GATESHEAD COLLEGE
EDUCATION
WITH
EMPLOYMENT
EDGE

PEOPLE AND REMUNERATION COMMITTEE – MAIN MINUTES
Thursday 22nd June 2023– Virtual Meeting

Governors	Type	Initials	Attendance	Apologies
Claire-Jane Rewcastle	Chair of Committee – Independent Governor	CJR	X	
Michael Wood-Williams	Committee Member – Independent Governor	MW	X	
Lisa Crichton-Jones	Committee Member – Independent Governor	LCJ	X^	
David Alexander	Committee Member – Principal / CEO *Committee Member for People items only.*	DA	X	
Clerk				
Nicola Taylor	Director of Governance & Compliance	NT	X	
Presenters / Attendees				
Vicki Casey	Director of People & OD	VC	X	

^Attended part of the meeting.

PR/172   **1. Chair's Welcome, Apologies and Conflict of Interest**

The Chair welcomed the attendees. There were no apologies. It was noted that LCJ was running slightly late to the meeting. The Committee **agreed** that the meeting was quorate.

In terms of interests, it was **noted** that DA and NT were senior post holders and that the Disciplinary Procedure under Item 6 covered the process relating to Senior Post Holders. Members were reminded to declare any conflicts that arose during the discussions in the meeting.

PR/173   **2. Minutes of the People and Remuneration Committee**

A. 2nd March 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. 2nd March 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.

C. 11th April 2023 (additional meeting) – Main Minutes

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

D. 11th April 2023 (additional meeting) – Confidential Minutes

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

The minutes were approved.

PR/174 3. Matters Arising / Action Log

NT presented the action log and noted that all but 2 actions had been completed; one not yet due and one ongoing, relating to additional qualification options for the Director of Governance & Compliance.

The report was noted.

Part 1 – People Items

PR/175 4. Core People KPI Update

VC presented the report and highlighted the following:

- Further work was needed around data; however, improvements had been made. Additional upskilling within the HR team was required to ensure capability for reporting. There were improvements made within the ITrent system, including moving to a cloud-based server and the addition of modules / functionality. This area would continue to improve regarding the report and visualisation of data.

- The College's absence figures were slightly above the ONS data for 2022 across all sectors in the UK and the latest AoC figure for 2020/2021, however the trend relating to absence was decreasing, compared to the national picture which was increasing. The College's absence figures relating to mental health were higher than the ONS data, however this was in line with the FE sector with 75% of responding colleges in the AoC Workforce survey placing stress and mental ill-health in the top three reasons for sickness absence in their organisation.

- The College had seen the doubling of absence related to cold / flu symptoms and decrease of covid-related absence; however, it was suspected that this could be due to the lack of covid testing.

- In terms of turnover, excluding fixed term and casual contracts, there was a small reduction in turnover levels. The number of casual contracts were in line with the sector. It was hoped that further work could be undertaken relating to learning and development and succession planning, which could have an impact on turnover.

The Committee discussed and queried the following:

- The impact of absence on the ability to deliver teaching and learning – it was noted there were some areas of provision where there had been challenges with cover due to long term absence, however further work was required to analyse this in greater detail. It was suggested that although there had been cover issues in some areas, it was not thought to have a detrimental impact on teaching and learning.

- The impact on staff dealing with increased / complex learner welfare issues – it was agreed that additional resource was required to deal with the increased and complex learner welfare issues and provision for this would be made within the draft 2023/24 College budget. However, staff had not cited this specifically when relaying reasons for their own absence.

It was confirmed that, based on feedback, specifically that of the recent annual community conversations, the College were looking to implement additional mental health and welfare resource for learners from 2023/2024 and this was expected to have a positive impact on staff workload and their own mental health.

- The use of the College occupational health service – it was noted that there was a new provider in place who were positively supporting staff back into work. This was seen as a benefit to the College in terms of absence, but also a benefit to individual staff members by being positively supported.

The report was noted.

PR/176 **5. Progress on Initial Thoughts & Emerging Themes**

Item taken after Item 7.

VC provided a verbal presentation and highlighted the following:

- HR Team – Work had been undertaken to help build and strengthen relationships across the team. Regular one to ones were taking place with the current team members and there had been a refresh of the areas of responsibilities / project work. There was an ongoing discussion regarding a role relating to learning and development. The Head of People was appointed and was due to start employment in July 2023. *Covered under a confidential minute.*
    - o **The Committee <u>queried</u> the following:**
        - ▪ *Covered under a confidential minute.*
        - ▪ The capacity of the Director of People & OD to reflect on the work undertaken / look forward to address priorities – it was suggested that once the Head of People had started in post, this would mean the Director of People & OD would be able to focus more on strategic matters, however it was important to have oversight of the operational work that was ongoing to ensure strong foundations were in place.

- Basics – Documents and relevant policies would be reviewed as part of a rolling programme to ensure a consistent tone of language and approach. This would be overseen by the Head of People. The recognition agreement with the Trade Unions and the HR business partner model across the College would also be reviewed.

