GATESHEAD COLLEGE
EDUCATION
WITH
EMPLOYMENT
EDGE

PEOPLE AND REMUNERATION COMMITTEE – MAIN MINUTES
Thursday 7 December 2023 – 4pm to 6pm

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	
Jeremy Cook	Deputy Principal Finance & Resources	JC	X	

P/001   1. Chair's Welcome, Apologies and Conflict of Interest

The Chair welcomed the attendees. The Chair noted that RW had been appointed to the People Committee and this was his first committee meeting.

There were no apologies to report. The Committee **agreed** that the meeting was quorate.

The Chair made specific welcome to LC, Head of People, who had been invited to present alongside VC.

P/002   2. Minutes of the People and Remuneration Committee

A. 22 June 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. 22 June 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.

P/003   **3. Matters Arising / Action Log**

A) Appointment of Vice Chair

LCJ confirmed that as part of the Terms of Reference for 2022/2023, a Vice Chair would be implemented for each Committee. Committee members had been contacted in advance of the meeting to seek expressions of interest. An expression of interest had been received from CJR.

The Committee **approved** the appointment of CJR as the Vice Chair of the People Committee.

The Chair also **noted thanks** to CJR for her time as the previous Char of the People and Remuneration Committee.

The Vice Chair was appointed.

B) Action Log

VC presented the action log, noting that one action was not yet due.

The report was noted.

P/004   **4. Human Resources (HR) Annual Report 2022/2023**

LC presented the report and highlighted the following:

- The Director of People and OD's (VC) and the Head of People's (LS) appointment to the HR Team.

- The work undertaken with external partners relating to specific areas of expertise, such as EDI.

- Data relating to; average position count, length of service, staff turnover, recruitment, absence and employer relations.

- The work planned within 2023/2024 to explore the staff retention data in more detail, including to improve the onboarding induction process, explore stay conversations and review the exit process.

- The higher absence figures in comparison with the sector and regional data, noting that the focus on absence management would work to reduce this figure going forward. It was also noted that 80% of sickness absence related to curriculum staff, and this was a 19% increase on the previous year.

- The College had increased occupational health clinics to two per month, and the appointment of a new College Mental Health and Wellbeing Team for learners during summer 2023 had started to alleviate the pressure on staff previously dealing with aspects of this work and it was hoped this would continue.

- The high levels of absence relating to mental health, and the disparity of this compared with the AoC sector data.

- Recruitment continued to be a challenge across the sector. There had been a dramatic reduction in the number of applications received for posts in comparison to the previous year. The top three reasons for not recruiting to positions had been attributed to lack of skills required, no applications and applicants looking for higher pay. The College were looking to build mechanisms to collect feedback, and had engaged with an external partner to support the recruitment project which was reviewing the end to end processes. This would include benchmarking against other organisations.

- o The Staff Governor (RW) made specific reference to the recruitment challenges faced, specifically within the areas of English and Maths.
- The increase in employer relations cases from the previous year, with the caveat that reporting had improved and more cases were being challenged. The Disciplinary Procedure had been reviewed and other related policies and procedures were also being updated as required.
- Positive relationships had been built with the Trade Unions.
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) data would be covered in more detail within the EDI report which was planned to be presented to the February 2023 Committee meeting.

The Committee **noted** the usefulness of the report and **recognised** the level of work undertaken.

The Committee discussed and queried the following:

- The utilisation of vacancy sites – it was suggested that these methods of recruitment weren't being utilised and this was being considered as part of the ongoing College recruitment project. It was agreed people may travel out of area for roles and therefore it was important to reach a wide audience.
- The linkage between the HR data provided within the report and the areas being progressed by the external consultant relating to the recruitment project.
- Support and interventions for those on long term absence – it was noted that the HR Business Partners would be focussed on this going forward, specifically being able to signpost support to facilitate return to work. It was confirmed the College had a higher percentage of disabled staff (in comparison to responding Colleges within the Further Education Workforce survey), and would be exploring any links between colleagues with long term conditions and those on long term absence.
- Any additional support needed for the staff working within the Jewish Academies due to the ongoing middle east conflict – it was confirmed operational conversations had taken and would continue to take place from a HR and learner point of view to ensure any necessary support was offered and provided.
- Impact of the additional Occupational Health Clinics – it was suggested that it was too early to measure, however the quality of reporting and the level of information provided had improved.
- Any wider audience of the HR Annual Report – it was noted that this was provided for Board assurance.
  - o The Committee **noted** the positive messages of progress however **requested** for future reporting to provide clearer action points based on findings, links with the strategic objectives and data trends.

