GATESHEAD COLLEGE
EDUCATION
WITH
EMPLOYMENT
EDGE

PEOPLE AND REMUNERATION COMMITTEE – MAIN MINUTES
Thursday 29 February 2024 – 4pm to 6pm
Meeting held via Teams

Governors	Type	Initials	Attendance	Apologies
Lisa Crichton-Jones	Chair of Committee – Independent Governor	LCJ	X*	
Michael Wood-Williams	Committee Member – Independent Governor	MW	X*	
Claire-Jane Rewcastle	Committee Member – Independent Governor	CJR	X^*	
David Alexander	Committee Member – Principal / CEO	DA	X*	
Richard Wensley	Committee Member – Staff Governor	RW	X*	
Clerk				
Nicola Taylor	Director of Governance & Compliance	NT	X*	
Presenters / Attendees				
Vicki Casey	Director of People & OD	VC	X*	
Lori Casson	Head of People	LC	X*	
Sharon Kinleyside	Health & Safety Manager	SK	X^*	
Jeremy Cook	Deputy Principal Finance & Resources	JC	X*	

*Attended via Teams / ^Attended for part of the meeting

P/015   **1. Chair's Welcome, Apologies and Conflict of Interest**

The Chair welcomed the attendees.

There were no apologies to report although CJR was having difficulty accessing the meeting. The Committee **agreed** that the meeting was quorate.

There were no conflicts of interest declared.

P/016   **2. Minutes of the People and Remuneration Committee**

A. 7 December 2023 – Main Minutes

The Committee **reviewed** the main minutes from the previous meeting and **agreed** that they were a true and accurate reflection of the meeting.

B. 7 December 2023 – Confidential Minutes

The Committee **reviewed** the confidential minutes from the previous meeting and **agreed** that they were a true and accurate reflection of the meeting.

The minutes were approved.

CJR joined the meeting.

P/017   **3. Matters Arising / Action Log**

VC presented the action log, noting that two actions were ongoing and 4 were not yet due.

The report was noted.

P/018   **4. Health and Safety Policy**

SK presented the Health and Safety Policy, noting that only minimal amends had been made as part of the annual review. An additional section relating to sustainability had been added.

The Committee <u>discussed and queried</u> the following:

- The balance between the focus on health and safety, and staff welfare – it was confirmed that although there was a link between overall health & safety and welfare, staff welfare sat within the remit of People Team. It was confirmed that the Health and Safety Manager and the Head of People worked collaboratively.

- The compliance with Board level responsibilities and how this was assured – it was suggested that this would be covered within the Health & Safety Annual Report however a note on this would be added to the covering report when seeking Board approval of the policy to provide assurance.

    Action: VC / SK to write a brief narrative regarding compliance with Board level responsibilities when seeking Board approval.

- Health and Safety implications of new projects and how the Committee / Board would be notified of these – it was suggested that this would link to risk implications which was a standard part of reporting templates.

The Committee **<u>recommended</u>** the Health and Safety Policy for Board approval.

In relation to policies in general, the Committee **<u>queried</u>** the process of Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) and if there was a holistic review of outcomes – it was confirmed that Executive Leads review the EIAs of policies within their areas however these were looked at individually. It was **<u>agreed</u>** that a wider review of the outcomes of all EIAs would be useful to consider trend data / potential improvements.

Action: NT to consider holistic review of Equality Impact Assessments and monitoring as part of overall policy project.

The policy was recommended.

SK left the meeting.

P/019   **5. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Annual Report 2022/23**

LC presented the report and provided some accompanying slides which covered key EDI data and information for 2022/2023, covering; staff data relating to age ranges, gender, disability, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and covering learner data relating to gender and disability, with suggested planned actions for each area.

The Committee thanked LC for the summary slides with key information, noting this provided clarity and future direction.

The Committee <u>discussed and queried</u> the following:

- The percentage of staff not disclosing sexual orientation (11%), it was suggested that this may be due to staff requiring a better understanding of how this data would be used to increase the comfortability with disclosure. It was agreed that the confidentiality of this would be reiterated.

  Action: VC / LC to ensure confidentiality of EDI data is reiterated to staff as part of data collection.

