

Council Open Business – minutes 1 to 13 inclusive.

1. Attendance, Apologies and Introductions

Present: John Graystone (in the Chair), Gayle Hudson, Iwan Hywel, Toni Schiavone (Vice Chair), David Elis-Williams, Cathy Clark (via video link at home), Gareth Cork, Suzanne Samuel, Jenni Jones-Annetts, Chris Franks. The meeting was quorate.

In Attendance: Kathryn Robson (Chief Executive), Mark Baines (Head of Curriculum and Performance – via video link in Cardiff office), Cath Hicks (Head of Learner Services and Resources – via video link in Cardiff office), Michelle Kerswell (Curriculum and Welsh Medium Provision Manager), Stephen Thomas (Company Secretary/Clerk); Sandra Williams (simultaneous interpreter). Also Ashok Chopra and Nicola Holmes (Curriculum Delivery Officer, North region) for minutes 1 and 2 only.

Apologies: Julie Cook, Caroline Davies, Gerry Jenson, Stephen Nicholls, Sonia Reynolds (Vice Chair), Dafydd Rhys, Nick Taylor, Guy Wallace Smith, Heather Willbourn.

Brief introductions were made, including by those on two separate video links to the meeting. This being the first Council meeting attended by Gareth Cork (elected staff governor in lieu of June Jeremy, who had stepped down since the previous meeting) and Suzanne Samuel since their elevation they provided short descriptions of their backgrounds. The Council also took the opportunity formally to approve the appointment of Suzanne Samuel as a Council member.

2. A case study of a learner's experience with the organisation

Ashok Chopra spoke of his car accident in 2011 which had left him low on confidence, and how his subsequent enrolment on a counselling course with the organisation had resulted in him attending Glyndŵr University, undertaking a PGCE teaching qualification and now being a tutor at Addysg Oedolion Cymru | Adult Learning Wales on the very course on which he had begun as an adult learner. He stressed the importance of having received strong support from key individuals at the organisation throughout his process of progression, which had been essential at the lower points emotionally. Having been the recipient of a Wrexham ACL Partnership Award in 2017 he was now taking a degree course. In discussion, it was agreed that getting appropriate, accessible (i.e. understandable) details to our prospective learners was still essential - Ashok had picked up an information leaflet originally, for example; and that stories such as his should be used in as many political constituencies in the land as possible, to assist in our leveraging work on AMs and MPs.

3. Minutes of the Open Business at the Council meeting of 6 September 2018 and matters arising

The minutes of the Open Business proceedings of the 6 September 2018 meeting held at Glynn Vivian Gallery, Swansea were approved as a correct record. The one point raised was the elevated number of absentees both at that meeting and in the meeting just begun in Wrexham. There was a wide range of reasons for the apologies received on each day, and it was confirmed that the Chair had recently discussed successive absences with two of the Council's members.

4. Chief Executive's Report, November 2018

Mark Baines began by stating that key performance targets on student attainment, success and on funding received had been met for 2017-18, with the division between accredited and non-accredited provision being correctly balanced for the year at 81%/19%. The low attainment and success figures in the Youth, Community and Play Work totals in a table on page 3 were explained. Expansion in work in the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) field in Swansea, Newport and Wrexham was about to happen, and Addysg Oedolion Cymru | Adult Learning Wales was well-placed to take advantage of it because of our current work in the similar Access to Communication and Integration (ACI) project, centred on Cardiff.

Attention then turned to the additional paper on a Welsh Medium and Bilingual Provision Action Plan, to which Michelle Kerswell spoke. She explained actions taken by her since her appointment and the more recent part-appointment of Dafydd Rhys to a new Welsh Medium specific role, the 3 overarching aims set out in the paper, and the awareness that had permeated the organisation that there needed to be purposeful growth in this field - though that would entail geographical variations in coverage. Toni Schiavone thought that we should concentrate on two or three niche types of education in this domain (family learning, for example) and that the recruitment of suitable staff had been a consistent weakness thus far that needed significant strengthening. David Elis-Williams believed that the decline noted at recent meetings in courses held in rural areas, while it was not precisely the same issue, represented a potentially significant overlap with the matter of Welsh/bilingual courses. Organisations which straddled the two needs, such as Clybiau Ffermwyr Ifanc Cymru or Merched y Wawr, could meet our needs as partners on both counts. Michelle Kerswell confirmed that there had been contact with those bodies already, as well as with Cymraeg i Oedolion, y Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol and Urdd Gobaith Cymru – all strategic level links. Connections to Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs) in each unitary authority were discussed, and it was confirmed that our 5% target for Welsh Medium and Bilingual course delivery was a combined one across the board, not split into separate targets for accredited and non-accredited provision. **This Action Plan, which had previously been to the Welsh and Bilingualism Group, was formally endorsed by the Council.**