- EDI – Further work would be done regarding the strategic approach to EDI, including an EDI strategy and refreshed EDI policy.

- Recruitment – Key operational risks had been identified and work had started on creating an employer brand strategy. A review of recruitment was underway with an external consultant, including a review of processes, procedures, polices and the approach to advertising vacancies.
    - o **The Committee <u>queried</u> the following:**
        - ▪ If it were possible to synchronise the employer brand and EDI work – it was suggested that although there would be EDI specialists within the recruitment project, the EDI work required was more about understanding and analysing data. It was noted that the projects would feed into each other.

- If the employer brand work would feed into Board recruitment – it was confirmed that this could be built into the project.

- The due diligence process for externally consulted work – it was confirmed that work had been undertaken to ensure a cultural fit and correct level of skill. The College were happy with the consultant's pitch of the work due to be carried out.

- The Committee **agreed** that there would need to be leadership sign up of the work and would need to monitor the work commissioned to ensure clarity of the expected outputs.

- Reward – A project was underway relating to the publicising of staff rewards to ensure staff were aware of what was available to them, this was expected to be broken down into financial health, mental health and physical health. The College was cognisant of the cost-of-living increase on staff.

- Engagement – A new survey provider had been contracted and the Staff Survey had been launched. Within the first 48 hours, there was a response rate of 38%. The response rate had been was 54% in the previous year. The College had agreed to donate a £5 per person donation for every survey completed. The charity was Gateshead Foodbank, and this had been voted for by staff. The new system was expected to produce greater reporting and functionality. The Staff Voice Group would continue across the College.

- Wellbeing – Network groups were being reinstated / introduced to help with staff wellbeing.

  o The Committee **queried** if the College was connected with Public Health Gateshead, suggesting that many staff / students would be residents of Gateshead and there could be opportunities to assist with the work around health and wellbeing.

- Culture and values – The College were working with an external consultant to help further embed the values across the College. A question relating to understanding the College values had been included within the Staff Survey. Focus groups would be undertaken as part of this work, and an action plan would then be developed. This followed on from conversations / activities at the annual Community Conversations.

- People Strategy – A College People Strategy would be developed by the end of the calendar year.

The Committee **noted** the level and scale of positive work undertaken and **agreed** the need to be mindful of the Director of People & OD's capacity. The Committee **took assurance** from the progress made and agreed that they would continue to monitor the mind map provided. The Committee **noted their thanks** to the Director of People & OD for the work in this area.

The report was noted.

PR/177 **6. Disciplinary Procedure**

Including the process for Senior Post Holders

VC presented the revised procedure and highlighted the following:

- The procedure had been re-written and was in line with the ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) Code of Practice on Discipline and Grievance. The code provided guidance for employers on how to handle disciplinary and grievance issues in the workplace and was intended to promote

good employment relations by encouraging the resolution of workplace disputes at an early stage.

- A summary of changes was provided as part of the report, including a section on Senior Post Holders to prevent the need from having two separate policies. This section had been written in line with the Instrument and Articles of Government and Standing Orders.

- The procedure would be shared with Trade Unions ahead of seeking Board approval. If any changes were required following Trade Union review, these would be circulated to the Committee.

The Committee **queried** the tone of voice of the policy – it was confirmed that further work was required to ensure a consistent tone of voice across college documentation, although noting the slight difficulty where regulation / guidance stated specific terminology, however this policy was the start of a policy review process which would consider tone of voice going forward. It was confirmed that this would be part of a rolling project which the Head of People would oversee upon commencing employment.

The Disciplinary Procedure was recommended for Board approval.

PR/178   7.   Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

VC presented the revised policy and highlighted the following:

- The policy was reviewed to ensure it was up to date and compliant, with a view to a larger scale review being carried out in 2023-2024 once the new Head of People was in post. It was confirmed this would be developed alongside the EDI strategy.

- The policy has been streamlined to reflect the purpose of a policy being to set the overarching principles and approach to an area of work or priority. Improvements to the wording and removal of out-of-date information had also taken place.

LCJ joined the meeting.

The Committee discussed and queried the following:

- The measurability of impact – It was confirmed that there were EDI related questions within the Staff Survey, and this would provide data relating to staff views towards EDI. The measuring of the impact would relate to an increase in positive responses to these questions, although it was noted that this would not be directly comparable until the following year. It was confirmed that pulse surveys could be carried out as and when appropriate. An EDI consultant was being engaged to analyse EDI related KPIs. Further EDI work was taking place across the College in the form of network groups.

- Policy launch – it was suggested that, following Board approval, staff would be notified of the policy being updated, however due to the level of changes it was not planned for a specific policy launch to be carried out.

- Policy approval levels – it was noted that the Board were required to approve the EDI policy, however it was first submitted to the Committee for recommendation and closer scrutiny.

  o It was confirmed that the College was planning to implement a policy on policies, and this would provide greater clarity on approval levels.

