

## 1. Attendance and Introductions

- 1.1 **Present:** John Graystone (in the Chair), Kaitlin Crisp, David Elis-Williams, Caroline Davies, Chris Franks, Gayle Hudson, Gerry Jenson, June Jeremy (to minute 6), Sonia Reynolds, Dafydd Rhys, Toni Schiavone, Nick Taylor, Heather Willbourn, Marjorie Williams, Iwan Hywel. The meeting was quorate throughout.
- 1.2 **Apologies:** Cathy Clark, Glenys Hughes-Jones; Sharon Reader (Head of Quality and Learner Services).
- 1.3 **In Attendance:** Kathryn Robson (Acting Chief Executive), Stephen Thomas (Clerk), Siôn Aled Owen (simultaneous interpreter); Michelle Kerswell (minutes 1 and 2 only); Rowland Jones (Chartered Surveyor – minutes 1 to 3 only); Nathan Jones (Head of Curriculum Delivery) and Alan Tinsley (Head of IT and Technology - both to minute 9 only); Mark Baines (Head of Finance - minutes 6 to 9 via Skype); and Cath Hicks (Head of HR and Workforce Development - minutes 6 to 10 via Skype).

**Council Open Business – minutes 2 to 7 inclusive.**

## 2. Presentation on current work in our North Region

Michelle Kerswell, Regional Manager, provided an overview of the current range of educational work being delivered in the six counties of the Region. She described the 4 office bases and the range of personnel based there, as well as the context in terms of economic, industrial and rural settings. Recent developments included becoming an approved Agored Cymru all-Wales Access to HE Diploma Centre (covering FE as well), contributing to regional consultation on the Adult Community Learning Review, and being part of the NatWest community initiative for digital banking and on-line safety. A number of Inspire Award winners, local partnership award recipients, plus the 2017 Siân Thomason Award winner were from the Region. Learner outcomes for 2015-16 showed good Completion Rates and a mix of accredited and non-accredited education - though there were significant variations between counties on that measure, as a result of historical factors.

**It was agreed that Michelle Kerswell's presentation should be circulated to all Council members with examples of student case studies - considered important to heighten the profile of the organisation.**

## 3. Coleg Harlech Site Update, June 2017

Rowland Jones was welcomed to the meeting, and it was noted that a number of Council members had undertaken the guided tour of the site that morning, in Mena Ifans's capable hands. Kathryn Robson explained how changed funding priorities and other factors had significantly reduced the degree of use of the campus. At present its occupation represented an annual deficit of £120,000 to the organisation, though with a number of Harlech-based staff to be made redundant at the end of July much of that annual loss would be cut. Our Harlech Steering Group had become increasingly engaged with the informal voice of the community, Harlech In Action, and a joint site decision group that had grown from that engagement had met in recent months too. The Council had approved the

theoretical concept of the Wern Fawr building becoming a hotel in the long-term (a recommendation of the 2016 Clear Thinking consultancy report) while the theatre building could be maintained as a social enterprise and community asset, with educational provision on the site in the short-term being based there. Theatr Ardudwy still had 4½ years left on its lease of the theatre building.

Toni Schiavone gave some more historical context to the site and thanked those amongst the staff whose dedication had kept the institution running through difficult times. The interest in the site expressed by the China Consulting enterprise, mentioned at the previous Council meeting, had emanated through Harlech In Action: that enterprise's stated preference was for community-led projects, and for leasehold of the site rather than its purchase. David Elis-Williams referred to that morning's North West Regional Forum meeting, at which a motion had been passed relating to the site's future (copies of which were tabled, for information). He made no comment on it, other than to note that as charity trustees it was not our prerogative to favour one type of investor, ethical or otherwise, or one category of declared international or local interest, over another. A second investor had also expressed interest in the site, namely the owner of the adjacent St. David's Hotel, and it was Council members' responsibility to react to what offers came before it and not to limit possibilities, should alternatives such as purchase as a private home or as a care home appear - even though a hotel might be the most significant contributor to local regeneration.

Rowland Jones said that the aim of his involvement was to maximise the return on the Harlech estate to Addysg Oedolion Cymru | Adult Learning Wales as a charity, including the wider land holdings within and just outside the town's boundaries. It was clear from his professional viewpoint that there were contrasting challenges in terms of the theatre building and the original Wern Fawr construction, built for photographer and social activist George Davison. While it would be unconscionable to get rid of Wern Fawr at below its real value and worth, the challenges were compounded and complicated by the existence of 2 substantial derelict buildings to the south of the site, namely the Tower Block and the St. David's Hotel. He referred to the document 'The Charities (Qualified Surveyors' Report) Regulations 1992' which it was not yet time to activate, where written advice and opinion was required from a Surveyor concerning the disposing of land and buildings. While considerations about regeneration of Harlech as a community were central to Cyngor Gwynedd Council's interest in Coleg Harlech, that was not the stated purpose of Addysg Oedolion Cymru | Adult Learning Wales. Yet charity law set out that it was not necessarily only the absolute financial return on assets that should be the sole arbiter on options to be taken either, but that added to a combination of the measures of benefit linked to the charity's purpose. In that respect, a leasing option for Wern Fawr had been suggested by Rowland Jones as a means of retaining control while being in line with charity law. A long-term lease arrangement could bring in money through the possibility of deferring some initial income, compared with a capital purchase.