On branch activity, there was much more occurring than that recorded in the Report: this was presumably because regional offices had provided updates, rather than there being direct contact with the branches themselves. It was stated that the majority of childcare support costs quoted (£46,814 in 2017-18) had been spent on students on our Access to Higher Education courses. On the inclusion or otherwise of the organisation within the stipulations of the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act, there had been no tangible impact on aspects of our work thus far, though it was accepted that legal judgment on the matter could theoretically influence our pay, terms and conditions norms and our overall categorisation as a body.

On the ACL consultation, the most productive meetings with politicians had occurred with John Griffiths AM and Ben Lake MP, though current indications suggested that a likely change in the Minister with responsibility for Further Education following the Labour Party leadership/First Minister contest would potentially delay action on the follow-up. The Chief Executive had written to the 3 leadership candidates about our work. A debate in the National Assembly's Chamber earlier in the week, monitored by ColegauCymru, had mostly emphasised post-16 provision through colleges, rather than adult education as such. A query was raised as to whether there should be more expertise on lobbying within the staff team for an organisation of our size – as distinct from marketing know-how. It was stated that we had

used a lobbying consultancy and ColegauCymru to assist in the ACL response process, but the point raised was a relevant one in general terms.

Finally, on the pay settlement and future funding issues, the organisation – as had all FE Colleges – had provided information to the Welsh Government on what impact the proposed funding changes would have on its budgets. It was asked whether the Welsh Government would make a one-off financial contribution towards salary increases, or whether it would be a consolidated year-on-year commitment from it: that was unclear. **The Council agreed the principles set out in the stance taken by ColegauCymru on the pay award matter, and exceptionally delegated the responsibility for a decision on this to the Resources Committee which was to meet on 4 December, on the basis that should further money be confirmed as coming to us from the Welsh Government by then, so the appropriate increase should be authorised for implementation in December's salary payments.** On funding, there had been much discourse and activity with senior civil servants and a partial budget reinstatement for 2018-19 now seemed likely. Kathryn Robson announced that, in an unrelated development, the new ACL inspection arrangements had been introduced in September 2018 by Estyn and it was likely that an ACL partnership would be selected soon, as part of a pilot inspection between January and March 2019. It was highlighted that AOC | ALW was an ACL partnership in its own right, and would be in the mix for potential selection. In the meantime, it was important that the organisation prepared to be inspection-ready, either for its own inspection or as a partner provider.

5. Coleg Harlech site update

Kathryn Robson referred to the papers on this, which included the bilingual prospectus for sale of the campus site as agreed by the Council at its previous meeting. She spoke of Rowland Jones's nervousness, based on his professional experience as a chartered surveyor, of waiting as late as the Council meeting of 29 January 2019 for final approval on a preferred bid, given that the closing date for receipt of tenders was 18 December 2018 and the Harlech Steering Group and Senior Leadership Team was to meet to seek agreement on a recommendation on 10 January 2019.

The Council agreed to delegate powers to the Harlech Steering Group and Senior Leadership Team to consider all submissions received through the tender process and that should there be a straightforward recommendation from their meeting of 10 January 2019 then that could be consulted upon on the basis of e-mail communication with the Council as a whole. However, if there were complications due to varied bids with a mixture of conditions, then it was agreed that a special extra meeting of the Council be convened at short notice specifically for the purpose of approval of a Coleg Harlech site decision.

The Council was informed that Northern Powerhouse Developments had already re-submitted the same bid as that of earlier in the year from it (subsequently withdrawn), which included the proposed purchase of Astor Fields – land which was not for sale in the current tender process.

