

COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held at 13:00 on 23 MARCH 2026, in the Dialogue Centre, Visualisation Building.

Present: Meri Huws, Chair of Council (Chair); Rhuanedd Richards, (Deputy Chair); Dr Paul Bevan; Professor Sarah Davies; Kate Eden; Kylie Evans; Millie Hackett, Undeb Aberystwyth President; Nanw Maelor Hampson, Welsh Culture Officer and UMCA President; Professor Angela Hatton, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research); Dr Aloysius Igboekwu; Yusuf Ibrahim; Arwel Thomas; Professor Jon Timmis, Vice-Chancellor; Jane Usherwood; and Claire Vaughan

In attendance: Julie Archer, Head of Governance (minutes); Simon Crick, Chief Financial Officer; Jean Jones, Head of Vice-Chancellor's Office; Dr Gwawr Taylor, University Secretary and Director of Welsh Language; Steve Thomas, Director of Communications and External Affairs.

Apologies for absence were received from Dan Richards and Mark Tweed

37. MATTERS TO BE RAISED BY THE CHAIR

38. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Yusuf Ibrahim advised that they have recently been appointed to the board of the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol.

39. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RECEIVED

Minutes of the meetings held on 24 November 2025 (COU2526-057), and minutes of the special meetings held on 30 January 2026 (COU2526-058) and 23 February 2026 (COU2525-059).

RESOLVED

1. Minutes of the 24 November meeting were approved as an accurate record.
2. Minutes of the 30 January special meeting were approved as an accurate record.
3. Minutes of the 23 February special meeting were approved as an accurate record.
4. To consider scheduling an additional meeting of Council in January [ACTION: University Secretary and Director of Welsh Language].

40. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

RECEIVED

Report by Dr Gwawr Taylor, University Secretary and Director of Welsh Language (COU2526-060) providing an update on previously agreed actions.

NOTED

1. Work on some actions is ongoing, including contact with the Privy Council. On those matters, actions 67.1.6 and 67.1.11 can be combined.
2. 7.1.3 – Head of Planning to report on tariffs – Governance will pick this up for a future meeting.
3. 40.3 – Report by Undeb Aber in March 2025 – Undeb Aber officers indicated that Llywydd UMCA will remain a member of Council going forward.

41. DECISIONS TAKEN BETWEEN MEETINGS

RECEIVED

Report by Dr Gwawr Taylor, University Secretary and Director of Welsh Language (COU2526-061) detailing matters that have been approved by members via correspondence since the last meeting.

NOTED

1. The Chair of Council and Vice-Chancellor had notified Medr of receipt and acceptance of the *Terms and Conditions of Funding*, which set out the terms and conditions for payment by the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (Medr) of funds to the governing body of the University out of funds made available by the Minister for Education.
2. Further decisions had been taken in relation to the University Seal, and those details are included for information under agenda item 12.2.

RESOLVED

3. The report was noted.

42. VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT

RECEIVED

1. Report by Professor Jon Timmis, Vice-Chancellor (COU2526-062), comprising three key sections: a highlights report; planning, including student recruitment; and communications.
2. The Vice-Chancellor presented a verbal update on the recent out of court settlement in the class action against UCL, as well as the recent outbreak of meningitis affecting students at the University of Kent.

NOTED

3. The sale of Llanbadarn is progressing, but the proceeds are now expected to be received in Q4, rather than in March or April.
4. The University is on track to meet the agreed £1.9m deficit. The budget for next year will, however, be challenging. Reflecting on the discussion during the morning briefing, officers sought approval from Council for the Vice-Chancellor to approach Medr to discuss the financial and recruitment context.
5. Welsh Government recently invited stakeholders to contribute evidence to help shape policy on the future of tertiary education. Officers noted that the University contributed as part of the Universities Wales submission.
6. Members sought clarity around the reference in the report to online nursing provision. Officers confirmed that this work is being driven by the Healthcare Education Centre, in partnership with Higher Education Partners (HEP), to offer postgraduate provision. The recruitment position would be further discussed under item 8.2.

RESOLVED

7. The Vice-Chancellor's request to make an informal approach to Medr to discuss the financial and recruitment context was approved.
8. The Vice-Chancellor's report was noted.