  The Committee <u>noted</u> that they would be interested to see the trend data relating to this over time to see if the level of disclosure improved in future years, and noted that this would come from future EDI reporting.

- The availability of local comparators for benchmarking, other than national and regional data – it was noted that the People Team were building networks within the local area and there may be opportunities to create local information sharing to enable this.

- The current position of the data – it was agreed that the EDI project would be ongoing over a number of years with plans and actions to continue to improve the College's position, however VC agreed that the College was at the expected point within the project and plan.

- The inclusivity of the recruitment process – it was confirmed that the College was working with external partners on a recruitment project and the College would be looking to ensure inclusivity across the whole recruitment process, which would include a review of job descriptions / person specifications, as well as ensuring interview accessibility.

The Committee <u>noted</u> the improvements within the reporting, including the interpretation of data and alignment of future actions.

The Committee <u>recommended</u> the EDI report for Board approval.

The report was recommended.

P/020   6. Director of People and Organisational Development Update

VC presented the report and highlighted the following:

- Recruitment and Selection – the College was moving into Phase 2 of the project, with the Phase 1 recommendations set out within the report. VC noted that that the employer brand was being considered, ensuring a link with the EDI and recruitment projects.

- EDI – the College was continuing to work with external partners who had recently conducted listening groups with the insights presented to the Executive Team. Phase 2 was starting which would involve a refresh of the EDI objectives and the further gathering of data.

  The EDI Steering Group was in place and would be overseeing the EDI work across the College.

  A Menopause Support Group had been reinstated, and there was work being undertaken to further support women returning from maternity leave. The College was looking to set up one inclusion group to ensure initiatives were manageable.

- People Policies – this project had been slightly delayed due to the current Business Partner vacancy. A meeting was due to take place to consider where Board approval was required for policies and any relevant policies which could be updated prior to the summer would be brought to the June 2024 Committee meeting for recommendation.

- Annual Staff Survey – good feedback has been received from managers regarding the support and follow up from the College survey results in 2022/23. The 2023/24 College survey was opening on 18 March 2024 and would be open for 2 weeks. This was earlier than prior years to synchronise with the College's operational planning cycle and with the hope to reach more staff, for example, those on casual / fixed term contracts.

  VC noted the importance of demonstrating the work undertaken by the College since the last survey to help staff recognise the positive outcomes and initiatives implemented following their feedback.

- Benefits – the People Team were working closely with Marketing and IT regarding the wellbeing portal. This was hoped to be launched by the end of July 2024.

  In November 2023, the College was internally audited on Staff Wellbeing. This report was being presented to the Audit Committee in March 2024 and would be shared with the People Committee at the June 2024 meeting for information.

- Values – a revised timeline had been created for this project, and internal discussions were ongoing as to how best to drive this forward.

- Learning and Development – this area had seen a lower score within the Staff Survey results for 2022/23 and the project was currently behind due to further due diligence taking place regarding internal learning and development activity within the College ahead of creating a job description for recruitment. The College was considering how best to implement a learning management system with the ability to access and update CPD records. Development Days had been revised to include support staff.

The Committee <u>discussed and queried</u> the following:

- The EDI insights report and the importance of gathering further data.

- The survey response rate standard – it was suggested that 70% was the response rate the College hoped to achieve. VC noted the communication plan for the launch of the survey, along with specific time allocated within the upcoming staff development day to facilitate participation.

- The utilisation of line managers as advocates for completion – it was confirmed that targeted communications were planned, specifically considering those departments who had a lower response rate in 2022/23.

- Whether staffing shortage / absence was included within the People Operational Risk Register, and whether this needed further escalation to the Strategic Risk Register – it was confirmed that this risk was covered at an operational level and there was a risk relating to "Failure to recruit, retain, develop and support high calibre staff impacts adversely on the College's capacity to deliver, leading to reputational damage and financial loss" at a strategic level.

The report was noted.

P/021 **7. People Strategy Update**

VC presented the report and provided an update regarding the progress of the People Strategy, noting that that staff focus groups were currently planned to take place. An additional session would be arranged for the People Committee, with all Board members invited, to cover the findings and discuss the development of the strategy in further detail. This was planned to be a 2-hour session.