6. Minutes of the Resources Committee meeting held on 12 October 2018; and Organisational Finances for the First Quarter, August – October 2018

David Elis-Williams as the Committee's Chair noted the positive news that there was a small surplus made in the 2017-18 financial year's income and expenditure account (minute 9), and that the request for action in promoting higher levels of donations and legacies from members and supporters (minute 8) was to be

further considered, creatively. On minute 6, where reference to the organisation as a 'college' in certain human resources policy documents had been discussed, it had been agreed that that was an interpretation too far of the Council's decision on the matter at its July Plas Tan y Bwlch meeting. Kathryn Robson acknowledged that while it was correct to amend those references, it was still useful to use the word with discretion – for example in internal references to the 'College Management Team' (CMT), and to the 'National Community College' in response to the Welsh Government's ACL consultation.

On the management accounts for the first three months of the financial year, Mark Baines stated that all budget lines were currently on target. In response to a query, he said that the c£1.5 million bank balance at Handelsbanken referred to on the Balance Sheet constituted a current account balance of some £900,000 plus a sum of £614,000 held in an interest-bearing deposit account there (specified in note 5). In discussion on the Aged Debtors page, he added that the sub-totals there represented a mixture of reasons for and types of debt, and he did not feel that the situation was critical in terms of the more long-standing debts.

7. Minutes of the Learner Experience Committee meeting of 6 November 2018; plus Quality and Performance Development Plan

In noting the Committee meeting's minutes from earlier in the month, a written question raised by Stephen Nicholls about **the number of tutors teaching under 50 hours/year** (a category mentioned in minute 6, on Teaching Observations) **would be answered in writing**. The attached Quality and Performance Development Plan, slightly updated since being considered by the Committee, was the new format document that underpinned the revised strategic aims of the organisation: it was linked to the Senior Management Team Key Performance Indicators (see minute 8 below). The Plan was featuring at a number of internal meetings, and was generally amber in colour because it was early in the academic/financial year, so that targets remained in progress and were as yet unachieved. The Chair wondered whether it was feasible to benchmark ourselves against another similar educational body, in the UK as a whole rather than necessarily in Wales, on some of the measurements and performance indicators quoted. **Kathryn Robson undertook to consider that as an option for inclusion in parts of the evolving document.**

8. Senior Management Team Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), 2018-19

This document was a succinct rendition of the points in the Development Plan and would be a paper coming to the Council on a regular basis in future. There was discussion on point 2.1, relating to the failure in recruiting Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people to the Council: this was a long-standing challenge, which preceded the mergers of recent years.

9. Risk Register for November 2018

The first 2 risks on the Register, namely the two key financial risks to the organisation linked to government funding, had both become heightened since the previous version viewed by the Council because of the pay claim and future funding matters discussed under minute 4 above. This was also the case with risk 1.2.2 relating to pension obligations, as there was to be an increase in employers' contributions to the Teachers' Pension Scheme which would have a c£200,000 implication in annual

outgoings for Addysg Oedolion Cymru | Adult Learning Wales. Certain Council members wondered whether the score on that particular risk should therefore be increased even higher than its current amber (12 points) rating.

10. Membership Report – November 2018

Members were given a quick recap on comparative membership figures over the previous three years, and were heartened by the early indications of significant growth in member numbers resulting from the opening months of the new policy on learner-members, whilst accepting that it was still too early to know how actively engaged with the organisation those new members would become. Gareth Cork said that, based on his office experience, the initiative was being warmly received by many learners. It had however been reported earlier in the week at the South East Regional Forum that not all tutors were promoting the scheme: **Michelle Kerswell undertook to underline the importance of a consistent and supportive approach to this at termly tutor meetings.**

11. Governance matters – Committee and sub-group structure (including Terms of Reference for the Senior Leadership Team); and confirmation of representative on the Court of Cardiff University

The main point of discussion on the revised structure was the recent creation of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), including both managers and Council members. It was clarified that this was not intended to interfere with operational matters and was not meant to represent the formation of a clique; it was however hoped that it would facilitate decision making on certain issues between Council meetings. An example of that in recent weeks had been quick reaction to the Welsh Government's funding announcement, and it might again be useful on the Harlech site's future in the coming weeks. It was considered to be a better format than resorting to e-mail or telephone-based discussion/decision-making by the individuals involved, and it was confirmed that the set-up would be reviewed in one year's time. Each Council member was invited to attend the meetings (on the first Thursday of each month), and **the timetable would be circulated for information to all of the Council. The Council was content that the SLT become part of the structure, but comments were made on strengthening its Terms of Reference to show a clear separation between the SLT and the Senior Management Team parts of meetings, plus the inclusion of a more detailed setting out of the responsibilities of the 2 bodies with a reference made to the College Management Team too.** Iwan Hywel said that Mentrau Iaith Cymru had introduced something similar within its structure some two years earlier which had proved an effective way of dealing with governance/managerial relations.

