

Minutes of the Personnel Committee Meeting held on Monday 15 June 2009 at 5.30 pm in Conference Room 1, the Astral Centre

Members Present:

Kevin Howes: Chair/Corporation Member
Jane Hore: Corporation Member
Sheila Keenan: Corporation Member
Gwen Parsons: Principal
Ashley Reynolds: Co-opted Committee Member

In Attendance:

Ruth Harrison: Head of Quality and Workforce Development
James Myhill: Head of HR
Charles Reynolds: Clerk to the Corporation

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting. A special welcome was extended to Ashley Reynolds who was attending his first meeting since being appointed a co-opted member of the committee. Introductions were made.

	Action
<p>Apologies for Absence:</p> <p>Apologies for absence had been received from Bob Mee and Teresa Miller. The Clerk also read out correspondence received from Bob Russell confirming that, reluctantly, he had decided to resign from his membership of the Corporation. Whilst this would need to be taken to the next Corporation Meeting members instructed the Clerk to write to Bob Russell thanking him for all his efforts whilst as a member of the committee.</p>	Clerk
<p>1. Disclosures of Interest:</p> <p>There were no disclosures of interest relevant to the agenda items.</p> <p>2. Appointment of the Chair and Vice-Chair for the Forthcoming Year</p> <p>2.1 Chair</p> <p>It was proposed by Jane Hore that Kevin Howes continue to act as Chair of the committee. Kevin Howes accepted the nomination which was seconded by Sheila Keenan.</p> <p>Members voted unanimously in favour.</p> <p>2.2 Vice-Chair</p> <p>It was proposed by Jane Hore that Sheila Keenan continue as Vice-Chair of the committee. Sheila Keenan accepted the nomination which was seconded by Kevin Howes. Ashley Reynolds sought confirmation that this meant that Sheila Keenan would chair meetings in the absence of the Chair. Members confirmed that this would be the case. Members voted unanimously in favour.</p>	

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the Personnel Committee Meeting held on 9 February 2009 were agreed to be a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

4. Matters Arising from the Minutes and not Agenda Items.

4.1 Strategic Planning – First Term Monitoring Report (previous agenda item 6)

James Myhill confirmed that an item for the staff newsletter had been produced as requested.

4.2 HR Audit Report – Update (previous agenda item 7)

The Clerk advised that members had been sent copies of the final HR Audit Report as requested. It was also confirmed that Ashley Reynolds would receive a copy as part of his induction training.

5. Correspondence

5.1 Email from Bob Russell confirming his resignation from the Committee and Corporation

6. Workforce Planning – Verbal Presentation by the Principal

The Principal informed members that the purpose of the brief verbal report was to highlight the need in the not too distant future to consider carefully what type of workforce the College would need in the future. Currently the College used lecturers to deliver to adults and Train to Gain students when a more appropriate and cost effective approach would be to use assessors who could assess competence. It was also important for staff to have relevant up to date experience and preferably still to be practicing. This reflected the movements towards delivering skills and training in the workplace.

The Principal also advised that it was important to look at the structure of the workforce in terms of the new curriculum, especially 14-16, where College staff would be expected to work alongside teachers from local schools, as there could well be training implications especially with staff used to teaching adults. Anticipated growth in Higher Education activity could also mean that craft based lecturers may be unable to deliver at the right level. There was therefore a need to have a thorough review of delivery staff especially from 2010-2011. It was the Principal's view that the new Vice-Principal, who had responsibility for Curriculum and Standards, was ideally placed to identify the needs of the curriculum of the future and the types of staff needed to deliver it.

A second reason for considering workforce planning and need related to support staff. Members were reminded by the Principal that approximately every two years the College carried out a benchmarking exercise via a company called Ben Johnson Hill, which enabled it to assess how effectively staff were being used. It was clarified that all areas of College operations were benchmarked, not just staffing. It was the intention to carry out this exercise in the Autumn of 2009 and the outcome would help to inform the College on its workforce needs with reference to support staff.

A third reason for there to be a workforce planning exercise related to the fact that costs of staffing were rising and there was a need to keep an eye on the situation to ensure it did not get out of hand. The current target re staffing costs was to limit them to 65% of total income. As it was clear that the income to be received from the LSC next year was to be “stand still” and this would mean staff costs would need to be held back. It was, the Principal advised, understood that the pay award to be offered next year would be 1% and it was Corporation Policy to pay once agreed. However the staff age profile clearly showed a significant number of old staff, many of whom would be on higher salaries.

In summary the Principal advised a two stage approach to address the concerns she had raised. The first stage was to take the necessary actions needed to ensure an appropriate staffing budget for 2009/2010. The second stage would be to carry out a long-term review, over the next few months, to identify the future staffing needs of the College.

Responding to the presentation and with specific reference to the observation that much of Work Based Learning activity would be delivered in the workplace, Sheila Keenan asked what implications this might have for employers. The Principal advised that there could be significant implications. There were many models of delivery to consider and employers could train their own staff to carry out the roles currently being filled by lecturers. The College needed to move away as painlessly as possible from using lecturers to do assessor work as, quite simply, they were too expensive. This was really important especially as Work Based Learning and Train to Gain were growth areas. As an example of how such a change could be achieved the Principal referred members to the decision to phase out full time Business Administration provision and to replace it with delivery in the workplace. This was working well.

Jane Hore asked whether there would be cost issues in employing staff who would be working alongside school teachers. In discussion it was acknowledged that salaries paid to College staff were less than their counterparts in schools and this could create recruitment issues.

In anticipating future reports on this matter it was agreed that the “Assessors” should be introduced as a separate category in staff profile data in order for effective monitoring to take place.

