



## COUNCIL

### Minutes of the meeting held at 13:00 on 10 FEBRUARY 2023, via Microsoft Teams.

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 Kylie Evans; Professor Simon Green; Ms Sharron Lusher; Dr Louise Marshall; Ms Rhuanedd Richards; Aisleen Sturrock, AberSU President; Mr Arwel Thomas; Mr Mark Tweed; Ms Claire Vaughan; Dr William Williams; Ms Nicola Wood; and Professor Reyer Zwiggelaar.

In attendance: Dr Rhodri Llwyd Morgan, Director of Welsh Language and External Engagement (for minute 49); Dr Gwawr Taylor, University Secretary; Mr Steve Thomas; Head of Communications and Public Affairs, and Jean Jones Head of the Vice-Chancellor's Office.

Apologies for absence had been received from Kate Eden, who will return to her role on Council in April 2023, and Dafi Jones, UMCA President.

### 39. MATTERS RAISED BY THE CHAIR

#### 1. Welcome

Members were welcomed to the meeting.

Dr Gwawr Taylor, University Secretary was welcomed to her first meeting of Council.

#### 2. Condolences

Sympathies were expressed following the death of:

Dr Jim Provan, Department of Life Sciences;

Mr Jeff Saycell, Facilities and Grounds Manager, Sports Centre;

Rukayat Bukola Akinfolarin, Postgraduate Masters Student, School of Management and Business; and

Olga Kittle, Facilities Cleaner, Estates, Facilities and Resources.

#### 3. 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.

#### 4. Decisions taken between meetings

A Serious Incident Report was submitted to the Charity Commission. The matter was noted under item 13.3 (minute 51).

#### House of Lords 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary reception

Council members were reminded of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary reception on 22 March 2023.

#### Register of Interest

Council Members were asked to update their Register of Interest by 20 February 2023 if they had not done so already.

#### Vice-Chancellor interim arrangements

A paper was circulated to members prior to the Council meeting on 10 February 2023 at 11:00am, noting the Vice Chancellor's decision regarding the interim arrangements for Acting Vice-Chancellor.

#### **RESOLVED**

Members endorsed the Vice-Chancellor's decision regarding interim arrangements.

#### **40. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

NOTED

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

Arwel Thomas noted, for transparency, that he had been appointed to Cardiff and Vale College's Audit and Risk Committee as a co-opted member.

#### **41. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

RECEIVED

Minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2022 (COU2223-067).

It was noted that Kylie Evans was present at the previous meeting.

#### **RESOLVED**

That the minutes be confirmed as a correct record, subject to correcting the attendance list.

#### **42. 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 (COU2223-068).

NOTED

The updates provided in the decisions log.

#### **43. CORRESPONDENCE**

##### Letter from David Blaney – 2022 National Student Survey Outcomes

RECEIVED

Letter from David Blaney, Chief Executive, HEFCW (COU2223-069)

NOTED

An action plan has been agreed, following a meeting with the Department of Law & Criminology. Considerable strides have been made and an updated action plan has been sent to HEFCW, which will be circulated to Council, for information. [**ACTION:** Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning, Teaching and Student Experience) via the University Secretary]

#### **44. VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT**

RECEIVED

Report by the Vice-Chancellor (COU2223-070)

NOTED

##### Recruitment

The increase in students arriving in January indicates the administrative systems are working effectively.

##### Industrial action

The UCU had proposed 18 days' industrial action in response to disputes concerning pay and conditions, and changes to the USS pension. Officers reported that, legally, nothing can be done to address matters in relation to pensions until 2024 when the formal valuation will be undertaken.

A policy to support strike action will be presented in the upcoming Annual General Meeting of the Students' Union. The SU's current position is to share facts, whilst maintaining neutrality.

Regulations are in place to mitigate against the impact of industrial action on students and their learning and the situation will be continuously reviewed.

It was confirmed that any deductions in pay will go to central funds, and not to the student hardship fund.

##### Pulse survey

A full report will be submitted to Governance and Compliance Committee to consider the responses and the action plan. Staff engagement scores have decreased which, according to the supplier, reflects the national trend.

##### Senior Appointments and Awards

The Vice-Chancellor reported the recent changes in staff and appointments. The appointment processes recently undertaken have been positive and inclusive. Although progress has been made, there is further work to be done and Governance and Compliance Committee will consider equality and diversity matters in its upcoming briefing session.

The Race Action Plan has been launched in a joint event with the Students' Union. The event was vibrant and was very well attended.

#### **45. HEALTH AND SAFETY UPDATE**

RECEIVED

Report by Claire Williams, Health and Safety Manager (COU2223-071).

NOTED

The reporting of injuries, diseases and dangerous occurrence for semester one.

#### **46. REPORT BY ABERYSTWYTH UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' UNION**

RECEIVED

Report by Aber Students' Union President (COU2223-072).

