

## COUNCIL

### Minutes of the meeting held at 13:30 on 23 September 2022, in Pantycelyn.

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; Professor Simon Green; Mr Dafi Jones, UMCA President; 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: Mr Stephen Forster, Director of Finance and Corporate Services; Dr Rhodri Llwyd Morgan, Director of Welsh Language and External Engagement (for Minute 13); Mr Mathew Norman (Independent Member of Governance and Compliance Committee); Mr Gethin Rhys, Faculty Registrar; Dr Gwawr Taylor, University Secretary; Mr Steve Thomas; Head of Communications and Public Affairs; Ms Emma Williams, Academic Registrar; Ms Kath Williams, Interim University Secretary.

Apologies for absence had been received from Kylie Evans.

#### 1. MATTERS RAISED BY THE CHAIR

##### 1. Welcome

1. The following were welcomed to their first meeting as Council members:
  1. Arwel Thomas, Independent Member;
  2. Nicola Wood, Independent Member;
  3. Claire Vaughan, who has been a member of sub-committees for a year and has now formally joined Council; and
  4. In her absence, Kylie Evans, non-academic staff representative (now appointed until 31 July 2024 as Kath Williams' replacement).
2. Those who had recently been appointed to a Council sub-committee had also been invited to attend the governing body meeting as observers, namely:
  1. Mathew Norman, Independent Member of the Governance and Compliance Committee (GCC);
  2. Ellen ap Gwynn, Independent Member of the Resources and Performance Committee (RPC) (not present, had submitted an apology);
3. Existing independent members on Sub-Committees had also been invited to attend the governing body meeting as observers, although were not present or had submitted apologies on this occasion, namely:

1. Melanie Hamer, Independent Member of GCC;
2. Jane Usherwood, Independent Member of GCC; and
3. Charu Maini, Independent Member of the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee (ARAC).

2. Congratulations

1. Professor Qiang Shen, Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor, Business and Physical Sciences was congratulated on being elected as a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering.
2. Professor Peter Merriman, Professor in Human Geography, on being elected as a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences.

3. 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations

All members were advised that invitations to events to mark the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary would be sent imminently.

4. Honorary Awards

Members were advised and an email inviting nominations for honorary awards had been sent on Friday 23 September 2022, and were encouraged to consider notable individuals that could be nominated for an award. Full details had been included in the email.

5. Graduation, the Royal Welsh Show, the National Eisteddfod, and Strategy Days

University colleagues were thanked for their work in organising several successful events over the Summer, and also for the organisation of the Strategy Days in September which had provided a valuable opportunity to reflect on a range of issues and challenges.

6. Condolences

Sympathies were expressed following the death of:

1. Emeritus Professor Paul Avtar Singh Ghuman, School of Education; and
2. Tony Curwen, Department of Information and Library Studies.

7. 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.

**2. ANNUAL APPRAISAL OF COUNCIL MEMBERS**

RECEIVED

Report by Dr Emyr Roberts, Chair of Council (COU2223-002)

## NOTED

1. During September 2022, the Chair of Council had held annual appraisal meetings with those members whose terms on the governing body were continuing into the 2022–23 academic year. The report summarised the matters discussed during those meetings, and proposed action points.
2. The Chair thanked members for participating in the process and summarised the main points which included: contentment with the running of Council and sub-committee meetings, welcoming the return to face-to-face meetings, acknowledging University Officers' work in preparing documentation notwithstanding the volume of that paperwork. Members had expressed a desire to schedule and programme additional briefing sessions with as much notice as possible.
3. The actions included ensuring papers were presented on time and ensuring agenda-setting meetings and Chair's Briefing meetings were scheduled ahead of time and for the full academic year.
4. There was also endorsement for inviting Council members to attend meetings of Senate.
5. There had been a follow-up discussion regarding opportunities to gain a deeper understanding of the culture of the institution, and it was agreed that one further GCC meeting should be organised during 2022-2023 with a particular focus on the issue. It was also noted in response to this that a discussion around people and culture should include the issue of under-represented groups on the governing body.