On the matter of a representative on Cardiff University's Court, the Clerk explained how Addysg Oedolion Cymru | Adult Learning Wales was represented on 4 university Courts in Wales, through a mixture of core staff, tutor and Council member representatives. Four people (both staff and Council members) had initially expressed interest in the vacancy that had appeared at Cardiff, though they were now reduced to two nominees– Jenni Jones-Annetts and Stephen Nicholls. Brief statements of intent, previously prepared, were read for the two candidates and there then followed a paper ballot among those Council members present, the result of which was: Jenni Jones-Annetts 7 votes; Stephen Nicholls 2 votes; with 1 abstention. **Jenni Jones-Annetts was therefore duly elected as the organisation's representative on the Court of Cardiff University, for a period of up to two consecutive terms of three years.** It was confirmed that brief written reports from each university Court representative would be circulated with papers for our AGM in March 2019.

12. Feedback on the Council meeting and other matters

As the new members, Suzanne Samuel and Gareth Cork expressed their view that the agenda papers and conduct of the meeting had been clear in content, though there remained much detail for them to take fully on board. It was agreed that a 'Get Well' message be sent to Gerry Jenson on behalf of the Council.

13. Forthcoming Council and other meeting dates confirmed for 2019

- Tuesday 29 January: Cardiff
- Monday 4 March: Newtown
- AGM – Saturday 23 March: venue in northern Wales
- Friday 17 May: Ebbw Vale
- Thursday 18 July: Llandudno Junction

ACTION POINTS

Reference	Minute name	Action agreed	Action by whom	Action by when
Minute 4	Chief Executive's Report	The Council agreed the principles set out in the stance taken by ColegauCymru on the pay award matter, and exceptionally delegated the responsibility for a decision on this to the Resources Committee which was to meet on 4 December, on the basis that should further money be confirmed as coming to us from the Welsh Government by then, so the appropriate increase should be authorised for implementation in December's salary payments.	KR / MB	Dec. 2018
Minute 5	Coleg Harlech site update	The Council agreed to delegate powers to the Harlech Steering Group and Senior Leadership Team to consider all submissions received through the tender process and that should there be a straightforward recommendation from their meeting of 10 January 2019 then that could be consulted upon on the basis of e-mail communication with the Council as a whole. However, if there were complications due to varied bids with a mixture of conditions, then it was agreed that a special extra	KR / CH / all Harlech Steering Group members and Senior Leadership Team members	Jan. 2019

		meeting of the Council be convened at short notice specifically for the purpose of approval of a Coleg Harlech site decision.		
Minute 7	Minutes of the Learner Experience Committee meeting of 6 November 2018	<p>The number of tutors teaching under 50 hours/year (a category mentioned in relation to Teaching Observations) would be provided to the Council in writing.</p> <p>Kathryn Robson undertook to consider relevant benchmarking as an option for inclusion in parts of the evolving Quality and Performance Development Plan.</p>	<p>MK / KR</p> <p>KR</p>	<p>Jan. 2019</p> <p>Jan. 2019</p>
Minute 10	Membership Report – November 2018	Michelle Kerswell undertook to underline the importance of a consistent and supportive approach to promoting learners' membership of the organisation at termly tutor meetings.	MK	Jan. 2019
Minute 11	Governance matters	<p>The timetable for the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) meetings would be circulated to all of the Council.</p> <p>Amendments were to be made on strengthening the Terms of Reference to show a clear separation between the SLT and the Senior Management Team parts of meetings, plus the inclusion of a more detailed setting out of the responsibilities of the 2 bodies with a reference made to the College Management Team too.</p> <p>Jenni Jones-Annetts was elected as the organisation's representative on the Court of Cardiff University for a period of up to two consecutive terms of three years.</p>	<p>ST</p> <p>KR</p> <p>ST</p>	<p>Dec. 2018</p> <p>Jan. 2019</p> <p>Nov. 2018</p>