terms of two restricted endowments – both of which would require approval from the Charity Commission – as well as the closure of an Endowment Campaign Fund where the money raised had all been committed in accordance with the terms communicated to the donors when that Fund was established.
2. The report had been considered at the RPC meeting on 30 January 2020 where members had recommended that the proposals be approved by Council, subject to obtaining clarification as to whether Masters and PhD students should be eligible for support from Peter Hancock Scholarship Fund in future. It was confirmed that such students would be eligible for support.

RESOLVED

3. To agree to (**ACTION:** Temporary Financial Accountant Alan Graham):
 1. approach the Charity Commission for its agreement with respect to the Glyn Rowlands Scholarship Fund;
 2. approach the Charity Commission for its agreement to revise the terms of the Peter Hancock Scholarship Fund; and
 3. formally close the 1997 Endowment Campaign Fund.
2. Donations Acceptance Policy

RECEIVED

Report by the Director of Development and Alumni Relations; and the University Secretary (COU1920-092).

NOTED

1. The University's Donations Acceptance Policy had been last revised in June 2017, and had been due for review the following year. However, this had not been undertaken as planned due to the University-wide restructure.
2. The current Policy had now been reviewed and a number of minor revisions were being proposed – mainly to reflect changes in roles, deleting references to the Mauritius branch campus, and updating references to other publications.
3. The proposed revisions had been considered and endorsed by RPC members on 30 January 2020.

RESOLVED

3. To approve the proposed revisions, subject to addressing an omission at point 5.7 (**ACTION:** University Secretary).

54. STRATEGIC DISCUSSION: HUMAN RESOURCES

RECEIVED

Presentation by the Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development (COU1920-097).

NOTED

1. The presentation provided statistics in relation to the University's workforce and employment practice, the strategies being progressed, and the matters currently being discussed with Trade Union representatives.
2. The presentation was intended to encourage debate amongst Council members, and it was discussed in detail – particularly with respect to the steps which could be taken to become a higher performing University. It was suggested Council's risk appetite on many matters would ultimately depend on the size of individual issues and potential gains.
3. The Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development was thanked for the thoughtful and engaging presentation. GCC would be kept apprised as appropriate of any further development on the matters raised during the presentation.

55. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

RECEIVED

Members received reports on the following for information:

1. Summary Corporate Risk Register (COU1920-093); and
2. Documents affixed with the Common Seal (COU1920-094).

NOTED

3. The contents of the reports presented for information.

56. REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES

RECEIVED

A composite report comprising the following (COU1920-095):

1. Resources and Performance Committee (30 January 2020); and
2. Investments Committee (15 November 2019).

NOTED

3. The reports received from the sub-committees.