## RESOLVED

1. To scheduling agenda-setting meetings and Chair's Briefing meetings for the academic year [**ACTION:** Governance Officer].
2. To invite members of Council to observe Senate meetings during 2022-2023. [**ACTION:** University Secretary].
3. To schedule an additional meeting of Governance and Compliance Committee during 2022-2023, which would be a single-item agenda focussing on people and culture [**ACTION:** University Secretary].

### 3. EXTENSION TO A TERM ON COUNCIL

## RECEIVED

Report by University Secretary (COU2223-003)

## NOTED

1. Having served on sub-committees from 1 August 2018, Mark Tweed commenced his term on Council on 1 January 2020 for a period of three years in the first instance, ending on 31 December 2022. In May 2020, Ordinances were revised and the term of office for of an Independent Member was changed from three to four years. ([Ordinance 09](#)). Mark Tweed had accepted an informal offer to serve a further term for a period of four years.

## **RESOLVED**

2. To formally approve Mark Tweed's four-year term as Council from 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2026 and to inform the Human Resource department accordingly [**ACTION:** University Secretary].

## **4. ACTING SECRETARY AND GOVERNANCE SUPPORT**

RECEIVED

Report by University Secretary (COU2223-004)

NOTED

1. Members were invited to note the cover arrangements for the role of University Secretary and other governance support duties pending the return of Dr Gwawr Taylor, following maternity leave. Ms Emma Williams, the University's Academic Registrar, had agreed to be Acting Secretary from 30 September 2022 until Dr Taylor's return. Committee management duties would be covered by other colleagues in the Academic Registry with support from the Planning Office, Finance and Vice-Chancellor's Office.
2. Members were advised that Helen Davies, Governance Officer, would remain as the main contact for the Governance Office and the correspondence address would remain as [Secretary@aber.ac.uk](mailto:Secretary@aber.ac.uk) / [Ysgrifennydd@aber.ac.uk](mailto:Ysgrifennydd@aber.ac.uk).

## **5. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

NOTED

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

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

RECEIVED

Minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2022 (COU2223-006).

**RESOLVED**

That the minutes be confirmed as a correct record.

## **7. 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 (COU2223-007).

NOTED

1. The updates provided in the decisions log.

## **8. CORRESPONDENCE**

There was no correspondence to report.

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

RECEIVED

Report by the Vice-Chancellor (COU2223-008)

NOTED

1. The report consisted of four key parts: a highlight report, parts of which had been discussed at the previous Strategy days; a planning and student enrolment report; and a communications report.
2. The current forecast student recruitment figures for 2022-23 were noted, together with the implications for the university's income; final figures would be available at the 1<sup>st</sup> November census,
3. On staff pay, it was noted that 55% of the institution's costs went against staff salaries but that there were other increasing costs and, above all, fixed fee income. A more complete picture would emerge in time for the next meeting of Council.

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

RECEIVED

Report by AberSU President (COU2223-009).

NOTED

1. The report provided an update on developments at AberSU since the last meeting of the University's Council.
2. The report highlighted a major campaign led by the NUS and the SU's response to the cost-of-living crisis, which 77% of students surveyed had indicated would affect them. The NUS and SU were anticipating retention issues arising from increased financial pressures and outlined some local measures being implemented to support students. Council noted the work of the university in mitigating some of these costs, and stressed the need for the institution to work with the SU on these matters.

## **11. STRATEGIC MATTERS**

1. Welsh Medium Academic Sub-Strategy

RECEIVED

Report by the Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor, Arts and Social Sciences and with institutional responsibility for Welsh-medium academic matters (COU2223-010).

1. Following a detailed a period of consultation, including with members of the governing body, the Welsh-Medium Academic Sub-Strategy was bring presented to Council for formal approval.
2. The Sub-Strategy drew from, and was directly linked to, other key strategies including the main University Strategic Plan, the Research and Innovation Strategy and the Learning and Teaching Strategy, as well as referencing the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol's own current and future strategic direction.
3. Central to the Sub-Strategy was the number of students studying a minimum of 5 credits per year through the medium of Welsh. Council Members emphasised the need for a continued focus on enabling a flexible provision to meet the needs of a variety of potential student communities, some of whom may, for example, not wish to study or be assessed entirely through the medium of Welsh, but to participate in differential models of delivery and provision.
4. A typographical error was noted on Page 10 which referred to *Higher* Education but which should read *Further* Education.

