

Council Open Business – minutes 1 to 13 inclusive.

1. Attendance and Apologies

Present: John Graystone (in the Chair), Toni Schiavone (Vice Chair), Julie Cook, Suzanne Samuel, Jenni Jones-Annetts, Cathy Clark, Daryl Leeworthy (from part-way through minute 3); Caroline Davies, Stephen Nicholls, Gareth Cork, Chris Franks, David Elis-Williams (these last five members for minutes 1 to 10 only). The meeting was quorate throughout.

In Attendance: Kathryn Robson (Chief Executive), Mark Baines (Head of Curriculum and Performance), Stephen Thomas (Company Secretary/Clerk); Iola Llwyd (simultaneous interpreter). Also Leane Saunders and Jayne Murphy (Curriculum Delivery Officers - CDOs, South East Wales), a tutor and six of our learners - for minutes 1 and 2 only; Andrew Clark and Helen Scaife (Welsh Government representatives) for minutes 1 to 3 only.

Apologies: Iwan Hywel, Gerry Jenson, Sonia Reynolds (Vice Chair), Dafydd Rhys, Guy Wallace Smith, Nick Taylor; Cath Hicks (Head of Learner Services and Resources), Michelle Kerswell (Curriculum and Welsh Medium Provision Manager).

2. Learners' Presentations and Discussion Session

Leane Saunders introduced learners from her geographical area (Merthyr Tydfil & Cynon Valley), who had attended a range of courses on offer to them - 'Train the Trainer', Playworker Levels 1 and 2, Safeguarding, and First Aid. The two female learners spoke of the positive impacts, in boosting confidence levels and in changing parenting methods, which they had experienced from participating in such courses. Trago Mills was a new local employer with which there had been recent collaboration; and in relation to filling gaps left by the end of Communities First schemes AOC | ALW was to extend Childminding courses in Rhondda Cynon Taf. Jayne Murphy (Blaenau Gwent & Caerphilly local authorities) introduced four learners and a tutor from her area. Here courses in Mental Health, Counselling, Autism Awareness, Food Hygiene, Textiles & Sewing and Sign Language had improved levels of self-esteem and had led to greater levels of volunteering. The creation of parent network groups and community breakfast clubs throughout Caerphilly CBC had been direct responses to community demands to which a number of the learners contributed. The pluses in terms of learners' progression and family benefits, achieved through the dedicated work of CDOs and tutors, were clear to those assembled. All were thanked for their input before leaving the meeting.

3. Update on current developments in the Welsh Government's approach to further & adult education

Andrew Clark explained his portfolio of responsibilities, of which further and adult education formed part, and the essential reasons why Welsh Government supported the concept and financing of adult education. High levels of poverty, and especially child poverty, in Wales, employability and slowing down the rate at which people required social care services were some of the 'returns on investment' in this field which were fully in line with the Government's priorities. There were undoubtedly other positive factors too, though, as heard in part from the learners in minute 2 – confidence building, general health improvements, greater social inclusion and community cohesion, and digital literacy. While gaining skills

was important, the Government appreciated that such education should also prove to be enjoyable and feed into the aims of the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015.

The Minister for Education was a firm advocate of the importance of adult education. However, an AOC | ALW delegation was to see the Minister the following week on the issue of the consultation on future funding of adult community learning, on which no decision had yet been reached. For that reason Andrew Clark could not say more on that specific subject at this stage.

On funding more broadly, the system that had formerly been in place for further education had been undone by the austerity measures imposed by the UK government in the early part of the decade. While ColegauCymru had requested stability and consistency in funding, this had not proved possible in particular in the middle years of the decade. AOC | ALW's budgets had nevertheless been protected during that period in recognition of its valuable work, while those covering the adult education aspects of colleges and local authorities and Careers Wales had lost 50% or more of their Welsh Government funding during that time. With demographic change, there was now a need to increase funding again, which required a revised funding model. This entailed that uplifts for scarcity and Welsh Language provision, for example, were to be reduced. Andrew Clark accepted that this was in effect asking AOC | ALW to work harder for the same financial reward. He noted however that the organisation continued to have a high proportion of 'generic' output, with a large amount of it in the Arts, and a comparatively small proportion of it accredited; he believed that the provision needed to be more closely synchronised with stated Ministerial priorities.