    Action: Future HR Annual Report to include clearer action points, links with the strategic objectives and data trends.

  - o The Committee **queried** any wider circulation of key themes to management and Unions. It was agreed that this would be considered.

    Action: VC to consider any further circulation of key themes from reporting.

- The level of absence, and links with the disciplinary / grievance process, alongside the HR Team's increased focus on absence casework and the utilisation of the policies and procedures.

- Considerations of the workforce of the future and potential changes to implement, such as working practices – it was agreed there needed to be a focus on this going forward, and improved data would assist with this, reporting and awareness of challenges. VC noted this would link with the People Strategy which would drive the focus on the workforce of the future, including further consideration of potential risks.

- Consideration of the operational and strategic risk registers, and the measurement of impact and improvements.

The report was noted.

P/005   5. **Health & Safety (H&S) Annual Report 2022/2023**

VC presented the report and highlighted the following:

- Previously the H&S Annual Report had been reported to the Audit Committee however as the Health & Safety Manager was now under VC's remit it had been suggested to bring this within the remit of the People Committee.

- VC would work with the Health and Safety Manager regarding data trends and actions to take forward. VC suggested providing a 6-month update to the Committee with additional reporting.

  Action: VC/ SK to provide 6-month H&S report at the June 2023 meeting.

- Only minimal amends had been made to the Quality Assurance Framework.

- Monitoring indicators were at, or above, target.

- The number of health and safety audits had increased from the previous year.

- An electronic system had been implemented for risk assessments and this had made completion easier which was evidenced in the increase completion. Additional digital technology was being explored to further improve reporting within other areas.

- There was positive stakeholder feedback relating, with 95.6% of learners agreeing with the statement of *"I feel that the college is a safe place to learn"* and the recent staff survey showing a score of 8.1 out of 10 to *"My workplace is a safe and healthy and safe place to work."*

- The Health and Safety Manager had been leading the Business Continuity Project, which was being reported to the Audit Committee, whereby an external consultancy firm had reviewed the current business continuity and response process. Each professional support department and every campus now had a business impact analysis and recovery plan. These documents supported the overarching Business Resilience Plan (BRP).

- The Health and Safety Manager had been involved and contributed to the College security reviews undertaken by the Police and independent security specialists. An action plan had been developed in response to these and was ongoing. These actions were expected to help prepare the College for the introduction of Martyn's Law.

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

- The inclusion of the positive culture across the campuses in relation to Health and Safety, and for this to be more evidenced within future reporting to provide assurance.

  Action: H&S culture to be included within the H&S reporting going forward.

- Lessons to be learned from the heightened level of recent cyber-attacks linking with the improvements of business continuity – it was confirmed that two factor authentication had recently been rolled out for all staff within the College and the cyber security elements of the business continuity plan had been updated. Scenario planning going forward would consider cyber-attacks.

- Potential threats to health and safety, linking to the ongoing middle east conflict, and the understanding of this threat – it was confirmed that communication with the Jewish Community continued and that the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) had strong with the Police who would provide any relevant intelligence and risk.

- The increasing emphasis on work experience placements and the time and resource of staff – it was noted that additional resourcing may be required for this work going forward as more placements are required.

The Committee **requested** further information relating to how the Health and Safety Team are structured / supported, the work of the H&S Committee and how this feeds into Board assurance.

Action: The Health and Safety Team structure, the work of the Health and Safety Committee and how this feeds into Board assurance to be included within the 6-month update.

The report was noted.

P/006   6. **Core People KPIs**

VC presented the report and highlighted the following:

- At the meeting of People and Remuneration Committee of 1 December 2022, 8 HR Key Performance Indicators were agreed focusing on the key challenges linked to the College Strategic Plan; recruitment, reward, retention, development and staff wellbeing.

