

COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held at 10:00 on 12 MAY 2022, in The Tower, Llandinam.

Present: Dr Emyr Roberts, Chair of Council (Chair); Ms Meri Huws, Deputy Chair of Council; Professor Elizabeth Treasure, Vice-Chancellor; Professor Tim Woods, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning, Teaching and Student Experience); Ms Kate Eden; Ms Kylie Evans (until Minute 59); Dr Louise Marshall; Ms Sabina O'Donoghue, AberSU President; Ms Rhuanedd Richards; Mr Mark Tweed; Professor Sir Robin Williams, and Professor Reyer Zwiggelaar.

In attendance: Mr Stephen Forster, Director of Finance and Corporate Services; Mr Steve Thomas; Head of Communications and Public Affairs; and Ms Kath Williams, Interim University Secretary, Chris Davies, Head of Estates Development (for Item 56) and Professor Colin McInnes, Pro Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation (for Item 65).

Apologies for absence had been received from Professor Simon Green, Ms Sharron Lusher, Ms Mared Edwards, UMCA President, Dr William Williams and Ms Jean Jones, Head of the Vice-Chancellor's Office. In order to ensure that the meeting was quorate for items requiring Council approval, the Non-Academic Staff Representative left at the end of Item 58.

47. MATTERS RAISED BY THE CHAIR

1. Condolences

Sympathies were expressed following the death of:

1. Professor Ken Walters FRS, former Distinguished Research Professor in the Department of Mathematics and the Faculty of Business and Physical Sciences.
2. Adrian Mironas, former student at IBERS, a member of the International Office team and a significant contributor to student life and learning at Aberystwyth.
3. Emeritus Professor John Roland Haynes, an Aberystwyth Geology graduate and former member of the Department of Geography and Earth Sciences.

2. Meeting Conduct

In order to ensure an effective meeting, members had been asked to provide advance warning should they wish to discuss any item marked with an asterisk on the agenda. There had been no such requests, and the items in question would therefore be approved or noted in accordance with the recommendation set out on the coversheet.

3. Extension to Pro Vice-Chancellor Contracts

TABLED

A confidential document by the University Secretary (COU2122-102).

NOTED

1. Four Pro Vice-Chancellors would reach the end of their current term on 31 July 2022. As per Ordinance 4, a recommendation was received from the Vice-Chancellor to extend the terms of the four listed members of staff to 31 July 2025.
2. Members were unanimous in their support for the recommendation to extend the terms of the Pro Vice-Chancellors.

RESOLVED

3. That the terms of office of the *Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning, Teaching and Student Experience)* Prof Tim Woods; *Pro Vice-Chancellor (Faculty of Earth and Life Sciences)*; Prof Neil Glasser; *Pro Vice-Chancellor (Faculty of Business and Physical Sciences)* Prof Qiang Shen; *Pro Vice-Chancellor (Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences)* Professor Anwen Jones, be extended to 31 July 2025 [**ACTION:** Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development].
4. Council Membership
A verbal update
 1. The term of Meri Huws, Deputy Chair of Council, had ended on 30 April 2022. Meri Huws had served as Independent Member since 1 May 2019 and, as per the previous Ordinance, was appointed for a term of 3 years. As per Ordinance 9, members were now eligible for re-appointment for 4-year terms and the Chair recommended that the term of office for Meri Huws was extended to 30 April 2026.
 2. Members unanimously endorsed the Chair's recommendation.

RESOLVED

3. That the term of office for Meri Huws as Independent Member and Deputy Chair of Council be extended until 30 April 2026 [**ACTION:** University Secretary].
5. Chair of Resources and Performance Committee
 1. Following Fiona Sharp's resignation from Council and as Chair of Resources and Performance Committee, the Chair had invited Kate Eden to Chair RPC, subject to Council approval.
 2. Members unanimously endorsed the Chair's recommendation.

RESOLVED

3. That Kate Eden would formally take over as Chair of Resources and Performance Sub-Committee from 1 May 2022 [**ACTION:** University Secretary].
4. The Chair and Secretary had received a communication from Mr Owen Evans stating that in view of his appointment as Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools in Wales, and the possible conflict of interest with his role as a member of Council, he had reluctantly tendered his resignation as a member of Council and its sub-committees. Owen was thanked for his contribution to the work of the University.

48. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

NOTED

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

49. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RECEIVED

Minutes of the meeting held on 04 February 2022 (COU2122-078).