The Committee **endorsed** the plans for their involvement and **requested** a draft of the People Strategy ahead of their recommendation being sought in June 2024.

Action: VC / NT to arrange People Committee / Board People Strategy development session.

Action: VC to share draft People Strategy with the People Committee ahead of seeking recommendation at the June 2024 meeting.

The Committee **queried** how the People Team were being prepared for the implementation of the People Strategy and VC confirmed that conversations were ongoing around this.

The Committee **noted** the level of work undertaken.

The report was noted.

P/022 **8. People Committee KPIs**

VC presented the report and highlighted the following:

- Additional upskilling within the HR team was required to ensure capability and consistency of reporting. Improvements had been made to date however, further work was to be done.

- Targets were planned to be included for the KPIs for Committee approval however, this had been delayed due to benchmarking data not yet being available. Targets would be suggested at the June 2024 meeting and this action was captured in the current action log.

VC also provided an update on the current absence and labour turnover data for the College, along with planned actions to improve these figures.

The Committee discussed and queried the following:

- The peaks of curriculum staff absence at the end of term (end of calendar year and end of academic year) and whether this linked to the impact of covering other staff absence – it was suggested this would need to be looked at in further detail.

  Action: VC to investigate any correlation between end of term absence and those departments covering for absence during the term.

- The College's pastoral approach to absence – it was confirmed that discussions were ongoing regarding this and that absence cases were considered on a case by case basis to best support staff and their return to work.

The tracking of any links between staff absence and learner outcomes – it was confirmed the Executive Team were looking at this. The Committee **endorsed** the planned improvement within the exit interview process.

The report was noted.

P/023   **9. Gender Pay Gap Report 2022/2023**

VC presented the report and highlighted the following:

- For 2022/2023, the College had a lower gender pay gap (11.2%) than the national average (14.3%).

- This was an improvement on the 2021/2022 figures, where the mean hourly gender pay gap was 8.8% (7.4% in 2022/23) and the median hourly gender pay gap was 13.8%.

- There was an imbalance in gender distribution across three of the four pay quartiles. This imbalance contributed to the 2022/23 pay gap.

- The lower middle and upper quartiles were identified as key areas for focused action to address the pay gap. Planned action linked to reviewing and addressing occupational segregation, ensuring diverse job postings, improving flexible working policies and enhancing family friendly policies.

The Committee **noted** the level of improvement within the Gender Pay Gap for 2022/23 and the alignment of actions which were already in progress.

The Committee **recommended** the Gender Pay Gap Report for 2022/2023 for Board approval.

The report was recommended.

P/024   **10. HR Case Work Update**

Item covered under a confidential minute.

The update was noted.

P/025   **11. Strategic Risk Register**

JC presented the report and highlighted that:

- In relation to the horizon scanning section of the risk register, the Executive Team were continuing to enhance this and were going to create more distinction of potential timings and internal / external factors. This would be presented at the April 2024 Board meeting. Additions to the horizon scan included:
  o Timely expenditure of capital grants. This related to the terms and conditions of capital grants that the College has received.

  o Disruption caused by local infrastructure projects (Gateshead Quays development, Tyne Bridge repairs etc) adversely impacts on travel to learn/travel to work.

  o Political uncertainty in the period prior to a UK general election.

- The Operational Risk Management Group continued to meet termly and highlighted areas of potential concern which were then reviewed by the

Executive Team for consideration at a strategic level. This group discussed impact of long-term sickness.

The Committee made the following <u>suggestions:</u>

- Consider future surveys regarding travel to include time taken to travel as this can largely vary and have a further impact on sustainability.

  Action: NT to pass on travel survey suggestion to Director of Brand and Learner Experience for future surveys.

- Consider options regarding flexible / hybrid working to reduce the risk relating to retention of staff due to the upcoming expected travel disruption. It was confirmed that this was being discussed by the Executive Team and considerations were ongoing.

The report was noted.

P/026   **12. Any Other Business**

N/A

P/027   **13. Date of Next Meeting:**

The next meeting was confirmed as 13 June 2024 at 4pm.