

**College of West Anglia  
Minutes of  
The Employment Policy Committee  
6 October 2021  
8.30 am  
Meeting Room, Principal's Suite, King's Lynn Campus**

<b>Present:</b>	Sharon Cambridge	Governor (Chair)
	Chris Ashman	Governor
	Andrew Cave	Governor
	Kay Driver	Governor
	Rebecca Hamilton	Governor
	Sally Mitton	Governor
	David Pomfret	Governor (Principal)
<b>Attending:</b>	Nicky Rowland	Head of Human Resources
	Stephen Halls	Clerk to the Corporation

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The Chair welcomed everybody back to the first on-campus meeting of this committee following the Coronavirus pandemic. The Chair particularly welcomed Kay Driver, (co-opted non-governor) to her first meeting.

**1 Apologies**

There were no apologies for absence.

**2 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3 Minutes of the previous meetings**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 2 June 2021 were agreed as being an accurate record of the meeting. A typographical error was noted on page 5 on the minutes relating to the Health & Safety Officer – this would be corrected. **ACTION-CLERK**

**4 Matters Arising**

The progress against the outstanding matters from previous meetings was summarised in the report for item 4.

The Principal provided an update on the job evaluation review for support staff, with a full update detailed in his report to the Board for its meeting on 13 October 2021. Completion of the project had been delayed due to the Coronavirus pandemic. The Head of HR had been working closely with the regional representative from Unison who had provided good support. There had been a recent change in the regional representative. Support staff were now anxious over the outcomes of the review. Three mitigations were available to assist adversely affected staff: pay protection (limited period); red circling on a particular pay band; offer of a recruitment & retention allowance to match salary with the external job market (now pensionable).

Governors asked about the numbers of affected staff. The Principal advised that 288 staff would receive a pay increase, 62 staff would be subject to mitigation actions and 57 staff would see no change. Governors asked if there had been any noticeable impact within staff age groups; the Principal explained that there had not been any skewed impact noticed, based on age. Of note, however, was that a number of younger staff members had chosen not to be part of the pension scheme in order to save paying contribution costs and therefore receive increased net pay.

## 5 Election of Vice Chair

The Committee noted that Andrew Cave, current Vice Chair of the Committee would be retiring from the Board in December 2021 and that Chris Ashman had recently replaced Andrew Cave as Chair of the Remuneration Committee.

**It was agreed that Chris Ashman would become Vice Chair of the Employment Policy Committee.**

## 6 Policy Review

- i. Flexible Working Policy – The Head of HR advised that this policy was now with the trade unions for their review. The Head of HR explained that this policy had been in existence at the College for some time, although since the pandemic homeworking had now been included. The Principal added that it was important to offer flexibility where possible, particularly when recruiting new members of staff (notably support staff) who would expect this option to now be more widely available from employers. Governors agreed that the offer of flexible working would provide benefits to both individual staff members and the College.
- ii. Staff Code of Conduct - The Head of HR advised that this policy was now with the trade unions for their review.

The Chair suggested that under Student Relationships (page 3) the third bullet point on raising concerns would benefit with a link to the Safeguarding procedures. The Head of HR advised that all staff should be aware of how to raise a Safeguarding concern from their induction and refresher training, but agreed that a link to the procedure would be beneficial and would add this in.

**ACTION-HoHR**

Governors discussed the new addition under Employee Relationships regarding the circulation of material on social media sites that referenced the College or its employees. Governors asked if this concern ought to be referenced in the disciplinary procedures. The Head of HR referred Governors to the end of the Code of Conduct where it stated that any breach of the code of conduct could lead to action being taken under the disciplinary procedure.

Governors noted that modern slavery and human trafficking had not been mentioned in the Code and asked if mention was given to this issue in any of the College's procedures. The Head of HR would review this issue and ascertain in which particular policy it should be included, adding that some staff training in this area would be needed.