43. REPORT BY UNDEB ABERYSTWYTH

RECEIVED

Report by Millie Hackett, Undeb Aber President and Nanw Maelor Hampson, Llywydd UMCA (COU2526-063)

NOTED

1. In contrast to other picture in other students' unions across the UK, March saw a quorate AGM, at which debates took place around the appointment of student trustees, BDS of Israeli goods, reducing militarism on campus, and supporting the Amnesty UK Defend Dissent Charter.
2. Elections took place during the week of 16-20th March, for which there was a 35% turnout. The term of the current officers ends at the end of June.
3. The term one survey, which had 500 respondents, showed that, students are generally happier and healthier than last year.
4. Preparations are complete for the forthcoming Varsity, which will see Bangor visit on Wednesday, for the first mid-week edition.
5. UMCA attended Eisteddfod Ryng –golegol / Inter-Coll Eisteddfod in Cardiff, at which Aberystwyth won overall for the third consecutive year. Aberystwyth students also secured the Crown, the Music medal and the Art medal.
6. Work to establish a constitution for UMCA is ongoing. A byelaw has recently been approved by Undeb Aber's Board of Trustees outlining the development of the

relationship between UMCA and Yr Undeb. Also outlined is how Llywydd UMCA can be elected in a way that protects the needs of Welsh language students, whilst ensuring compliance with charity laws.

7. Llywydd UMCA recently had the opportunity to attend the AMLÉ Conference in Cork, to discuss the significance of minority languages in higher education and wider society.

RESOLVED

8. The report by Undeb Aberystwyth was noted.

44. FINANCIAL MATTERS

1. Management Accounts Update

RECEIVED

Report by Dallas Baker, Interim Head of Financial Management and Reporting, and Stephen Harrison, Head of Financial Operations and Compliance (COU2526-064) setting out the University's financial performance as at Quarter 2.

NOTED

1. Papers have been scrutinised and discussed at RPC.
2. The current forecast position at Q2, with a good level of confidence, is to meet the £1.9 approved budget deficit. There are several variances, both adverse, such as the fall in milk prices affecting the farms forecast, and favourable, such as the generation of a vacancy factor month-on-month.
3. Members sought clarity on the timing of the Llanbadarn sale. **FOIA s43(2)**
[REDACTED] Members questioned whether there is any risk due to the forthcoming elections, and officers confirmed that the risk is around timing, rather than the political landscape. **FOIA s43(2)**
[REDACTED]
4. Construction work on the Old College is increasing, which is positive, but creates a cashflow risk to the University. 50% of Student Loans Company payments are in May, so the period leading up to that is challenging, which officers have identified actions to mitigate against. **FOIA s43(2)**
[REDACTED]
5. Discussions took place around further potential asset disposals.

RESOLVED

6. **FOIA s43(2)**
[REDACTED]
7. The report was noted.
2. Recruitment and Enrolment Report

RECEIVED

Report on recruitment and student number forecasting by Strategic Planning (COU2526-065), with a verbal update from Fran Carey, Chief Marketing Officer.

NOTED

1. Data shows a decline in home fee applications year-on-year. The University has increased its pool of unconditional offer holders, FOIA s43(2)
[REDACTED]
2. Work is ongoing around capped programmes. There are live conversations with the Royal Veterinary College around Veterinary Science and admissions practices. Officers are also exploring other possibilities, FOIA s43(2)
[REDACTED]
3. Officers noted that progression from undergraduate to postgraduate, and international, are both challenging. Officers are looking in-year at continuation rates and how they can be supported. FOIA s43(2)
[REDACTED] There are concerns over the US market, where the University has always been strong, with increasing competition from Russell Groups.
4. FOIA s43(2)
[REDACTED] Work continues around brand identity and narrative. The University has a strong strategy, but that does not necessarily translate to the 17-year-old applicant brain. The welcome talk at applicant visiting days is increasing its focus on belonging and inclusion.
5. FOIA s43(2)
[REDACTED]
6. Members questioned whether there are specific trends around language of study. Officers confirmed that numbers are declining at the same rate and noted that cross-border study is going the wrong way, with more Welsh students choosing to study elsewhere in the UK.

RESOLVED

7. The report was noted.
3. Budget Assumptions

RECEIVED

Verbal update by Simon Crick, Chief Financial Officer on the key budget assumptions for 2026-27.