RESOLVED

That the minutes be confirmed as a correct record and item 37.8 and 37.10 redacted prior to publication of the minutes [**ACTION:** University Secretary].

50. 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 (COU2122-079).

NOTED

1. The updates provided in the decisions log.
2. Members noted, under 37.3, further concerns regarding recruitment to PGCE courses in Wales, highlighting in particular the challenges regarding recruitment to science subjects and Welsh-medium teaching.

51. DECISIONS TAKEN BETWEEN MEETINGS

RECEIVED

Report by the University Secretary (COU2122-080).

NOTED

1. A note of the decisions taken between meetings by correspondence or Chair's Action.

52. CORRESPONDENCE

1. Institutional Risk Review

RECEIVED

Letter from Dr David Blaney, HEFCW (COU2122-081)

NOTED

2. The letter informed Aberystwyth University of the outcome of HEFCW's most recent Institutional Risk Review (IRR). The University was assessed as being at 'Moderate' risk, and improving, having previously been assessed at 'high' risk.
3. Members welcomed this assessment and congratulated the Vice-Chancellor and colleagues for the progress made.
4. Members highlighted the reference to the strategic leadership and resources for widening access noting that this matter would be further emphasised in the strategic objectives of the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (CTER). It was agreed that a session should be included on the agenda for the Council strategy meeting in September to update members on the strategy for widening participation in the University.

RESOLVED

5. To include an item on widening access at the Council strategy meeting in September 2022 [**ACTION:** University Secretary].

53. VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT

RECEIVED

Report by the Vice-Chancellor (COU2122-082)

NOTED

1. The report consisted of three key parts: a highlight report; a planning and student enrolment report; and a communications report.
2. The Quality Enhancement Review (QER) had taken place during the week beginning 26 April 2022. Although the final report was not available, early indications were that the outcome was overwhelmingly positive with commendations in several important areas. It was agreed that the full report would be brought back to Council at the July 2022 meeting.
3. The results of REF 2021 were published on Thursday 12 May 2022. Members were advised that there had been an improvement in the quality of outputs at Aberystwyth University but that the University's relative position compared to the overall sector had declined due to a greater improvement in other universities. Aberystwyth University returned a similar number of staff compared with 2014 but others in Wales had returned substantially more. As a result, the proportion of staff in Wales returned by Aberystwyth University had reduced from 16% in 2014 to 10% in 2021. It was also noted that the results were a measure of activity between 2013 and 2019 when the university had made strategic decisions away from research. Whilst there would be a financial impact and an anticipated decrease in QR income, it was expected that HEFCW would mitigate some of those losses in the forthcoming financial year. The university was clear in its ambition to grow its research activity and quality of research output and delivering on the agreed strategic objectives for research was key to that.

RESOLVED

4. To update Council regarding the final QER outcome at the July 2022 meeting [**ACTION:** Pro Vice-Chancellor, Learning, Teaching and the Student Experience].

54. HEALTH AND SAFETY UPDATE

RECEIVED

Report by the Health, Safety and Environmental Manager (COU2122-083).

NOTED

1. The report provided an interim summary update on health and safety activity.
2. The report had been received at the Governance and Compliance Committee in March 2022. The Action Plan had been re-worked to incorporate a new set of target dates prioritising matters to address 6, 12 and 18 month intervals. This, alongside the progress made with recruiting to vacant posts in the area, increased confidence in the achievability of the action plan.
3. The University was undergoing a full review of its Business Continuity Management Systems which had included training for Executive Group members in the implementation of a strategic response to disaster recovery.

55. REPORT BY ABERYSTWYTH UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' UNION

RECEIVED

Report by AberSU President (COU2122-084).

NOTED

1. The report provided an update on developments at AberSU since the last meeting of the University's Council.
2. The SU elections had taken place in March 2022.
3. Students, including the UMCA President, would be involved in the preparations for the announcement of the Urdd's Peace and Goodwill message in Oslo during week of 16 May 2022.
4. The Staff and Student Awards 2022 had taken place on 3 May 2022 and had been a successful event. The Pro Vice-Chancellor for Learning, Teaching and the Student Experience was thanked for his support.
5. The Head of Communications also thanked the SU for their cooperation and engagement with the work of the Communications and Public Affairs team.
6. UMCA was congratulated for their success in the Eisteddfod Rhyng-golegol 2022, having come second to Cardiff.

