

**Minutes of the Personnel Committee Meeting held on Monday 9 November 2009 at
5.30 pm in Conference Room 2, the Astral Centre**

Members Present:

Kevin Howes: Chair/Corporation Member
Evelyn Hicks: Corporation Member
Bob Mee: Corporation Member
Gwen Parsons: Principal
Ashley Reynolds: Co-opted Committee Member
Alastair King: Corporation member (Inclusive)

In Attendance:

Teresa Miller: Vice Principal
Ruth Harrison: Assistant Principal
James Myhill: Head of HR
Charles Reynolds: Clerk to the Corporation

The Chair welcomed Alastair King to the meeting,

Apologies for Absence:

Apologies for absence had been received from Shiela Keenan who was still recovering from a broken ankle

1. Disclosures of Interest:

There were no disclosures of interest relevant to the agenda items.

2. Minutes of The Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 15 June 2009 were agreed to be a correct record and were signed by the chair.

3. Matters arising from the minutes and not agenda items.

3.1) Apologies for absence. The clerk confirmed that a letter of thanks had been sent on behalf of the Committee to Bob Russell following his resignation.

4. Correspondence

There had been no correspondence received relevant to the Committee.

5. Workforce planning – Phase 1

Presented by Teresa Miller who informed members that, in producing the paper under review consideration had been given to such things as the Workforce Strategy for England, the need for succession planning, and the production of a training plan. This had resulted in the production of an action plan which was set out as Appendix A in the meeting paper.

The College vision in terms of workforce planning was detailed. In terms of succession

Action

planning Teresa Miller explained that this was viewed from both an organizational as well as an individual perspective. It was however clearly important for the college to effectively plan for any issues that could arise with respect to key posts at whatever level in the organisation.

Having set the scene members attention was drawn to the action plan and Teresa Miller went through each proposed action in detail. It was made clear that what was set out was not listed in order of priority. It was however explained by Teresa Miller that the action plan reflected the need to have a systematic, planned programme which protected the College from crisis management or fire fighting. Some of the actions listed were already happening and it was the view of management that the College was a much more mature organization which was ready and able to deal with the proposed first phase approach to workforce planning. At this stage members were asked to comment on the proposals.

Ashley Reynolds asked for clarification on what were the different expectation regarding training for supervisors compared with middle management?

Responding Teresa Miller advised that supervisors needed basic training in such things as appraisals, carrying out return to work interview and on understanding of basic employment law. Middle manager however used a different set of tools and their development needs were normally to do with HR issues such as having a good knowledge of College policies such as disciplinary, grievance etc, but also with financial. For the senior management team it was much more about leadership.

Ashley Reynolds acknowledged this to be a 'hot topic' and advised that he was currently involved in developing similar training at his place of work. He believed he had a very good package which also looked at things like competency and behaviour and as he believed that much of what could be learned was applicable to any organisation he offered the college the opportunity to use it if it was felt it could help. Members thanked him for this kind offer and it was agreed James Myhill would follow this up. At this point Bob Mee arrived.

AP JM

James Myhill also confirmed that the College used external organization to produce tailored training and development packages for managers.

Evelyn Hicks asked if there had been an audit of staff skills to help identify where there were likely to be gaps that could affect the delivery of the College vision. Responding Teresa Miller confirmed that this was reviewed by both HR and the senior management team. The Principal added that as a result of this review the priorities 1-8 as set out in the proposed action plan had been identified as the key areas to address in addition to what is already happening. The big challenge was to bring in the next generation of managers.

Evelyn Hicks advised that a similar exercise had been carried out in schools which had shown the need for breadth of skills. It had also identified the need to ensure teachers were not doing administrative roles. Again responding Teresa Miller advised that the College was in the process of addressing this concern via use of Apprenticeship scheme as it was just as important to ensure lecturers were used to best advantage.