**ACTION-HoHR**

The Principal suggested that modern slavery and human trafficking should also be included in the next update of the Governance & Financial Management Regulations with regard to apprenticeships and working with employers.

**ACTION-CLERK**

**The updates on the policies were noted.**

## **7 Curriculum Impact Report**

*This item was deemed “Confidential.”*

## **8 Annual HR Report 2020/21**

From the report, the Head of HR highlighted the increased number of repeat staff recruitment campaigns during the year; a reduction in voluntary leavers, particularly those with less than 2 years’ service and the number of absence days recorded due to Covid-19. The Chair commented on the current (and future) difficulties of data comparison since March 2020 due to the effects and disruption caused by the pandemic.

Governors asked about the work carried out to improve staff retention. The Head of HR explained that Human Resources Officers were now meeting with newly appointed staff members after 2 months to discuss progress, to ensure inductions had been carried out correctly and to check that the individuals were settled in their roles. Additionally, it had been noticed that the quality of candidates now moving into the FE sector had improved. Governors asked if there were any particular areas struggling with recruitment. The Head of HR noted the Technology faculty and English & Maths, where recruitment had been an issue for both the College and the FE sector for some time. Governors discussed the issues of recruiting staff for the landbased faculty, noting the difficulties caused by this campus being located near to Cambridge and Newmarket where job opportunities were many for related professionalisms (notably vet nursing and equine). The Principal added that this matter was discussed regularly at the PR&Q Committee and was listed on the College’s risk register. Further, a new post had been created within the HR department to focus on staff recruitment.

**The report was noted.**

## **9 Staff DBS Compliance/Safeguarding & Prevent Training Update**

The report noted that as at 17 September 2021 all those employed by the College or associated with it had had a DBS check carried out.

Governors focused on the number of staff with outstanding safeguarding training. The Head of HR advised that SMT was made aware of the outstanding training and the Principal added that managers were responsible for chasing this up and ensuring their staff completed the required training. The Head of HR explained a change to the probationary procedures for new starters in that probation could no longer be completed until all training modules, including safeguarding, had been completed. The Head of HR assured the Committee that all staff received an element of safeguarding training at their first-day induction and received the appropriate booklets and procedures to read, such as Keeping Children Safe in Education. It appeared that the issue tended to relate to casual staffing and those hourly-paid lecturers who had infrequent contact with their managers. The Principal suggested that an alternative to the first-day induction and Corporate Induction should be made available at a more convenient time for the casual and hourly part-time teaching staff. The Head of HR would review this matter.

**ACTION-HoHR**

Governors were concerned that staff may not have received sufficient safeguarding training for their role. The Head of HR assured the Committee that this was not the case as a 3-year refresher course was required for all staff and annual training was

given covering specific themes. It was noted that no refresher training was given on PREVENT.

Governors noted the new requirement to check the date of birth and birth certificate for all new employees.

**The report was noted.**

## **10 Annual Staff Development Review 2020/21**

The Head of HR noted the training priorities for 2021/22, based on the College's strategic targets and the impact of the training provided in 2020/21.

Governors noted from the report that Digital Skills needed some attention and that staff engagement in this area had reduced following the return to on-campus teaching. The Head of HR explained that staff would still be encouraged to undertake the JISC capability tool to identify areas of weakness and to plan for training and development; time would be made available on the training day, planned for 22 October 2021, to cover this. The Principal highlighted the Technology Enhanced Learning Team who had supported teaching staff greatly during the recent lockdowns by providing support and daily teaching sessions on how to use the technology and software available for remote teaching.

**The report was noted.**

## **11 Health & Safety Summary Report 2020/21**

The report indicated that student accidents had increased from 22 in 2019/20 to 32 in 2020/21; staff accidents had reduced from 18 in 2019/20 to 11 in 2020/21. There had been no reportable accidents to the Health & Safety Executive during the year. Slips trips and falls continued to be the most common type of accident reported.