56. ESTATES IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

RECEIVED

Report by Chris Davies, Deputy Director of Estates, Facilities and Residences; and Andrea James, Director of Estates, Facilities and Residences (COU2122-085).

NOTED

1. The Estates Implementation Plan had been received and endorsed in principle by the Resources and Performance Committee in March 2022. The report included the full range of ambitions and costs but also an early indication of priorities in years 1-3 and beyond; creating the capacity to free space for academic endeavour; addressing current weaknesses and the creation of an administration block at the entrance to campus. This was a development recommended for an early point in the programme in order to enable the consolidation of a number of professional service departments occupying other areas of campus, which could then be freed to allow for the strategic growth and development of the provision.
2. That identifying funding remained challenging particularly as considerable investment had been made, and would continue to be made, in hidden essential maintenance and remedial works.
3. Members noted the following points for consideration in the development of detail for the programme: considering demolishing as well as development for parts of the estate; potential synergies with private-sector organisations when developing new infrastructure; consideration the university's profile and reputation in the community; and of the relevance and importance of particular existing spaces to external stakeholders.
4. The detail concerning the review of the requirements for specialised research space remained outstanding and was required.
- 5.. The plan had been broadly accepted by RPC subject to consideration of the needs arising from the research strategy; questions of sustainability and well-being and preserving heritage. Projects emerging from the plan should also include consideration of new ways of working following the pandemic and the need to incorporate a more flexible working environment.

RESOLVED

6. To welcome the direction of travel outlined and, as per RPC's discussion, accept the report as a first step towards the implementation of a master-plan with individual project outlines and details being submitted for scrutiny at the appropriate point.
7. To report substantively on the evaluation of current research spaces and outline recommendations for the development of specialist research facilities, recognising that these cannot be based on current departmental configurations. [**ACTION:** Head of Estates Development].
8. To begin the process of identifying funding streams for the programme's individual projects [**ACTION:** Director of Finance and Corporate Services].

57. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

RECEIVED

Report by Steve Walsh, Head of Planning (COU2122-086)

NOTED

1. The Key Performance Indicators for Quarter 2 were received by Council updates recorded since Quarter 1 to research income and finance.
2. This was the second year since the introduction of the new Graduate Outcomes survey and the response rate had been very low. It was noted that members would welcome closer consideration of this and the employability strategy more generally at the Council away-day in September.

RESOLVED

3. To include a session on employability on the agenda for the September away-day meeting of Council [**ACTION:** University Secretary].

58. FINANCIAL MATTERS

1. Management Accounts

RECEIVED

Report by the Deputy Director of Finance, Mark Godsell (COU2122-087).

NOTED

The report set out the University's financial performance to the end of Month 5 (31 January 2022).

1. The University remained on target to achieve its budgeted £0.1m surplus budget, supported by in-year grants from HEFCW of £2.3m, for investments in the maintenance and equipment for carbon net zero and the digital economy; and a further £1.03m in additional QR income.
2. The Management Accounts had been received at the March meeting of Resources and Performance Committee at which point the position had been noted, in particular regarding the pre-buying strategy used for managing rising energy costs.
3. As noted under Decisions taken between Meetings, approval had been given through Chair's Action for the 12-month extension to the Revolving Credit Facility. The current term had been due to end in May 2023, and notice to extend was required 12 months in advance of that end date. Following approval, the facility was now due to end in May 2024.

RESOLVED

4. To note the report as outlined.
2. Key Budget Assumptions

RECEIVED

Report by the Deputy Director of Finance, Mark Godsell (COU2122-088).

NOTED

1. The University budget had been prepared as part of a 5 Year Financial Forecast, setting the financial parameters for the year. The report summarised the University's planning assumptions based on the latest available information.
2. Members were advised that the final pay offer agreed for 2022/2023 had been favourable compared to the budget assumed. A flat rate for QR income had also been assumed, which would remain the case for the forthcoming year but was very likely to decrease in out years.

RESOLVED

3. To note the report as outlined.

3. Fee and Access Plan

RECEIVED

Report by Professor Tim Woods, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning Teaching and Student Experience) and Dr Sarah Taylor, Head of Strategic Development (COU2122-089).

NOTED

1. That the report had been drafted in consultation with the Students' Union and had been approved through Chair's Action in order to meet the HEFCW deadline. This was a response to HEFCW's request for a two year plan, covering 2023/24 to 2024/25. HEFCW had not requested details of activities, expenditure or targets. However, work on these would continue to ensure that the plans were properly implemented and that the University was able to provide appropriate assurance to Council and HEFCW as required.