- The full set of key performance indicators were reported on an annual basis with more broad and detailed data and analysis incorporated into the HR and EDI annual reports. These figures had been reported on in the HR Annual Report at this Committee.

- There were currently no target figures for these KPIs, a paper would be brought to People Committee in February 2024 to consider this.

  Action: VC to present a paper considering Core People KPI targets at the February 2024 meeting.

- The data for sickness absence and labour turnover was reported at every People Committee meeting.

- There was an ongoing project as part of the HR operational plan to improve data and KPI reporting. Progress on this was taking time but the project continued.

- AoC benchmarking data from 2020/2021 had been used to provide comparative data, however there had only been a 38% response rate to this survey.

- Recruitment KPIs were being developed, and these would be reported on when available.

- There was a recommendation to change the staff engagement KPI to the Employer Network Promoter Score (eNPS) score used within the Hive reporting framework.

- In relation to the induction KPI, data processing was manual and not always fit for purpose.

- In relation to the completion of the appraisal process, the College wanted this to be higher however the perception of the system was not positive. This linked with the need for additional resource within learning and development.

  - The Staff Governor (RW) agreed that the work to improve the completion rate of the appraisal process needed to focus on the quality of conversations and training on the delivery of such.

- There had been a small increase in the rolling turnover figure. The majority of absence was long term. The mental health rolling absence figure had also increased.

- Covid absence had declined, however cold related absence had increased and this may be related due to the lack of covid testing and new strains.

- As reported within the HR annual report, curriculum staff absence was higher than support staff. Work was to be undertaken by the People Business Partners in collaboration with the Assistant Principals to investigate causes of absence and consider the differences arising in relation to curriculum and support staff absence.

- The turnover rolling year figure for the College was 16.96% as at end of October 2023. This was a significant decrease on the previously reported figure to end of April 2023 of 20.5%. The top three reasons for leaving the College were; personal, prospects / career progression and end of casual / fixed term contract. Prospects / career progression linked with the outcomes of the staff survey and the need for additional resource within learning and development.

- The People Strategy would set out the strategic priorities for retention, engagement and wellbeing supported by operational plans to drive activity in this area with the aim of reducing staff turnover year on year to a level at or below the sector average.

The Committee discussed and queried the following:

- The timescale for the deeper understanding of absence – It was confirmed that work was underway and an update could be expected at the February 2024 Committee meeting.

  Action: VC to provide an update on absence figures (including deeper dive into the difference between curriculum and support staff absence) at the February 2024 meeting. Summary presentation to be provided alongside the report.

- The timescale for the appointment of a learning and development specialist – it was noted that the job description was being drafted and there were allocated funds within the 2023/2024 budget for this role. The role would be advertised when a college wide approach had been agreed by the Executive Team.

- Indicators relating to Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, including the tracking of progress and risk assessments – it was confirmed that any staff

starting ahead of receiving DBS clearance were risk assessed and that one of the HR Business Partners focussed on Safeguarding linking with HR and recruitment. It was confirmed that all DBS applications were tracked through to completion, with any necessary follow up carried out.

The report was noted and the Committee approved the revised engagement KPI.

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<tr><td>P/007</td><td>**7. People and Organisational Development (OD) Project Updates**</td></tr>
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VC presented the report and asked how the Committee would like to be involved within the development of the People Strategy.

The Committee **agreed** to have an additional session to help shape the drafting of the initial themes of the strategy.

Action: VC to arrange an additional People Strategy development session.

The Committee **queried** if the project work being undertaken by the external consultant was focussing on priority areas and it was confirmed by VC they were.

The report was noted.

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<tr><td>P/008</td><td>**8. Annual Staff Survey 2022/2023**</td></tr>
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VC presented the report and provided an overarching presentation which covered the following:

- The 13% increase in the response rate (67%), compared with 2021/2022. It was noted the timing of the survey did not provide an opportunity to increase the response rate further due to Fixed Term and Casual staff not being in post when the survey was issued. The timing of the survey was therefore being reviewed for 2023/2024 with the possibility of issuing the survey in March 2024 being under consideration. This revised date being considered was also more appropriate for the operational planning cycle and communication plans.

- The positive overall picture of the results, showing that all overall scores were recorded as good or moderate. Moderate scored areas related to development, workload and feedback from managers. The most positive scores related to culture and inclusivity.

