

Minutes of the 184th meeting of the Council held on 21 September 2017 at the HEFCW office, Bedwas

- Members:** David Allen (Chair)
Dr David Blaney (Chief Executive)
Dame Sandra Burslem
Bethan Guilfoyle
David Mason
Dr Arun Midha
Professor Leni Oglesby
Professor Mark Smith
Professor Robin Williams
Dr Colin Wyatt
- Observers:** Mario Ferelli, Director of Analytical Services, HEFCE
Sam Huckle, Welsh Government
Chris Jones, Welsh Government
Ellen Jones, President, National Union of Students Wales
- Officers:** Dale Hall (Council Secretary)
Mat Hall
Celia Hunt
Nicola Hunt
Joanna Kirkby
Bethan Owen
Ryan Stokes
Nick Williams
- Apologies:** Dr John Kemp, Interim Chief Executive, SFC
Huw Morris, Welsh Government
Neil Surman, Welsh Government

1. Introductory remarks and declarations of interest

1. The Chair welcomed observers, who included Ellen Jones, President of NUS Wales, attending her first HEFCW Council meeting; Sam Huckle from Welsh Government; and four relatively new HEFCW members of staff.
2. No specific members' interests were declared in relation to any of today's agenda items above and beyond those currently published on HEFCW's website.
3. The Chair would write on behalf of the Council to Professor Alice Brown, who was retiring as Chair of the Scottish Funding Council in October, to thank her for her services. The Chair would also write letters of congratulations to the following on their recent appointments:

- Chris Millward, new Director Fair Access and Participation for the Office for Students (OfS).
- Alison Johns, Chief Executive-designate of the new UK higher education agency to be formed in 2018 from the merger of the Equality Challenge Unit, Higher Education Academy and Leadership Foundation for Higher Education.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2017 (HEFCW/17/Min183)

- 2.1 The minutes were accepted as a true record of the meeting held on 13 July 2017

3. Matters Arising (HEFCW/17/67)

- 3.1 *Electronic council paper system* – Difficulties were still being experienced with installation of the software; the matter had been escalated with the supplier.

The paragraphs below are exempt from publication under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (prejudice to the effective conduct of public affairs)

3.3 Exempt minute

3.4 Exempt minute

3.5 Exempt minute

3.6 Exempt minute

4. Chair's Report (HEFCW/17/CH5)

4.1 The next quarterly meeting with the Cabinet Secretary was scheduled for 27 September.

4.2 The Chair had held a positive and energising meeting with the Permanent Secretary in August. The Permanent Secretary had expressed an interest in improving the skills base of Wales and in the development of apprenticeships. They had agreed to meet again in the New Year following the consultation period on the recent White Paper post-Hazelkorn.

4.3 The Learned Society of Wales had consulted with the Chair in August on research they were commissioning. The Council noted in this context the *Wales and the World* publication tabled at today's meeting which had been produced by the Learned Society, with a financial contribution from HEFCW, and which would appear as an insert in the Times Higher Education in September. Members welcomed the supplement as a good piece of work promoting the strengths of higher education in Wales.

4.4 On 14 September the Chair and Chief Executive had met with Universities Wales, National Training Federation Wales and Colegau Cymru as part of their continuing engagements on closer working. Further meetings were being arranged and the Cabinet Secretary would be updated on developments.

The paragraphs below are exempt from publication under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (prejudice to the effective conduct of public affairs)

4.5 Exempt minute

5. Chief Executive's Report (HEFCW/17/CE5)

5.1 Diamond Review, including Cabinet Secretary's statement: oral update
HEFCW officers were continuing to work closely with Welsh Government on the implementation project. Chris Jones was the Senior Responsible Officer for the project.

The paragraph below is exempt from publication under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (prejudice to the effective conduct of public affairs)

5.2 Exempt minute

The paragraph below is exempt from publication under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (prejudice to the effective conduct of public affairs)

5.3 Exempt minute

The paragraphs below are exempt from publication under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (commercial interests)

5.4 Exempt minute

The paragraph below is exempt from publication under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (information provided in confidence)

5.5 Gateway review consultation
Exempt minute

The paragraphs below are exempt from publication under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (commercial interests; prejudice to effective conduct of public affairs)

5.6 Exempt minute

5.7 Exempt minute

5.8 Council Workshop 15 November: proposed agenda items
Resolved: The Council agreed the three proposed discussion topics for its next Workshop, and added to the agenda some discussion on Corporate Strategy measures. It was further agreed to allow enough space on the Workshop agenda for discussion of issues of general topicality.

5.9 HEFCW Draft Corporate Strategy 2017-20 and Draft Operational Plan 2017-18
The paper attached the finalised draft Corporate Strategy that had been submitted to the Cabinet Secretary for approval. Council members welcomed the document and its new, stripped-down format. The NUS observer welcomed the references in the new Strategy to the student experience and widening access. CJ said that HEFCW shortly could expect a formal reply from the Cabinet Secretary on the Strategy.

5.10 Funding for quality proposals

Resolved: The Council approved the use of approximately £55k from the Learning and Teaching Fund for HEFCW's participation in UK-wide quality contracts coordinated by HEFCE.

5.11 Authorisation to sign electronic and all other banking documentation and to sub-delegate authority

Resolved: The Council authorised David Blaney and Nicholas Williams jointly to sign any documents in relation to the operation of the Council's bank accounts and documents in relation to electronic banking channels, and to delegate to individuals the power to decide matters dealt with for electronic banking channels and to allow those individuals to sub-delegate the power to other individuals to make payments and give other instructions in respect of those electronic banking channels.