RESOLVED

2. To note the content of the plan as approved.

59. OLD COLLEGE

RECEIVED

Report by Director of Welsh Language and External Engagement (COU2122-090).

NOTED

1. At the February 2022 meeting of Council and subsequently at Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee in March 2022, members had requested confirmation of the means by which the governing body would be informed of progress with the Old College Project. A recommendation was put to Council to establish an Old College Project Oversight Group to provide additional monitoring of the project's progress, meeting on a quarterly basis and reporting to Council via the Executive Group and RPC.
2. Council were also requested to approve the nomination of a member of the governing body to sit on the Oversight Group and Meri Huws, Deputy Chair of Council, had been nominated.

RESOLVED

2. To approve the recommendation to establish a Project Oversight Group and to further approve the nomination of Meri Huws, Deputy Chair of Council, to sit on the Oversight Group.

60. APPROVAL FOR THE NAMING OF THE BEATRICE EDGELL LABORATORY

RECEIVED

Report by the University Secretary (COU2122-091)

NOTED

1. A request had been made to the Executive Group under the Policy for the Naming of University Buildings and Physical Spaces. The request was to name a laboratory space in the Department of Psychology in honour of Professor Beatrice Edgell, an alumna of Aberystwyth University and significant figure in the development of Psychology as an academic discipline. Council was requested to approve the recommendation made by the Executive Group. The recommendation was unanimously accepted.

RESOLVED

2. To formally approve the recommendation for the naming of the space in the Department of Psychology as The Beatrice Edgell Laboratory.

61. BUILDING NAMING POLICY UPDATES

RECEIVED

Report by the University Secretary and Head of the Vice-Chancellor's Office (COU2122-092)

NOTED

1. Having operated the Policy for the Naming of University Buildings and Physical Spaces, some amendments to the policy were recommended. Members were invited to note, in particular, the additional steps for assessing risks associated with any naming proposals and secondly the considerations of Welsh-language versions or equivalents of proposed names.

RESOLVED

2. To revise and publish the Naming of University Buildings and Physical Space policy as recommended [**ACTION:** University Secretary].

62. DISPOSAL OF ASSETS

RECEIVED

Report by Andrea James, Director of Estates, Facilities and Residences (COU2122-093)

NOTED

1. In 2017, Council approved the Disposal of Assets report, which identified nineteen properties as being surplus to requirements. This included academic, residential,

domestic and land across the Estate. On 26 November 2021, Council considered a paper on affordability considerations for the Old College project in arriving at a decision to the appointment of a main contractor for the Old College project. That paper recommended asset disposals of up to £2.0m along with divestment from investments held by the University and subject to further fundraising efforts.

2. The proposed paper had been received at Resources and Performance Committee in March 2022 at which point it had been approved subject to removing Gogerddan Mansion from the list of proposed disposals. Members were also advised that the detailed proposals for the disposal of Llanbadarn remained pending.
3. Members were advised that considerations regarding disposal sites were subject to due diligence in terms of potential reputational issues.

RESOLVED

4. To approve the proposed strategy for the disposal of the assets as listed subject to removal of Gogerddan Mansion. It was further noted that the university's Bank would be informed of any significant approved disposals as per the Revolving Credit Facility agreement in place [**ACTION:** Director of Finance and Corporate Affairs].

63. WIND FARM LEASE OPTION PROPOSAL

RECEIVED

Report by Dr Tim Macy, Space Planning Manager (COU2122-094)

NOTED

1. A proposal had been received for approval to enter into a lease agreement with Waun Hesgog Energy Park Limited for a parcel of university-owned farmland (Rhydyronen) for development as a windfarm. The University was one of 20 property owners in the area who had entered into similar agreements. The proposal was being presented to Council for approval as it formally constituted a disposal of assets. It was noted that the land was also being used for tree-planting and that this development would remain unaffected with relevant areas both tree planting and the wind farm development indicated in the Option Agreement (COU2122-094e).

RESOLVED

2. To approve the recommendation to enter into a lease agreement for the parcel of land on Rhydyronen Farm as outlined. [**ACTION:** University Space and Asset Manager].

64. COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

RECEIVED

Report by Steve Thomas, Head of Communications and Public Affairs (COU2122-095)

NOTED

1. A Communication and Public Affairs Strategy was presented for noting and formal approval by Council. The accompanying presentation outlined the structural arrangements which safeguarded the distinctiveness of Faculties whilst ensuring some

oversight at central University level of the messaging and communications more generally. It was agreed that including research *impact* should be added to the core strategic objectives. Members were further advised, with regard to the strategic interrelationships, that a member of the communications team was in attendance for meetings of the Faculty Research Committees and that this facilitated consistency of messaging as well as ensuring an appropriate level of oversight for research matters.

RESOLVED

2. To approve the Strategy subject to the addition of research impact under the core strategic objectives [**ACTION:** Head of Communications and Public Affairs].

65. RESEARCH AND INNOVATION STRATEGY – MID-TERM PROGRESS REVIEW

RECEIVED

Report by Colin McInnes, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research, Knowledge Exchange and Innovation) (COU2122-096)

NOTED

1. A Research and Innovation Strategy had been approved by Council in 2019 which included five key principles to underpin the university's approach to R&I, and 35 actions to develop the research environment. The context over the past two years had been challenging, specifically Covid-19 had brought significant disruption to research activity. Members' attention was drawn to the signing of the two Concordats: the Concordat to Support the Development of Researchers and the Knowledge Exchange Concordat. The latter in particular underpinned a further recent development which was a new HEFCW fund (Research Innovation Wales Fund) intended to address some of the underfunding of HEIs in Wales by providing additional resource to support innovation activities and research support capacity within the University.
2. Members were advised of four additional strategic objectives for incorporation into the strategy covering: the opportunities for promoting research arising from 150th anniversary celebrations; the implications of the 'digital shift' for R&I and the infrastructure to support this; engagement with Emeritus staff; engagement of professional services across the University to improve understanding of the research landscape post-Covid.

RESOLVED

3. To approve the updated Research and Innovation Strategy as outlined and accept the four additional strategic objectives.

66. SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS FOR APPROVAL

RECEIVED

Report by the University Secretary outlining four items from Sub-Committees presented for formal approval (COU2122-097)

NOTED

1. The updated Health, Safety and Environment Action Plan (GCC2122-029)

2. The Students' Union Code of Practice (GCC2122-035).
3. The request to adopt the IHRA non-legally binding working definition of antisemitism and the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) recommendation for the adoption of the definition of Islamophobia (SEN2122-025).
4. The recommendation to reconfigure IBERS as currently constituted into two separate academic units comprising a research institute (IBERS) and an academic department (The Department of Life Sciences) (SEN2122-025)

RESOLVED

5. To approve the updated Health, Safety and Environment Action Plan and Students' Union Code of Practice as recommended by the meeting of Governance and Compliance Committee dated 10 March 2022.
6. To adopt the IHRA non-legally binding working definition of antisemitism and the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) recommendation for the adoption of the definition of Islamophobia as recommended by Senate at the meeting dated 17 November 2021.
7. To approve the reconfiguration of IBERS as currently constituted into two separate academic units as recommended by Senate at the meeting dated 23 March 2022.

67. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

RECEIVED

Members received reports on the following for information:

1. Summary Corporate Risk Register (COU2122-098); and
2. Report on meeting dates for 2022-23 (COU2122-099);

NOTED

3. The contents of the reports presented for information.

68. STUDENT SUPPORT AND EMPLOYABILITY DEVELOPMENTS

RECEIVED

Presentation by Ian Munton, Head of Student Support Services and Careers Services (COU2122-100)

NOTED

THIS ITEM WAS DEFERRED TO A FUTURE MEETING

69. REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES

RECEIVED

A composite report comprising the minutes of the following (COU2122-075):

1. Governance and Compliance (10 March 2022);

2. Investments (10 March 2022);
3. Audit, Risk and Assurance (11 March 2022);
4. Senate (23 March 2022) and (17 November 2021); and
5. Resources and Performance (25 March 2022)

NOTED

6. The reports received from the sub-committees.

70. ANY OTHER BUSINESS, MEETING REVIEW, AND FUTURE BUSINESS

NOTED

1. This was Sabina O'Donoghue's and Mared Edwards's final meeting of Council, and both were thanked for their contribution to the work of Council during the year. New Students' Union Officers would be joining Council for the July 2022 meeting.
2. This was also the final in-person meeting opportunity for Professor Sir Robin Williams, although there would be one further on-line meeting of Council in July. Sir Robin was thanked for his invaluable contribution to the work of the University during his term on Council.