

Council Open Business – minutes 1 to 12 inclusive.

1. Attendance and Apologies

Present: John Graystone (in the Chair), Iwan Hywel, Sonia Reynolds (Vice Chair), Daryl Leeworthy, Suzanne Samuel, Caroline Davies, Stephen Nicholls, Toni Schiavone (Vice Chair), Gareth Cork, Jenni Jones-Annetts, Chris Franks, Dafydd Rhys, David Elis-Williams; Cathy Clark (to minute 6 only). The meeting was quorate throughout.

In Attendance: Kathryn Robson (Chief Executive), Cath Hicks (Head of Learner Services and Resources), Mark Baines (Head of Curriculum and Performance), Stephen Thomas (Company Secretary/Clerk); Siôn Aled Owen (simultaneous interpreter).

Apologies: Julie Cook, Gerry Jenson, Guy Wallace Smith, Nick Taylor.

2. Minutes of Open Business at the Council meeting of 17 May 2019 and matters arising

The minutes of the Open Business proceedings of the previous Council meeting held at Ebbw Vale were approved as a correct record, subject to a change in references made in minute 2 of the Welsh language version being to two, and then four, **female** learners (*dysgwraig*). All action points had been followed up, and three matters in the minutes were further discussed:

Minute 3 – Current developments in the Welsh Government’s approach to further and adult education: a recent meeting with a senior civil servant had revealed misunderstandings on their part about the division of our provision between accredited and non-accredited courses. **This was to be followed up with a letter, setting out the accurate position in terms of our conforming with ministerial priorities in this regard.**

Minute 6 – Previous minutes and the Estyn Inspection of January 2019: showing the **impact** of our educational interventions on learners, as underlined by Estyn by its emphasis on the ‘So What?’ question, was to be advanced through providing training on the measurement of impact to our managers.

Minute 8 – Minutes of Resources Committee (Coleg Harlech site update): the sale’s completion remained stalled because of the Land Registry matter. A further Statement of Truth had been signed by a former Coleg Harlech/CHWEAN employee confirming that the disabled access ramp, lift and disabled parking bay for the theatre/auditorium building were directly linked to the building’s ownership under those organisations. The buyer remained actively committed to the purchase and hence a sum of £200,000 was still included in the forecast for the end of year accounts (*see minute 8 below*). A Freedom of Information Act request concerning the site’s sale had recently been submitted by the *Harlech in Action* group.

3. Issues to confirm and agree upon from the earlier Strategic Planning sessions

The themes of perception of AOC|ALW and its profile which Jeff Greenidge had highlighted as facilitator were considered to have been germane ones. The feedback received from the five break-out groups at that morning’s session would be processed. **It was agreed that ‘The National Community College / Y**

Coleg Cymunedol Cenedlaethol' be officially adopted as a strap-line for the organisation on printed and virtual materials, and that the 'formerly known as / a elwid gynt' sub-script and logos no longer be used. Variations on this representation were discussed but not approved, though the words 'and democratic movement for adult education in Wales' should be added when introducing AOC|ALW verbally.

John Graystone as Chair wished to record his thanks to those staff and Council members who had contributed to reaching the position where AOC|ALW was still in contention for a key role in future changes to the adult community education scene according to the Minister for Education's statement of earlier in the month. **The positive potential effect involved in becoming an organisation with an 'ac.uk' domain name, as an additional one to our present '.wales/.cymru' one was referred to, though the need for AOC|ALW to be open to NUS membership so as to be eligible for this alternative should be checked.**

4. Chief Executive's Oral Report

Kathryn Robson spoke of the key matters raised that morning, the continuing follow-up to Estyn's inspection, the clean audit on learners' data that had occurred, the financial surplus expected for the organisation in 2018-19 and the slow improvement in Welsh medium education learners' numbers.

5. Minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 4 July 2019

Chris Franks referred members to the substantial assurance that the internal audit had given the Key Financial Controls of the organisation, and the Committee's delight at the sale of the Llanishen office. The continuing lack of success in recruiting to the new fundraising post was however a worry, and the Committee had requested the addition of one risk to the Register (on communication and marketing). Information on a well-being strategy for staff would be presented at the next Committee meeting, by which time a new Council member appointee to the Committee was ideally required. It was noted that while the Cardiff office was consistently convenient as the venue for the Committee in its current form it might be that it should vary its meeting locations, dependent upon any new appointee's base. The Council noted the minutes' contents.

6. Risk Register for July 2019

A need on occasion to peruse this document in a detailed, point by point manner, so as to ask the pertinent 'So What?' questions relating to it, was put forward. All discussion on this occasion centred on the newly added risk 6.1.3 – Communication and Marketing. There needed to be measurable targets established for the number of hits received by our web-site and on our social media, and **these data should be reported regularly to the Council.** It was also felt that tutors were not yet fully on board with the importance or availability of marketing and its materials, and that there was a case for further internal communication and induction on those. An alternative challenge to overcome was mentioned, raised at the recent NW Wales Regional Forum, of tutors being prevented from using marketing which did not conform with central diktat and templates. In passing, it was noted that Risk 6.1.1 (Welsh Language Standards) was not correctly colour-coded in its Net Risk column.