- The Automotive campus scored lower than other campuses and this was being explored as a priority area.

- The Employer Network Promoter Score (eNPS) was a recognised scoring across Hive which allowed benchmarking within and outside of the sector.

- Support staff were classified as the least engaged, with management being classified as the most engaged.

- There had been a number of actions implemented and planned following the outcomes of the survey and the staff voice group was meeting regularly to progress these. The action plan focussed around the themes of; confidence in the College, health and wellbeing, and motivating managers & a learning culture.

The Committee discussed and queried the following:
- The potential of over commitment of actions – VC confirmed that the majority of actions were already included within the HR Operational Plan, and project plans

were already in place. It was noted that in relation to improvements within learning and development, this was more likely to be carried out over 2 -3 years, following the appointment of a Learning & Development Specialist within the HR team. VC assured the Committee that the actions were achievable.

- The revised survey date of March 2024, and noted that there may not be a large amount of change within the results due to the shorter period between reporting. The Committee **noted** the importance of being aware of the planned impact of outcomes to ensure all actions were to be of benefit.

- The accuracy of the ePNS starting point, with some specific areas / departments having a negative impact on the overall results.

- The potential of staff previously being more focussed on external factors such as Ofsted and financial intervention, and now having more time to be reflective of the College.

It was noted that two Equality, Diversity and Inclusion listening groups had taken place with staff from across the College and the initial findings suggested that further work could be done on ensuring events offered by the College were inclusive for everyone and recognised neurodiversity. This feedback had been beneficial with the College now looking to explore the impact and accessibility for all in relation to future learning and development activity.

The Committee **suggested** that within the survey for 2023/2024, there could be a subset of questions more specific to Learning and Development to help the College strategise and prioritise within this area – or a separate survey considering this.

Action: VC to consider a subset of learning and development questions within the 2023/2024 staff survey to help with the strategy and prioritisation for this area going forward.

The report was noted.

P/009   **9. Pay Award Update 2023/2024**

VC presented the report and confirmed the 2023/24 College pay negotiations had concluded with all recognised trade unions accepting the proposed offer.

The Committee **discussed and queried** the impacts within the College where the introduction of the Living Wage had increased the starting salary bands at lower levels and the potential of this to be raised again. It was noted this had caused a small number of staff just above the Living Wage level to raise their remuneration and meetings had taken place with them. The College had made changes to impacted pay scales to respond to this. VC confirmed that this did not relate to an equal pay claim concern.

The report was noted.

P/010   **10. HR Case Work Update**

Covered under a confidential minute.

The update was noted.

P/011   **11. Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement 2023/2024**

VC presented the revised Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement 2023/2024.

The Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement for 2023/2024 was recommended for Board approval at the December 2023 meeting.

P/012 **12. Strategic Risk Register**

JC presented the report and highlighted that:

- There were two risks on the Strategic Risk Register which related to the work of the People Committee and there were no changes suggested.

- The Operational Risk Management Group had been implemented and the first round of meetings had taken place in Term 1. The quality of the conversations had been positive.

- Since the last meeting of the Board on 25 October 2023, the Executive Team has revised the residual risk score for *R9 Insufficient resilience to the threat of a cyber-attack leads to one or more of loss of data, fraud, business interruption, legal sanction and reputational damage*. The probability score had been reduced from 4 'more likely to occur than not' to 3 'equally likely to occur as not'. This reduces the residual risk score from 20 (High) to 15 (Medium). Work continued internally to continue to respond to this risk.

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

- High scoring operational risks for consideration at a strategic level – it was assured that the Executive Team reviewed the Strategic Risk Register on a monthly basis and considered the escalation of any relevant operational level risks and considerations for horizon scanning.

- Horizon scanning being beyond the FE landscape.

  Action: JC to amend future reporting to ensure the Horizon Scanning reporting is acknowledged as beyond solely the FE landscape.

The report was noted.

P/013 **13. Any Other Business**

The Committee **noted** the significant improvement in reporting and the impact of VC's work since appointed in January 2023. The Committee also **noted their thanks** to LC.

P/014 **14. Date of Next Meeting:**

The next meeting was confirmed as 29 February 2024 at 4pm.