NOTED

The report provided an update on developments at Aber SU since the last meeting of the University's Council. The report highlighted the SU's focus on supporting students with cost of living; activities and events; and training sessions.

The SU promoted NUS research into the impact of increased costs-of-living on students at the beginning of the academic year. Although Aberystwyth University saw the highest response rate in Wales, the numbers were small and therefore may not be representative. However, the responses that were submitted were useful. An internal survey was also conducted with Redbrick on a range of issues including student satisfaction, wellbeing, community, students' union, and engagement. The survey benchmarks against other organisations who participate in the survey and Aberystwyth University compares very favourably against each of the key statements.

Withdrawal rates are comparable to pre-Covid levels, but initiatives were being discussed with Student Support. Work is also underway to ensure students' understanding of living in hardship; many do not realise they are currently living in hardship and are not therefore requesting the support that is available.

#### **47. FINANCIAL MATTERS**

Management Accounts 2022-23

RECEIVED

Report by the Interim Director of Finance, Mark Godsell (COU2223-073).

NOTED

1. Retention is holding up well and is supporting the current position.
2. Commercial trading is marginally better than budget assumptions.

3. Energy costs assumptions are in line with forecast. The solar farm is generating electricity which helps financially and contributes to the University's objective of a zero-carbon estate.
4. Footfall hasn't returned to the expected levels at the Arts Centre. The University is addressing the situation and is seeking to appoint a new Director.
5. A soft freeze has been implemented on all posts, creating a saving of £400K. It was confirmed that it was not a hard freeze, and it allowed the University to manage conflicting demands. It was noted that each case would be considered on its own merit and would consider the impact on recruitment and workload.

#### **48. GOVERNANCE MATTERS**

##### 1. Appointment of Chancellor

RECEIVED

Report by University Secretary (COU2223-074).

NOTED

Lord Thomas of Cwmgiedd's term will conclude on 31 December 2024.

The revised Ordinances set out the respective responsibilities of, and the method of appointing, both the Chancellor and the Chair of Council. However, despite both roles being formally separated, Council retains the ability to appoint the same individual to fulfil both positions.

##### **RESOLVED**

1. The role of Chancellor and Chair of Council will remain separate.
2. A selection committee should be convened to consider the recruitment and appointment process, with a subsequent recommendation to Council. [**ACTION:** University Secretary]

##### 2. Appointment of Chair

RECEIVED

Report by University Secretary (COU2223-075).

NOTED

Dr Emyr Roberts will complete his term as Chair of Council on 31 December 2023.

The Chair of Council is a crucial appointment, and a thorough appointment process is required to ensure a suitable candidate is appointed.

##### **RESOLVED**

1. A suitable external recruitment process should be undertaken.

2. To delegate authority to the Nominations Committee to undertake the search process, agree a timetable and submit a recommendation to Council in its meeting in July 2023.

#### **49. OLD COLLEGE**

RECEIVED

Report by Director of Welsh Language and External Engagement (COU2223-076)

NOTED

1. The updated negotiations with the main contractor on a Deed of Variation with the proposed 'prime cost' approach.
2. The University's requirements to ensure an ability to halt the project at defined points should circumstances necessitate this, for example, increasing costs making the project unaffordable for the University.
3. The University sought procurement advice when it initially went out to tender, and it has commissioned further legal advice.
4. The University reserves the right to appoint sub-contractors based on quality and price, following advice from the design team and Blake Morgan.
5. The Director of Welsh Language and External Engagement and the team were thanked for their work over the project.

**RESOLVED**

1. Deed of variation is approved, subject to further consultation regarding procurement rules.

#### **50. RENAMING OF IBERS - PENGLAIS**

RECEIVED

Report by Tim Macy, Space Planning Manager (COU2223-077).

NOTED

1. The proposal was welcomed and deemed appropriate recognition for Gwendolen Rees's significant contribution.
2. The building was financed by the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC). A member queried whether permissions needed to be sought before changing the name. [**ACTION:** University Secretary]

**RESOLVED**

3. Subject to receiving the appropriate permissions, Council approved the proposal.

## **51. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

RECEIVED

Members received reports on the following for information:

1. Summary Corporate Risk Register (COU2223-078);
2. Documents affixed with the Common Seal (COU2223-079);
3. Serious Incidents reported to the Charity Commission (COU2223-080);

NOTED

4. The contents of the reports presented for information.

## **52. REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES**

RECEIVED

A composite report comprising the minutes of the following (COU2122-081):

1. Senate (23 November 2022); and
2. Resources and Performance (12 December 2022).

NOTED

3. The reports received from the sub-committees.

## **53. ANY OTHER BUSINESS, MEETING REVIEW, AND FUTURE BUSINESS**

The next meeting of Council will be held at Aberystwyth and preceded by a briefing session the day before. The Court will meet in the afternoon after the Council meeting.

The meeting concluded at 14:20.