As this was referred to as workforce planning phase 1 Bob Mee asked what the other phases might be. James Myhill believed these to involve clarifying what types of lecturers and administrative support the college needed. Picking up on this point the Principal observed that the workforce needed to be fairly fluid especially if it was going to be able to respond to central government planning. She referred to the recent experienced around Train to Gain and the pressures to replace lecturers with assessors, which many Colleges had done, and which in the light of the current funding difficulties with this scheme could have caused major staffing issues. The College did need a

balance of lecturers, assessors, administrative staff and managers but there had to be flexibility. The College was constantly reviewing the situation. The main concern was that there were not enough people coming up through the ranks who were ready to carry on from those due to leave.

Bob Mee believed the phase 1 strategy and action plan under review was a good start. However what he felt was missing was how it was proposed the College was going to access the staff that were difficult to get. It was also his view that as the College spent £6.7 million on staffing it needed the best strategy it could get to reflect this level of investment. He believed the college would need to invest in further support to enable HR to develop a £6.7 million workforce plan.

Ashley Reynolds referred to the executive summary and asked whether the developments as listed at 2.6 were happening. He also felt that the use of 'shadowing' in the workplace whilst difficult to provide, was an extremely useful practice that had worked well for him. The Principal confirmed that the College was addressing the needs as set out as 2.6.

Teresa Miller observes that at times she felt the College was guilty of setting to big a challenge for itself. What was being put forward was a starting point which would be built on and where progress in delivery would be reported at future meetings. In support the Chair felt that there was clear evidence that overall progress was being made and this was the way ahead

It was agreed that it would be helpful to have a report at the next meeting which also detailed what the other 'pillars' to the strategy were.

It was also felt that because of its importance the issues surrounding Equality & Diversity needed to be outlined much more fully. Members thanked Teresa Miller and James Myhill for the report which was noted.

6. Human Resources Data Report

Again presented by Teresa Miller who advised that the presentation for the data for this meeting had been subject to change as part of a process of moving towards a more user friendly model based upon that used by University Campus Suffolk.

Members were taken through the detailed report with care. With reference to the breakdown of staff by category Teresa Miller advised that the paper did not take account of a recent management restructure which had saved in the region of £300,000 in salaries. There had however been little movement in overall staffing levels.

Members reviewed data relating to ethnicity, gender, disability, sickness and age. With reference to ethnicity details were provided on current staffing levels and how these matched with the local population. It was also pointed out that because of recruitment requirements in the maritime section a number of staff from similar backgrounds to the student had also been recruited.

There was some discussion on the issue of how to encourage staff who were disabled to declare their disability as it was not certain that the figures held centrally were correct. The gender profile reflected the fact that the college had a 'male' dominated curriculum. There were more male lecturers and more female support staff.

Levels of sickness for which an updated handout was circulated, currently running at below 3%, were seen to be very good and well below those recorded elsewhere. There was some discussion on whether it was appropriate to count a cleaner who only worked a few hours a day as being a full days absence when not at work. It was felt it could be

**AP James
Myhill**

better to calculate in terms of hours lost. On the issue of levels of absence amongst cleaners. Alastair King asked whether the lost time on cleaning could be made up at other times in the day. Responding Teresa Miller observed that it was noticeable if the cleaning had not been done before the College day started. She did add that the college was very proactive in managing the levels of absenteeism and the Principal confirmed there not really to be a problem. There were currently no issues of stress absence related to work and when relevant long term absences were referred to occupational health professionals for assessment.

Finally members reviewed a profile re recent recruitment to posts.

Members congratulated the College on the progress made, especially with regard to absence management. The report was noted.

7. Strategic planning – monitoring of key performance targets 2009/2010

James Myhill and Ruth Harrison took members through the meeting paper with care. Details were provided on the progress made to date in delivering against the agreed key performance targets. They were both pleased to report that good progress had been made in ensuring staff were appropriately qualified. It was noted that this was especially the case with regard to variable hours lecturers where currently 84% were either qualified or in training.

With reference to a recent safeguarding internal audit it was also pleasing to note that 100% of the staff folders checked had been completed accurately and were up to date. Good progress had also been made in delivering staff inductions.

As the issue of succession planning had been the subject of considerable discussion earlier in the meeting it was agreed there was no need for a further update.