7. Minutes of the Resources Committee meeting held on 2 July 2019

These were formally presented by David Elis-Williams and noted by the Council.

8. Management Accounts, August 2018 – May 2019

Mark Baines said that a projected £286,000 surplus for the year broke down into a £64,000 surplus in 'core' matters, with the exceptional one-off income from the sale of the Llanishen and Harlech properties on top of that. The variances noted were almost all balanced ones, with extra income compensating for additional expenditure. Liquidity at £2.7 million was extremely healthy – far more significant than the 3 months' expenditure which was our stated objective. It was asked if part of this money could go towards expenditure on extra marketing, research work or other new developments rather than merely being kept as a hedge against possible future financial hardship. David Elis-Williams reminded Council of his suggestion that a proportion of the income from the Harlech site's sale should not automatically go into organisational reserves, but should instead be spent in some form on celebrating and recording that institution's history.

9. Proposed Budget for 2019-20 and Three-Year Financial Plan for 2019-20 to 2021-22

The budget, recommended for approval by the Resources Committee earlier in the month, and the three-year plan covered the period of assimilation - by the beginning of Year 3 - of the transitional arrangement on £1 million funding from the Welsh Government discussed at previous Council meetings. The figures in Year 3 had been slightly amended following the Committee's comments, to ensure a surplus of 0.5%. The savings of c£450,000 necessary over the two-year lead-in period were intended to be achieved by greater emphasis on courses in Sector Subject Areas which paid more per learner per hour, the closure of our Llandudno Junction leased office, a freeze on filling certain staff vacancies, and the appointment of a Business Development Manager (fundraiser). This was not as controversial a set of budgetary proposals as in previous years, where staff restructuring had proved necessary: on this occasion a phased set of actions was before the Council. There however remained a certain tension between the bigger (and therefore more viable) classes at urban-based courses and the need to continue to champion rural courses too. It was confirmed that greater sums would be made available to the marketing budget should there be savings made elsewhere in the 2019-20 budget. While the comparative financial leanness of the organisation at present was noted, some Council members still expressed concern about the potential funding cuts that were to come and the need to avoid redundancies at all cost. **The Council approved the budget for 2019-20 and noted the forecast figures for the following two financial years.**

10. Minutes of the Learner Experience Committee meeting held on 20 June 2019

Caroline Davies said that the Committee had been impressed with the degree of work behind the large number of new policies presented to it. While there were cases reported of under-performance on certain courses, learners' complaints and safeguarding matters, these in their way all showed that due processes were in place to alert the organisation as a whole to problems or to potential problems. The Council noted the contents of the minutes.

John Graystone left the meeting for the duration of a brief discussion on a confidential minute relating to Agored Cymru, because of a conflict of interest on his part. Toni Schiavone took the chair for that matter. Mark Baines reported that this was a historical issue going back 12 months and further, concerning a

small number of partnership-led courses in the National Delivery team’s portfolio. Problems on consistency in their quality checking had been picked up internally in advance, and appropriate new controls had been put in place as a result.

11. Feedback on the Council meeting

There was positive feedback on the new simultaneous interpretation headphones on offer, and on the introduction of name badges. There was confirmation that the decision made at the previous Council meeting, that there needed to be a full day dedicated to the Strategic Planning process from 2020 onwards, had been a correct one.

12. Confirmed Council and other related meeting dates for 2019-20

- Monday 23 September 2019: Swansea
- Tuesday 26 November: Wrexham
- Monday 27 January 2020: Cardiff
- Thursday 12 March: Newtown
- AGM - Thursday 2 April: Merthyr Tydfil or St. Fagans
- Wednesday 20 May: Ebbw Vale
- Strategic Planning Day – Thursday 2 July: Llandrindod Wells
- Thursday 23 July: Bangor

ACTION POINTS

Reference	Minute name	Action agreed	Action by whom	Action by when
Minute 2	Minutes of Open Business at the Council meeting of 17 May 2019 and matters arising	A letter would be sent to civil servants, setting out the accurate position in terms of our conforming with ministerial priorities in regard to accredited/non-accredited provision.	KR / MB	July 2019
Minute 3	Matters to confirm and agree upon from the earlier Strategic Planning sessions	It was agreed that ‘The National Community College / Y Coleg Cymunedol Cenedlaethol’ be officially adopted as a strap-line for the organisation on printed and virtual materials, and that the ‘formerly known as / a elwid gynt’ sub-script and logos no longer be used. The words ‘and democratic movement for adult education in Wales’ should be added when introducing AOC ALW verbally.	KR / Jonathan Goddard	August 2019

		The positive potential effect of becoming an organisation with an 'ac.uk' domain name, as an additional one to our present '.wales/.cymru' one was referred to, though the need for AOC ALW to be open to NUS membership so as to be eligible for this alternative should be checked.	KR / MB / CH	
Minute 6	Risk Register for July 2019	Measurable targets on the number of hits received by our web-site and on our social media should be set and these data should be reported regularly to the Council.	CH / Jonathan Goddard	September 2019
Minute 9	Proposed Budget for 2019-20 and Three-Year Financial Plan for 2019-20 to 2021-22	The Council approved the budget for 2019-20 and noted the forecast figures for the following two financial years.	MB / Adele Gatt	August 2019