The paragraphs below are exempt from publication under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (prejudice to effective conduct of public affairs)

5.12 Exempt minute

5.13 Council received and noted a number of items for information:

- Chief Executive's Calendar of Meetings since the last meeting of Council on 13 July 2017. One amendment to the Calendar was noted: the Welsh Government's PCET Reform External Stakeholder Reference Group meeting on 19 September had been attended by Bethan Owen on behalf of the Chief Executive who had, instead, attended a reception hosted by the Ambassador of Vietnam.
- Chief Executive's Miscellaneous Fund
- Appointments Committee actions
- Note of the Institutional Visit to Aberystwyth University, 12 July 2017

6. Draft HEFCW response to the Welsh Government White Paper *Public Good and a Prosperous Wales* (HEFCW/17/68)

The paragraphs below are exempt from publication under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (for future publication)

6.1 Exempt minute

6.2 Exempt minute.

6.3 Exempt minute

6.4 Exempt minute

6.5 Exempt minute

6.6 Exempt minute

6.7 Exempt minute

6.8 Exempt minute

6.9 Exempt minute

6.10 Exempt minute

6.11 Exempt minute

6.12 Exempt minute

6.13 Exempt minute

Resolved: The Council

6.14 Noted the latest draft HEFCW response to the White Paper.

6.15 Agreed that a revised draft, taking account of the comments above, be circulated to members of the Council, and to members of the HEFCW advisory committees, including the Research, Innovation and Engagement Committee, prior to final sign off.

6.16 Delegated authority to the Chair and Chief Executive to finalise the response, taking account of Council's comments, for submission by the deadline of 23 October 2017.

7. Fee and access planning (HEFCW/17/69)

7.1 The paper updated the Council on fee and access planning (FAP) issues, including monitoring of 2014/15 plans; variations to 2017/18 plans; approval of 2018/19 plans; and potential variations to 2018/19 plans.

The paragraphs below are exempt from publication under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (information provided in confidence; prejudice to the effective conduct of public affairs)

7.2 Exempt minute

7.3 Exempt minute

7.4 Exempt minute

7.5 Exempt minute

Resolved: The Council

7.6 Noted the completion of the 2014/15 fee and access plan annual monitoring process.

The paragraph below is exempt from publication under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (prejudice to the effective conduct of public affairs)

7.7 Exempt minute

7.8 Noted the approval of 2018/19 fee and access plans and issues arising from the approval process.

7.9 Noted that HEFCW would develop a variation process for 2018/19 plans in autumn 2017 to take account of maximum fee-level changes.

- 7.10 Agreed to establish a new regulation sub-committee subject to further reflection on the committee's membership as outlined in minute 7.4 above.
- 7.11 Delegated authority to the Chair and Chief Executive to approve the final terms of reference for the new regulatory committee.

8. NSS 2017 results (HEFCW/17/70)

- 8.1 The paper provided a summary of the outcomes of the 2017 National Student Survey (NSS). Amended copies of Annexes A and B were tabled at the meeting as the originals had some missing data. The Council expressed its thanks to Nicola Hunt for the paper and underpinning analysis.
- 8.2 It was noted that, as a consequence of revisions made this year to the NSS survey questions, it was not possible to make direct comparisons with previous years' outcomes. Also, there had been some boycotting of the survey by students in England which had affected some of the results.
- 8.3 The overall performance of Wales' higher education providers in this year's NSS was positive, outperforming the UK in the 'student voice' and 'students' union' categories, and showing good results in the new questions in the survey. At an individual institution level, the Council noted that both Aberystwyth and Bangor universities continued to perform above their benchmarks on overall student satisfaction. The University of South Wales remained statistically significantly below its benchmark. The NUS observer commented that the considerable variation in responses to the NSS questions about students unions reflected the wide range of views of students as to what they believed the role of students unions were or should be.
- 8.4 The Council's Quality Assurance Committee would consider the NSS results in detail at its next meeting in October.
- 8.5 Resolved: The Council noted the 2017 NSS outcomes.

9. Any other business

None.

- 10. Date of next meeting**
Council Workshop: 15 November 2017. Council meeting: 16 November 2017.

Papers for approval without discussion

11. HEFCW's Strategic Equality Plan (HEFCW/17/71)

- 11.1 The paper attached the revised HEFCW Strategic Equality Plan and accompanying documentation. It was noted in this context that arrangements were being made for Council members to receive equality and diversity training at the time of its meeting in March 2018. The Council thanked Ryan Stokes, the new Widening Access and Equalities Manager for preparing the paper.

Resolved: The Council

- 11.2 Delegated authority to the Chief Executive to finalise the HEFCW's revised Strategic Equality Plan 2016 to 2020 prior to publication.
- 11.3 Noted progress against the Strategic Equality Delivery Plan 2016/17.
- 11.4 Delegated authority to the Chief Executive to finalise the Strategic Equality Delivery Plan 2017/18 prior to publication.

Papers provided for information

- 12. Finalised Annual Report and Accounts 2016-17 (HEFCW/17/72)**
- 13. Cash expenditure report for the period April to June 2017 (HEFCW/17/73)**
- 14. April to June Accruals Based Management Accounts report 2017-18 (HEFCW/17/74)**
- 15. Part-time undergraduate fee-waiver scheme 2015/16 (HEFCW/17/75)**
- 16. Unconfirmed Minutes of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meeting held on 21 June 2017 (HEFCW/17/76)**

Signature.....Date.....