J Myhill

In the absence of further discussion on the issue of workforce planning it was agreed that an interim report on progress should be made at the November meeting and that a further report should be produced following receipt of the benchmarking data resulting from the Tribal/Ben Johnson Hill exercise.

Ashley Reynolds observed that, at his place of work, and for the first time in 60 years it had been decided not to offer a pay award. The Principal reiterated that the final offer within the FE sector was 1%.

Members thanked the Principal for her verbal update.

7. Independent Safeguarding Authority

Presented by James Myhill who advised members on the background to the development of the new authority, how it was intended it should operate, the timescales involved, the implications for the College as an employer, for employees and the costs involved. In summary James Myhill stressed that it would be a criminal offence for an employer to employ anyone not “checked” and “approved”, that employers would be informed of reasons that could change an employee’s situation, that CRB checks could transfer between employers if

employees changed jobs.

In discussion members acknowledged a key issue would be the payment for the necessary checks etc. This would be £64 per person. Clearly the College could not afford to cover the cost for all employees. Likewise it was recognised that an employee nearing the end of their working lives could be reluctant to pay for the checks. There was also a question mark regarding the ability of whatever system was used in making and recording the 30 million plus checks that would be needed.

Ashley Reynolds, on the issue of cost wondered whether some form of sliding scale could be used regarding the length of service/years of work remaining etc. and any contribution to be made by the employer.

Members agreed this to be worth exploring.

Members thanked James Myhill for this update which was received.

8. Human Resources Data Report (Staff Monitoring)

Again presented by James Myhill who took members through the relevant meeting paper with care. He reviewed in detail the data on staff by category of employment, ethnicity, gender, disability, sickness absence and age profile.

With reference to the sickness absence rate Ashley Reynolds advised that, for this measure, his place of work as considered to be world class having similar rates to the College. Therefore he observed the College was performing really well. Responding Kevin Howes believed that really good progress has been made. James Myhill added that a new policy and procedure covering absence was due to be introduced which, because it was more robust, may identify absences that may in the past have gone unreported.

Members also discussed the age profile data noting that there was an increasing tendency for staff to wish to stay beyond 65. Ashley Reynolds observed that within a factory environment staff were encouraged to retire at 65 especially for Health and Safety reasons. Jane Hore asked if the College put on pre-retirement courses and it was confirmed staff had access to these.

In the absence of any further questions or discussion Members thanked James Myhill for his report which was received.

9. Strategic Planning – third monitoring report re HR Key Performance Targets

Presented jointly by James Myhill and Ruth Harrison. The paper for this item was tabled with apologies.

Members were taken with care through the detail of the meeting paper as they had not had the opportunity to read it prior to the meeting.

Each Key Performance Target and performance to date in achieving it was reviewed. With reference to the target set for sickness absence members observed that in a previous agenda item this had been quantified as a “%” target whilst in this context it was set in terms of “days per year”. It was agreed that whichever measure was chosen there should be consistency.

Members were however still pleased to note the progress made against the target.

J Myhill

Turning to the target to achieve Substantial Assurance from the next HR Internal Audit James Myhill confirmed considerable progress was being made. In support of this members were referred to Appendix A in the meeting paper which detailed the findings of an “internal” audit review. There were still areas where improvements were needed but the outcome of this work had been extremely useful.

Ruth Harrison reported to members on performance with respect to the Investors in People standard and the implementation of the Lifelong Learning UK’s guidelines with respect to staff qualifications. On the latter members were referred to Appendix B of the meeting paper which detailed the current status re staff having or working towards the achievement of the required standard. Members were especially pleased to note the progress made in getting variable hours tutors qualified as this had been an area of concern. Members did however request comparative figures to help them grasp more clearly the level of improvement made.

R Harrison

Finally James Myhill confirmed that the College was continuing to implement and monitor the Corporation’s recruitment policy to ensure it reflected the “local population” served by the College. Again members’ attention was drawn to the meeting paper, and specifically Appendix C, which set out the action plan that had been agreed.

In the absence of any further discussions or questions members thanked James Myhill and Ruth Harrison for their report which was received.

10. Review of Committee Effectiveness

The Clerk advised that, as part of the Corporation’s Self Assessment Review each of its committees was required to review its effectiveness over the last 12 months and to make recommendations regarding any changes felt necessary.

The process to be followed and criteria used were explained. The outcome of the review was as follows.

- 1) Terms of reference – to be amended to make clear that the committee did not deal with procedures relating to senior post holders. Regarding membership to include the Director of Quality and Workforce Development, in attendance, and also the Co-opted Member.
- 2) Members were satisfied the terms of reference had been met.
- 3) Members requested that Workforce Planning and Employment Law Update be added to the list of standard agenda items.
- 4) Members were satisfied that the number of meetings held was right. Emergency meetings could be called if needed.
- 5) Regarding committee membership see (1) above. The new Vice-Principal Curriculum and Standards to be invited to attend with reference to Workforce Planning agenda items.
- 6) Members were happy with the method of reporting in to Corporation.
- 7) Members were satisfied with both the Chair and Clerk.

8) Members were satisfied with the timeliness and coverage of items see (3) above. It was also agreed that issues surrounding staff development at a strategic level should be covered.

9) Members were satisfied at the balance between micro and macro level of information provided.

11. Any other Business

There were no items of any other business.

Part 2 Confidential Items

12. Legal Matters

The Principal advised that she had shared a matter with the Chair of Governors but was not able to say more than that at this time.

13. Date and Time of Next Meeting

9 November 2009 at 5.30 pm. The venue will be Conference Room 1 in the Astral Centre.