#### **RESOLVED**

5. To formally accept and approve the Welsh-Medium Academic Sub-Strategy subject to minor updates, corrections and clarifications and to thank Professor Anwen Jones for her work in bringing this to a conclusion.
6. To schedule a follow-up item during the next academic year to update Council on progress with the delivery of the strategic objectives [**ACTION:** University Secretary].
7. To incorporate any minor amendments to the document prior to formal publication [**ACTION:** Faculty Pro-Vice Chancellor, Arts and Social Sciences].

#### 2. Key Performance Indicators

RECEIVED

Report by Steve Walsh, Head of Planning (COU2223-011)

NOTED

1. The Key Performance Indicators for Quarter 4 were received by Council updates recorded since Quarter 2 to research income and finance.

#### **RESOLVED**

2. To note the report as outlined. Members' attention was drawn to a slightly improving position overall, but with remaining issues regarding two matters; one of which had been included in the discussion during the Strategy Days (employability) and the on-going issues regarding participation in ECS.
3. To prepare a report for GCC specifically addressing the low completion rates for ECS [**ACTION:** Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development]

## 12. FINANCIAL MATTERS

### 1. Management Accounts

RECEIVED

Report by the Deputy Director of Finance, Mark Godsell (COU2223-012).

NOTED

The report set out the University's financial performance to the end of Quarter 3 (30 April 2022).

1. The draft University result for 2021-22 was forecast to be around £0.1m surplus and in line with both budget and previously reported forecasts. This was a favourable position and the Director of Finance and Corporate Services, and his team were thanked for their efforts in assuring the University's financial situation.

**RESOLVED**

2. To note the report as outlined.

### 2. Indicative Income 2022-23

RECEIVED

Report by Deputy Director of Finance, Mark Godsell (COU2223-013).

NOTED

1. The paper received set out an indicative assessment of University income for 2022-23. Members were advised that there was still a steady increase in student numbers but that the latest forecast was weaker than budget and indicated a shortfall against budget by around £1.5m. It is anticipated that the financial 'gap' would be closed by a series of management actions, some of which were noted alongside a further review of university operations. Full details and the impact of the 2022 recruitment round would be known during October and November and brought back to the next meeting of Council.

**RESOLVED**

2. To note the report as outlined.

## 13. OLD COLLEGE

RECEIVED

Report by Director of Welsh Language and External Engagement (COU2223-017)

NOTED

1. A written report was received advising Members of progress whilst noting that current circumstances remained challenging due to Listed Building Consent (LBC) and planning conditions.

2. It was noted that the timetable for completion of each stage was currently at risk and costs were likely to increase both due to the delays in receiving LBC and also because of the wider economic pressures and inflation.
3. Members were advised that bids for additional funding had been placed and that working through the planning consents remained the priority for the University, in close collaboration with Ceredigion County Council.
4. It was agreed that a full update would be presented to the November meeting of Resources and Performance Committee, particularly highlighting any increased risks to aspects of the project or the overall budget.

#### **RESOLVED**

5. To present a full written update for presentation to Resources and Performance Committee at its November 2022 meeting [**ACTION:** Director of Welsh Language, Culture and External Engagement].

#### **14. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

##### RECEIVED

Members received reports on the following for information:

1. Summary Corporate Risk Register (COU2223-014);
2. Documents affixed with the Common Seal (COU2223-015) and;
3. Quality Enhancement Review: Final Report and Response (COU2223-016);

##### NOTED

4. The contents of the reports presented for information.

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

1. Briefing Session

Members were advised that an email invitation had been sent for the 25<sup>th</sup> of October 2022, to hear a briefing by Dyfed Powys Police on Cyber Essentials.

2. Farewells

Kath Williams was thanked for her work as Interim University Secretary during the period since January 2022. The Chair wished Kath well in her new role in Glasgow University.