NOTED

1. [REDACTED] FOIA s43(2)

2. Members received a detailed briefing during the strategy morning ahead of the formal meeting and are aware of the financial challenges institutionally, across the sector, and globally.

RESOLVED

3. The report was noted.

4. Revolving Credit Facility: Extension to current contract

RECEIVED

Report by Simon Crick, Chief Financial Officer (COU2526-066)

NOTED

1. As set out in the Management Accounts update, and recommended to Council by RPC, the paper seeks approval to trigger the 12-month facility extension to the Revolving Credit Facility (RCF) to aid liquidity and provide resilience and consistency whilst the short to medium term financing plan is defined.

RESOLVED

2. The request to trigger the 12-month facility extension to the RCF was approved.

5. Receipt of Undeb Aber's Financial Statement for 2024-25

RECEIVED

Report by Trish McGrath, Chief Executive Officer, Undeb Aber (COU2526-067) including the annual statement for 2024-25 and a narrative for the in-year surplus.

NOTED

1. It is a condition of the 1994 Education Act that requires the University Council to have oversight of how the Students' Union conducts its financial affairs.

RESOLVED

2. The financial statements for Undeb Aberystwyth for 2024-25 were noted.

45. HEALTH AND SAFETY UPDATE AND POLICY

RECEIVED

Report by Claire Williams, Health, Safety and Environment Manager (COU2526-069)

NOTED

1. It was noted that detailed scrutiny had taken place at Governance and Culture Committee.

2. Members noted that it would be helpful to see a KPI dashboard for incident reporting.
3. Members raised concerns over the number of 'hit by vehicle' incident reports and received assurance that these primarily reflected contact with inanimate objects such as fences, rather than people.
4. Members acknowledged the excellent level of detail in HSE reporting.

RESOLVED

5. The updated Health and Safety Policy was approved.

46. OLD COLLEGE

RECEIVED

Report by Anwen Jones, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Education and Student Experience and Jim O' Rourke, Old College Project Manager (COU2526-068) providing an update on construction activity and the GIR to the NLHF.

NOTED

1. The paper has been considered by the Executive and RPC, and details on site progress, which is gaining momentum. The main steel frame for function room is now in place.
2. [REDACTED] FOIA s43(2)
3. The vehicle for the hotel management has been agreed and approved, and the process is nearing completion.
4. [REDACTED] FOIA s43(2)
5. Governance matters in relation to the subsidiary company would be returned to in the May meeting of Council [ACTION: Head of Governance]. It was noted that officers will be trustees while the entity is a shell.
6. Members highlighted the risk around Old College. It is a significant demand on the Pro Vice-Chancellor's time and concern was raised for their workload. Officers acknowledged this and emphasised the need for prioritisation. The priority in the first instance must be to respond to any questions from the NLHF business manager. Members noted that they reserve the right to return to the subject of risk in future meetings.
7. Members wished to acknowledge the progress set out in the paper, and the effort involved, noting that the visuals are very helpful.

RESOLVED

8. To bring the revised paper back to RPC for further discussion, [REDACTED] FOIA s43(2)
[ACTION: Pro Vice-Chancellor, Education and Student Experience].

47. ANNUAL EQUALITIES REPORT AND EQUAL PAY STATEMENT

RECEIVED

Annual Equality Report, Ethnicity Pay Gap Report, and Gender Pay Gap Report by Dylan Jones, HR Business Partner (EDI and Organisational Development) (COU2526-070).

NOTED

1. The University is required to publish these documents, and this will take place by the end of March. Officers noted that the University is choosing to publish the ethnicity pay gap.
2. The positive moves around the gender pay gap were noted, while acknowledging that academic promotions has not been run.
3. Members questioned the low number of declared disabilities, which is not representative of either the sector or of wider society. Officers acknowledged that trust may still be an issue.
4. Members observed that it would be helpful to see more insights-based reporting, such as the high number of non-white applicants, against a lower number of appointees.
5. Members noted that the report goes above and beyond the statutory requirements, and therefore contextualisation becomes important.

RESOLVED

6. Members noted their thanks to the HR Business Partner for their work on the reports.
7. The reports were approved for publication.