Concerning the printed, electrical, electronic and other equipment that was still found throughout the site, some of the IT materials were to be moved to the theatre building from Wern Fawr, other materials were to be used elsewhere within the organisation, and the library was currently being catalogued. It was asked why the theatre building was being used rather than the Amenity Block for continuing educational activity: the latter might yet be a place to invest in further, but the imminent needs of the 2017-18 academic year did not allow for that at present. It was accepted that it would be possible to seek external grants for upgrading the Amenity Block, and so not be dependent on our own reserves for such work.

**The Council continued its instruction to the Harlech Steering Group to monitor and to react appropriately to the fluid situation relating to the site; and further authorised the Steering Group to instruct a Chartered Surveyor to act promptly in the organisation's name, should that course of action be required.**

#### 4. Demographic data on our learners for the 2016-17 academic year to date

Alan Tinsley referred to the one-page summary template that was now consistently used to present such information. He compared a couple of figures with their 2015-16 equivalents: the Success Rate at 90% was higher than in the previous year, and the figure for learners with a disability or difficulty (3.8%) was significantly lower than in former years. This latter change was considered to be due to an amendment to students' enrolment forms, though there was no proof of that, and the situation would continue to be monitored by staff and by the Learner Experience Committee, which in its previous incarnation had kept an eye on this matter because it was important to ascertain that it was not due to increased difficulties of accessibility for our courses. With 92% of the year's delivery target for teaching hours already met, it was likely that we would achieve our aim of reaching 97.5% of the overall target for the academic year. This meant that we would end the year with c.15,000 learners, compared to the previous year's over-provision with more than 18,000 students.

David Elis-Williams raised once more a question he had put in the past, namely whether the (correct) emphasis being placed on learners in socially deprived areas meant that Welsh language speakers were in some way being put off attending our courses, as their numbers were below national averages; Toni Schiavone pursued a different but related point, that we did not do enough to cater for Welsh language speakers and should tailor courses more effectively for them. While Pembrokeshire County Council was a significant provider of adult education, other gaps in the map of our course locations in western Wales coincided with predominantly Welsh-speaking areas: **there might be a correlation between the two matters, which senior staff would attempt to answer through further statistical analysis (AT/NJ).**

#### 5. Minutes of Open Business at the Council meeting of 11 May 2017 and matters arising not on the agenda

The minutes of the Open Business at the previous Council meeting, held in Cardiff, were approved as a correct record. There were two matters arising:

**Minute 6 – Welsh Government's Adult Community Learning Review:** we were the sole organisation which appeared in all 4 options for future delivery of adult learning in Wales which had emanated from the Review, and the first meeting in the resultant consultation exercise was to take place the following week. Re-allocation of the £4 million annual Grant for Adult Learning was to be a priority, as its division between local authorities at present was highly imbalanced. Dafydd Rhys reiterated the importance of not forgetting our membership as a force for advocacy on this matter.

**Minute 11 – Draft formal agreement with Wales TUC Cymru:** there was no update to report on this issue since the previous month's Council meeting.

#### 6. Minutes of the Search Committee meeting of 25 May 2017 and proposed dates for other Committees' first meetings and remainder of Council meetings for 2017

These minutes were formally noted. On minute 1, it was acknowledged that it was important to pitch the Chief Executive's salary right, so that it was neither too high nor too low. In relation to minute 4 on additional Committee members, **the Council formally delegated authority to its 3 other**

**committees to act straight away on co-opting additional members who they considered to be beneficial to their operation - if necessary prior to their first meetings.**

The opening meeting dates for those three Committees were confirmed as follows:

Learner Experience: 1.00 p.m., Tuesday 4 July at Caia Park, Wrexham

Audit: 10.00 a.m., Thursday 13 July at Coopers Yard, Cardiff

Resources: 12.30 p.m., Thursday 13 July at Coopers Yard, Cardiff;

as were dates for the Council meetings for the rest of 2017:

- 12.30 pm, Monday 24 July 2017: Innovation Centre, Ebbw Vale

- 1.00 pm, Wednesday 27 September 2017: Caia Park, Wrexham

- 12.30 pm, Thursday 30 November 2017: Dylan Thomas Centre, Swansea.

## **7. Risk Register for June 2017**

Mark Baines informed Council members that this was a document reviewed monthly by the Senior Management Team and scrutinised in depth at each Audit Committee meeting, but that it was of relevance to all governors. He drew members' attention to the key new risk (no. 3) relating to potential destabilisation caused by the proposed reorganisation.

Members provided comments – that certain risks after their controls should still be categorised higher in their view; and that the fact that not a single risk related to delivery and learners was unfortunate in terms of perceived priorities. This was nevertheless understood to be an evolving document, which had improved in its applicability and usability over the previous two years. **Kathryn Robson said that an updated Strategic Plan and revised 2017-18 Operational Plan would soon be brought to the Council for its attention, and that the Risk Register would be fully aligned with those two Plans from then on.**

***Council Confidential Business of 13 June 2017– see minutes 8 to 10 inclusive, separately minuted.***