Various topics were covered in the discussion which ensued: the importance of supporting the Arts in creating rounded individuals, versus increasing demands made on the educational budget; acknowledgement and gratefulness that the organisation's budget had effectively been ring-fenced in difficult times and that extra future amounts had been earmarked for our branches' work, acknowledging their legitimate liberal arts agenda; the statements by learners that afternoon which had shown the indirect worth and largely unmeasurable inputs to individuals and communities of our work; and the need to reduce inefficiencies in government spending on education and the increasing move to meeting Ministerial priorities. Some of the learners who had described their experiences were indeed addressing Government priorities in finding work close to home. But there also needed to be awareness that financial constraints meant that certain apprenticeships, for example, were being cut because they did not provide adequate uplift and the ending of ESF funding in a few years' time would also have adverse effects on apprenticeships and so on adult education, though it was as yet unclear where its impact would fall. Helen Scaife added that 'engagement activity' had seen attempts to reduce it over many years: while it was accepted that taster courses such as those described earlier were acceptable to entice people into the system, it was not possible to fund year-on-year continuation for the same learners without some evidence of onward movement by those individuals.

Andrew Clark and Helen Scaife were thanked for their contributions, and left at this point. **The Council proposed that they be invited back to address it annually, in principle.**

4. Institutional Review: adoption of the Welsh Government's Voluntary Framework for Good Governance Toolkit 2019

Background papers on this had been circulated. John Graystone declared an interest, having been a member of the working group appointed by the Welsh Government in late 2017 to undertake an assessment of further education governance measurements. Stephen Thomas provided further details

on how this framework had emerged from the previous year's pilot consultation undertaken by the Welsh Government, in which AOC | ALW had played an active part. There was discussion on its links to Estyn's recommendations and on how it could be diplomatically adroit to be a part of the voluntary scheme. **The Council agreed that AOC | ALW should adopt the Review's Voluntary Framework for the 2018-19 year.**

5. Election of the Chair and two Vice Chairs for 2019-20

John Graystone and Toni Schiavone left the room for this item. In their absence, the Council unanimously approved the (re-)election of John Graystone as Chair and of Sonia Reynolds and Toni Schiavone as joint Vice Chairs of the organisation, each until 31 March 2020. These had been the sole nominations received by the Clerk for these positions. On returning to the meeting, John Graystone thanked members for their continued support to the officers in fulfilment of their roles and also thanked Sonia Reynolds and Toni Schiavone for their important and regular contributions.

6. Minutes of Open Business at the Council meeting of 4 March 2019 and matters arising

The minutes of the Open Business proceedings of the previous Council meeting held at Maesmawr Hall Hotel, Caersws were approved as a correct record, subject to the correction of **Daryl** Leeworthy's name in minute 3. Two points from them were further discussed:

Minute 3 – Chief Executive's Report: in response to the Council's exhortation, a meeting was to be held with officials from the office of Ken Skates (Minister for Economy and Transport) the following week - though he would not personally be present.

Minute 3 – Estyn Inspection of January 2019: Estyn had published its inspection report in late April, a little earlier than foreseen, and it had been circulated with the Council papers. It had 4 Recommendations as anticipated (not 3, as previously minuted), and Mark Baines felt that the full 10-page report provided a clearer context and a broadly more positive picture than the somewhat mixed messages of the five headline summary conclusions. A number of Council members commented that it was indeed couched in 'inspection-speak', and that conclusions from certain sentences or sections could be drawn as either praise or criticism, depending on the reader's interpretation of the wording. The in-house Recommendations Action Plan was also studied and would be a regular Council/Committee agenda item until the next official meeting with Estyn. The ***impact / 'so what?'*** theme discussed at prior meetings could in the Council's view be **better reflected through further germane comments in the Action Plan's final column.**