The audits undertaken during the year were noted. Governors were concerned that an unsatisfactory report had been received for the Property Services Department. The Principal explained that there had been some recent concerns with Property Services, resulting in the need for it to be placed under Support to Improve. The Principal and SMT were keen to support the work of the Head of Property Services and his team to ensure that the issues were swiftly resolved. Action was being taken.

Governors queried the accidents reported within the Landbased areas, noting that these amounted to 38% of the total for student accidents and asked about the guidance and handling policies within the faculty.

Kay Driver asked for a learning walk to be arranged for her at the Cambridge Campus.  
**ACTION-CLERK**

**The Committee agreed that the areas for audit in 2021/22 would be Hospitality, Humanities & Social Sciences and Construction (King's Lynn & Wisbech).**

**The report was noted.**

## **12 Health & Safety Policy Review**

The Health & Safety Policy was noted by the Committee. There were no questions or concerns raised.

**The Health & Safety Policy was approved.**

### **13 JNC Summary Report 2020/21**

The Head of HR reported that the job evaluation exercise involving Unison was ongoing but was expected to be completed by the end of the autumn term. There was currently no local representation with Unison and so matters were referred to and managed by the regional office which sometimes affected communications. The Head of HR stated that staff tended to be either un-interested in the branch role, or too busy to take this on.

For NEU and the UCU there was local representation.

**The report was noted.**

### **14 Gender Pay Gap Report**

The Head of HR explained that due to the Coronavirus pandemic the reporting on the gender pay gap had been suspended but had now been reinstated with a requirement for both 2020 and 2021 years to be reported.

The latest analysis indicated that the pay gap was reducing, and that the outcomes of the job evaluation scheme were likely to reduce the gap further. The Chair was pleased to note that there were no differentiated pay scales due to gender.

Governors asked about the definition for each quartile; the Head of HR explained that these were specifically defined by the Government to allow for comparison across various organisations, with there being an upper quartile, upper middle, lower middle and lower quartile. Governors asked for details of the College's pay scales. These would be circulated by the Head of HR. **ACTION-HoHR**

Governors discussed the reasons for women tending to be employed in the lower paid positions at the College, which included the need to provide childcare at home therefore requiring more flexibility. It was noted that there were less women in senior positions at the College. The College was taking action to promote gender diversity in all areas of its workforce.

**The report was noted.**

### **15 HR Strategy Review**

The Head of HR outlined the need for a defined strategy for the HR department, to give direction to its activities for the next 3 years and to provide specific targets for the year ahead. Governors agreed that the document provided a clear and concise direction of travel for the HR department in achieving its targets and supporting the College.

Governors queried the ambition listed under "Rewards Systems" regarding the pay as proportion of income ratio, noting that this was detailed as being between 60%-65% of income. Governors reflected that this was perhaps too ambitious, based on previous performance (and that expected for the future) and that a more realistic ambition of 65%-70% be used. The Head of HR would make the adjustment to the document.

**ACTION-HoHR**

**The HR Strategy was approved by the Committee (subject to the amendment noted above).**

## **16 Any Other Business**

There were no items of others business.

## **17 Chair's items for briefing to the Corporation**

- The draft flexible working policy was reviewed, now including a section on home working following the experiences of the Covid-19 lockdowns. Legal advice now confirmed that the College's approach was appropriate. The policy would be shared with the College Leadership Team and the unions for feedback.
- The Committee reviewed the curriculum impact report, the annual HR report, staff development review, DBS compliance report and Health & Safety Report.
- The gender pay gap report was reviewed; there was a reducing gap from 18% in 2020 to 13.7% in 2021.
- The HR Strategy which provides a mid-term and long-term planning tool for the HR team in respect of its priorities and focus was reviewed and approved.

## **18 Date and time of next meeting**

Wednesday, 23 February 2022 at 8.30 am, if required, or Wednesday 18 May 2022 at 8.30 am.

**The meeting closed at 10.12 am**