Turning to the issue of ensuring that the staffing budget was no more than 68% of income. James Myhill confirmed that the College was being very pro-active in holding to this budget figure. The pay budget was the subject of continuous review and as had already been mentioned the recent restructuring of the management team had brought saving of £300,000.

The Principal also informed members that there had been discussions with unions locally about the high levels of remitted hours. She was pleased to advise that as a result of these discussions the numbers hours used in this way had been cut from 8,800 to 4,200 which was the equivalent saving the costs of five members of staff. This had been achieved by ensuring a system of fairness and equality was adopted across the college.

On an equally positive note the Principal was also able to advise that, whilst the nationally recommended pay rise for the sector had been set at 1 ½% which was more than budgeted for, local union representatives had suggested making the pay award payable from February 2010, which was workable and also within budget. This had been really positive and helpful. Members agreed seeing this as demonstrating good HR relationships and at the same time enabling the college to keep to nationally agreed salary rates.

On other matters James Myhill advised that the college had signed up to the 'Mindful Employers' charter, which was explained, and also provided staff with a range of benefits which included Flu Vaccinations free, reduced entrance fees to the Sports Centre and discounts on a range of cycles and equipment.

Ashley Reynolds offered the services of staff from Birds Eye to carry out free health

checks. Bob Mee also advised that the Primary Care Trust might be prepared to provide funding for Healthy Life Style checks. It was agreed both should be followed up.

AP JM

Regarding the investors in people accreditation it was confirmed by James Myhill that this would be subject to internal assessment for the current year with the next external assessment in 2010. Ashley Reynolds observed that as it was of no real benefit to his organization it had been decided not to continue with it. The Principal however advised that for contractual reasons it was important for the college to maintain its accreditation.

AP JM

Finally and with respect to the college's recruitment policy the Principal felt that future work was needed with respect to disability. This was acknowledged as was the need to take account more fully of Equality & Diversity issues.

Members thanked James Myhill and Ruth Harrison for the detailed report which was noted.

8. Independent Safeguarding Authority – Vetting and Barring Scheme

Members were advised by James Myhill that this was the third report they had received updating them on the new scheme. The purpose of this report was to seek approval for the proposed implementation plan. Members were taken with care through the various stages of the proposed implementation plan which was as suggested by Government. The financial implications were also explained. It was proposed that the college would still meet the costs of CRB checks but staff would be expected to fund their own ISA registration fee as this was transferable from employer to employer should the member of staff leave college employment. Assistance could be applied for by staff in genuine hardship.

Bob Mee asked whether college procedures would need to be revised in order to cope with notifications of 'barring' by for example the use of suspension and if so what would be the implications. Responding James Myhill advised that this was being looked into.

Having reviewed the paper in detail it was proposed and seconded that the implementation plan be agreed. Members voted unanimously in favour. The report was noted. At this point Evelyn Hicks apologised and left the meeting.

9. Employment law Update

James Myhill updated members on current important developments in Employment Law. Particular note was given to the very detailed but easy to read appendix to the meeting paper which members found excellent and concise.

Members thanked James Myhill for this report which was noted.

10. Chairs Annual Report 2008/09

Presented by the Chair and Clerk who explained that this report was designed to inform the public of the work covered by the committee during the time period specified and also to provide assurance to corporation that the committee had fulfilled its remit. Members were asked to review and approve the document for circulation to corporation..

AP Clerk

Members voted unanimously in favour.

11. Any other business

11.1 Birds Eye Shop

Ashley Reynolds advised that the staff at the College could make use of the factory shop. He provided a poster for use in the College Newsletter. Members thanked him for this additional service to staff.

11.2 Corporation Self Assessment

AP CR/ JM

Bob Mee requested a report to the next meeting regarding the outcome of staff exit interviews. This issue had come up at the recent SAR corporation event.

Part 2 confidential Items

12. Legal Matters

The minutes for this item can be found in the Confidential Minutes Book.

13. Date and time of the next meeting

The next Personnel Committee Meeting will take place on Monday 8 February 2010. The venue will be Conference Room 2 in the Astral Centre.