7. Governance Matters - AGM proposals, constitutional review, Council meetings, and University Court updates

The AGM in Wrexham in late March had been a positive event in the eyes of many present, other than the disappointing turn-out of members at it. This partly reflected the customary dip in numbers when holding it at a northern Wales location; changing the precise Saturday date would have had little effect on attendance on this occasion, it was felt. Year-on-year reductions in the presence of members who were also staff was also remarked upon. **The proposal that there be a different format for it, making it a bigger 'festival' event held during the working week, was agreed.** Canolfan Soar in Merthyr Tydfil and

St. Fagans National Museum of History were put forward as possible locations for the 2020 event. The Clerk would liaise with others to proceed on planning for the occasion.

The constitutional review timetable was noted. As for the 2019 Strategic Planning Day in July, there would be a session on potential research into the financial and social benefits, including savings in care costs, stemming from adult education (as raised in minute 3 earlier). It was possible that the Learning and Work Institute (Wales) could lead on such research/information needs. It was also explained that the Day (and Council meeting) would be held at a venue other than Llandudno Junction as planned, for logistical reasons. From 2020 onwards, it was agreed that the Planning Day become a separate annual timetabled event, without a Council meeting on the same day. **The decision was therefore taken to hold 6 Council meetings plus a Strategic Planning Day in 2019-20.**

Turning to the University Courts, members noted the write-up of the Aberystwyth meeting held the previous month, and heard more of the occasional consultation with Bangor University's Court members outside the confines of its single meeting per year. A vacancy had arisen in our representation on Swansea University's Court (a three-year representational term). **The Council decided that it was correct to have a Council member as that representative, received the nomination for it submitted by Daryl Leeworthy (a graduate and former lecturer at that University) and, in his absence from the room, unanimously approved his nomination to be AOC | ALW's representative.**

8. Minutes of the Resources Committee meeting of 13 March 2019 and Management Accounts for August 2018 – April 2019

The Committee minutes were noted. Regarding the finance paper covering the first nine months of financial year 2018-19, the projected surplus had increased since the previous set of accounts before the Council because the Harlech campus sale (though yet to be completed) had been recognised, meaning that the sum of £200,000 was anticipated to be received by the year's end. That income would be added to our reserves: it was needed there because of the Welsh Government's transitional funding proposals for the organisation over the coming three years, moving from a grant of £1 million to receipt of the equivalent sum on the basis of 100% educational delivery by 2021-22. That significant effective cut by Year 3 had to be prepared for through a mixture of efficiency and cost savings, and income generation. It was hoped that the lead-in time given would be adequate to undertake changes to some employees' job purposes and descriptions, so as to reduce the prospects of redundancy.

Mark Baines elaborated on the additional note on the 2017 staff restructure (as requested by the Council), setting out its broad financial implications some 20 months after its approval. He spoke of the financial savings which had resulted from the difficult decisions taken then, which had entailed that the organisation now remained financially viable.

It was confirmed that a correct 80/20 split on accredited/non-accredited provision would be achieved by the end of the year, because Term 3 courses were much more weighted towards accredited work.

9. Chief Executive's Report May 2019, with Welsh Medium and Bilingual Provision Action Plan update

Kathryn Robson pointed to the strong figures on educational delivery, on target thus far in the academic year, including certain positive moves in increasing provision through the medium of Welsh as set out in the accompanying supplementary document. Interesting developments with new partners, the goodly

level of activity at many branches, and nominations to the Learning and Work Institute's Learner Awards were noted. It was clarified that the correct target for ESOL (ACI project) learners, cited in para. 11.5, was in fact 500 this year. Three Council members had participated in the mental health awareness course over recent days and were complimentary about it, feeling that it could be of use to learners more generally. The sale of our Llanishen office property was nearly completed: payment for it was expected before the calendar month's end.