The Committee **noted** that the College undertakes a wide range of activities and initiatives in relation to EDI and **suggested** that further information could be provided relating to the culture of the College. It was confirmed that the College was working with an external consultant on a project relating to College values and this could be shared with the Committee when appropriate.

Action: VC to provide an update on the values project when appropriate.

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy was recommended for Board approval.

PR/179   **8. Industrial Relations and Pay Claim**

VC presented the report and highlighted the following:

- The joint Trade Unions in the Further Education sector in England submitted their pay claim for the academic year 2023/24. This included seeking an increase of RPI + 2% on all pay points.

- The Association of Colleges (AoC) declined to make a recommendation and instead were pushing the government to improve funding to address staff pay.

- The joint Trade Unions responded to this with their disappointment and reaffirmed their seeking of national pay bargaining.

- A recent report published by the Institute of Fiscal Studies noted that school teacher salaries had overtaken those of college teachers.

- *Covered under a confidential minute.*

The Committee queried and discussed the following:

- The changing landscape across FE.

- The potential implications of an agreement being made locally, and then a proposal being made by the AoC at national level.

- Risk associated with recruitment and retention. It was noted that recruiting those from industry was particularly challenging.

- Pay scales and the removal of the Support Staff Scale 3 pay band during 2022-2023 as part of offering the Living Wage.
  - It was confirmed that the College had committed to paying the living wage in 2022-2023 however this was not an annual commitment, and therefore the College would need to consider affordability for 2023-2024 and future years.

The report was noted.

PR/180   **9. Organisational Development Update**

VC presented the report and highlighted the following:

- The staff survey was live; a new provider for this was contracted allowing greater functionality and reporting. Following discussions at previous Committee meetings, staff were provided with a "You said, We Did" communication following results from the prior year's survey.

- The Aspire appraisal process had started and based on staff feedback, was due to be open for a longer period to increase completion rates. Further work was to

be done with line managers to ensure the process included high quality conversations to support the ongoing development of staff.

The report was noted.

PR/181   **10. HR Case Work Update**

Covered under a confidential minute.

The update was noted.

PR/182   **11. Strategic Risk Register**

VC presented the report and highlighted that:

- Risk 3 "*Loss of stakeholder confidence as a consequence of failing to secure a 'Good' or better Ofsted judgement*" was fully mitigated and eliminated, however an alternative risk was being considered covering failure to deliver and sustain high quality provision.

- Risk 4 *"Failure to deliver the Post Intervention Monitoring and Support Plan (PIMS) and move to ESFA active support status"* was fully mitigated and eliminated following confirmation of the College coming out of PIMS.

- Risk 7 had been amended to specifically include a reference to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) "*Failure to meet statutory requirements relating to Safeguarding, Prevent, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and the protection of young people and vulnerable adults".*

- *Covered under a confidential minute.*

- The report included a section on horizon scanning where the Executive continued to consider potential risks / opportunities and monitor them closely.

At the last Committee meeting, the Committee requested to understand the two key risks at an operational HR level. It was confirmed that these risks were recruitment and selection, and reward. It was agreed that these risks had been reiterated and discussed throughout the meeting.

The Committee **noted their thanks** for the work undertaken and prioritisation of key HR themes.

The report was noted.

PR/183   **12. Draft Board Calendar 2023/2024**

NT presented the report for information, setting out the proposed meeting dates for 2023/2024. The Committee was reminded that it was proposed to officially separate the Committee to the People Committee and the Remuneration Committee, however meetings would run consecutively where appropriate. It was confirmed that diary invites would be issued once the dates were approved by the Board.

The report was noted.

PR/184   **13. Terms of Reference 2023/2024**

NT presented the report and highlighted the following:

- A revised set of Terms of Reference had been created for each committee for 2023/2024.

- The revised documents have been re-written and set out specific areas of delegated authority to help ensure the Board is able to utilise the skillset of each Committee to its advantage and ensuring clear levels of delegation to prevent the Board from repeating business. This would also create more space at Board level to focus on strategic discussion, whilst continuing to receive updates from each Committee on the areas of business covered.

- A scheme of delegation had then been created to set out the delegation levels to support the Terms of Reference.

- The People Committee Terms of Reference covered the areas of; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, People, Health, Safety and Wellbeing (moving from Audit), and relevant policies.

- The Remuneration Committee Terms of Reference covered the areas of Senior Post Holders and relevant policies.

The Committee **noted** the more specific focus on having strategic oversight of relevant areas of business.

The People Committee and Remuneration Committee Terms of Reference were recommended for Board approval.

PR/185   14. Any Other Business

N/A

PR/186   15. Date of Next Meeting:

- The next meeting of the Remuneration Committee would take place on Thursday 12th October 2023 at 4pm.

- The next meeting of the People Committee would take place on Thursday 7th December 2023 at 4pm.