48. GOVERNANCE MATTERS

1. Serious Incidents reported to the Charity Commission

RECEIVED

Report by Dr Gwawr Taylor, University Secretary and Director of Welsh Language (COU2526-071).

NOTED

No serious incidents were reported to the Charity Commission since the last meeting, but that two reports have been made to Medr in the spirit of their transparency requirements. These related to a pro-Palestine protest on campus, and the death of a PhD student while at home.

RESOLVED

The report was noted.

2. Report on documents affixed with the Common Seal

Report by Dr Gwawr Taylor, University Secretary and Director of Welsh Language (COU2526-072).

NOTED

1. The University's Common Seal has been affixed to three documents since the last meeting. Two were grant agreements relating to the Old College, and the third was the National Contemporary Art Gallery of Wales, which was approved by Council in November 2025.

RESOLVED

2. The uses of the Common Seal were noted.
3. Report on compliance with Undeb Aberystwyth Code of Practice

RECEIVED

Report by Dr Gwawr Taylor, University Secretary and Director of Welsh Language (COU2526-073)

NOTED

1. This annual review, to inform members of the extent to which the University and Undeb Aber are complying with the Code of Practice, had been considered by GCC.
2. There have been positive movements, and conversations are ongoing around a relationship agreement.
3. Undeb Aberystwyth officers noted that newly elected officers would be shadowing from Easter onwards.

RESOLVED

4. The report was noted.
4. Report on Committee membership: Skills and Diversity

RECEIVED

Report by Dr Gwawr Taylor, University Secretary and Director of Welsh Language (COU2526-074) setting out diversity data for current committee membership.

NOTED

1. The report has been considered by Nominations Committee. Officers now have greater data, and the Governance team are working with Human Resources colleagues to improve the process of data gathering and storage.
2. Regarding ongoing member recruitment, Odgers Berndtson have drawn up a longlist, all of whom they have spoken to. Ethnic diversity was a specific requirement emphasised to the search agents, but this was not initially reflected in the candidates presented. A shortlist will be drawn up tomorrow, with interviews to be held at the beginning of April. Officers reported that the standard of applications was very high, and that the panel was very pleased.

3. Members questioned whether individuals are likely to be personally identifiable from the data. Officers provided assurance that data protection is a key consideration of any reporting, and that any risk of identification would be mitigated. Members questioned whether they could have sight of the same detail for Senate, and officers confirmed that this is not currently collected, but it could be considered for the future.

RESOLVED

4. The report on the skills and diversity of the committee membership was noted.

49. UNIVERSITY RISK REGISTER

RECEIVED

Report on the University Risk Register by Dr Gwawr Taylor, University Secretary and Director of Welsh Language (COU2526-075).

NOTED

1. ARAC have held a session on risk management.
2. The Governance team have started conversations with risk owners to establish what currently sits beneath the University Risk Register and to identify any gaps.
3. Officers noted the need to improve articulation of the conversations being had by the Executive. There have already been useful recommendations feeding back into Exec from committees.
4. ARAC is keen to retain a role and noted that its members are much more comfortable with the make-up of the University Risk Register, and the alignment of risks with the strategic plan. Discussions have now moved on to individual risks, rather than colours and scores, which is positive.

RESOLVED

5. The University Risk Register was noted.

50. ANNUAL REPORT ON PUBLIC COMPLAINTS

RECEIVED

Report by Jean Jones, Head of the Vice-Chancellor's Office (COU2526-076) summarising the issues dealt with under the University's Public Complaints Procedure during the 2025 calendar year.

NOTED

1. The report had been considered by GCC.
2. The reduction in the number of complaints was highlighted, noting that this is likely to be a result of improved signposting to other, more appropriate, complaints processes.

3. Members noted that the rise in AI-generated requests may be an issue going forward.

RESOLVED

4. The annual report on public complaints was noted.

51. ANY OTHER BUSINESS, MEETING REVIEW AND FUTURE BUSINESS

1. Recent threats, treated as malicious communications, resulting in the closure of two schools in Cardiff were discussed. Officers provided assurance that the University has business continuity processes in place and is also preparing for Martyn's Law coming into force in 2027.
2. Members noted that these are challenging times and requested that the Executive call on them for support in any area.

The meeting ended at 15:35

The next meeting will be held on 15 May 2026

Approved by Council on 15/05/2026