Regarding the following week's meeting with Minister for Education Kirsty Williams, it was not clear from where the educational provision figures quoted by Andrew Clark in minute 3 had come, but they appeared to be erroneous and needed to be put right at that Ministerial meeting. Toni Schiavone proposed that **an additional single side of A4 paper be prepared for that meeting, setting out accurate and essential organisational information.**

While the Welsh Medium and Bilingual Provision Action Plan showed that the organisation was taking its obligations seriously in this field, the infrastructure and key personnel were taking time to be put in place, meaning that the 5% of overall delivery target would not be met in this year. The roles of Y Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol and the Cymraeg i Oedolion programme were key to successful expansion in this realm. Daryl Leeworthy added that Merthyr Tydfil branch's informal Welsh language use at courses could legitimately boost activity numbers.

10. Minutes of the Audit Committee meeting of 11 March 2019 and the Risk Register for May 2019

Chris Franks, noting that it had been an inquorate meeting, stated that the Committee's main outcome had been commenting on the revised Quotation and Tendering Policy, for onward final approval by the Resources Committee. He added that the 2019 internal audit was already well underway and could report that nothing untoward had yet been uncovered in it. The Committee's minutes were noted.

The circulated Risk Register had been updated in light of the Committee's comments two months earlier. The only request made was that it feature higher on the agenda of the Council's July meeting.

11. Key Performance Indicators for Senior Management Team – May 2019 Progress Report

There were four red (unachieved) Indicators - on Welsh Medium/Bilingual provision, campaigning, the assessment of adult learning's impact, and on staff appraisal. It was also reported that there had now been 3 unsuccessful attempts at filling the new Business Development Coordinator (fundraiser) post, and that a decision had been taken to place the role on a higher salary scale and to re-advertise it.

12. Feedback on the Council meeting

It was agreed that name badges for Council members (used as an ad hoc measure at the meeting) **should become a standard feature.** It was also agreed that, in addition to meeting and hearing from learners at occasional Council meetings, **members would periodically be invited to accompany staff attending classes or 'learner walks' in their part of the country as well.**

13. Confirmation of the remaining Council meeting date for 2018-19

- Thursday 18 July: Strategic Planning session (a.m.) - with the programme as outlined in the accompanying paper - plus a Council meeting (p.m.), at a mid Wales venue yet to be confirmed.

ACTION POINTS

Reference	Minute name	Action agreed	Action by whom	Action by when
Minute 3	Update on current developments in the Welsh Government's approach to further & adult education	The Council proposed that Andrew Clark and Helen Scaife be invited back to address it annually, in principle.	JG / KR / ST	Early 2020
Minute 4	Institutional Review – adoption of the Welsh Government's Voluntary Framework for Good Governance Toolkit 2019	There was agreement that the organisation should adopt the Review's Voluntary Framework for the 2018-19 year.	ST	Sept. 2019
Minute 6	Estyn Inspection of January 2019	The impact / 'so what?' theme discussed at prior meetings could be better reflected through further germane comments in the Recommendations Action Plan's final column.	MB / Michelle Kerswell	June 2019
Minute 7	Governance Matters - AGM proposals, constitutional review, Council meetings, and University Court updates	<p>The proposal that the AGM have a different format as a bigger 'festival' event, held during the working week, was agreed.</p> <p>The decision was taken to hold 6 Council meetings plus a separate Strategic Planning Day in 2019-20.</p> <p>Daryl Leeworthy was unanimously approved in his nomination as AOC ALW's representative on Swansea University's Court.</p>	<p>ST</p> <p>ST</p> <p>ST</p>	<p>Sept. 2019</p> <p>July 2019</p> <p>May 2019</p>
Minute 9	Chief Executive's Report May 2019	For the following week's Ministerial meeting, an additional single side of A4 paper would be prepared, setting out accurate and essential organisational information.	KR	May 2019

Minute 12	Feedback on the Council meeting	<p>It was agreed that name badges for Council members should become a standard feature.</p> <p>Members would be invited periodically to accompany staff attending classes or 'learner walks' in their part of the country.</p>	<p>ST</p> <p>MB / ST</p>	<p>July 2019</p> <p>July 2019</p>
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