

**The College of West Anglia
Minutes of
The Employment Policy Committee
2 June 2021
10.30 am
Remote Meeting – Microsoft Teams**

Present:	Sharon Cambridge	Governor (Chair)
	Chris Ashman	Governor
	Andrew Cave	Governor
	Sally Mitton	Governor
	David Pomfret	Governor (Principal)
Attending:	Nicky Rowland	Head of Human Resources
	Stephen Halls	Clerk to the Corporation

1 Apologies

There were no apologies for absence.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest at the commencement of the meeting. An interest was later noted for Nicky Rowland, Head of HR, for Item 11 – Annual Pay Settlement.

3 Minutes of the previous meetings

The Minutes of the meeting held on 7 October 2020, and the two special meetings held on 27 January 2021 and 3 March 2021 were all agreed as being accurate records of those meetings.

4 Matters Arising

The progress against the outstanding matters from previous meetings was summarised in the report for item 4. There were no questions or concerns raised. The Chair noted from the report the 3 items still to be resolved and therefore carried forward, highlighting particularly the review of the College's HR strategy, which would be reviewed over the summer period for finalisation in the autumn term.

5 Coronavirus Pandemic – Impact on Staffing - Update

The Head of HR advised that on-campus testing had now ceased with all staff and students now expected to use home-testing kits. The Health & Safety report to the Committee in the autumn term would include a report of the testing carried out during the year.

ACTION-HSO

The report noted one member of staff who remained on furlough – this member had since returned to work.

The Chair asked about students carrying out their own testing at home. The Principal advised that the use of home testing by students could not be assured, although the College was monitoring the kits being issued. The Head of HR added that the number of issues of kits on the Wisbech and Cambridge campuses had been in line with expectations. Issues at King's Lynn had reduced for a period but had now increased. The College currently had an oversupply of kits, but due to the regulations, was unable to pass these on to local schools.

The Chair was concerned of the cost of the kits in being produced, and the cost to the College in administering the process. The Principal advised that the allocation received did not cover the additional costs incurred, although there may be an opportunity of submitting a business case for those colleges that operate over multiple campuses.

Governors commented positively on the communications issued during the pandemic.

Governors asked about the use of the Kindness Room (virtual). The Head of HR advised that this virtual room on Teams was used to recognise the help and support received by colleagues and was still open for use; the Employee Wellbeing Group would be looking to develop this initiative further in due course.

Governors enquired about the effectiveness of the JISC on-line Discovery Tool. The Head of HR advised that this would be assessed at year-end with a review of the actions taken by individuals as a result of using the tool. Governors asked if the tool could be used to provide management data and support the area performance reviews. The Head of HR confirmed that, in time, this would be the case.

Governors noted their disappointment at the low levels of attendance during the week-long training event in April. The Head of HR advised that the next training session would be a one-day, mandatory event in July. The Chair commented that a similar one-day event in 2019 had been positively received by staff.

Governors noted the low number of responses received to the wellbeing survey and asked if this was the usual number received, if the numbers were disappointing, and if there were plans to produce a similar survey to understand employees concerns on their return to site. The Head of HR advised that a response level of around 300 would have been expected, adding that in recent times the usual, large scale staff survey had been replaced with small, micro surveys looking at particular issues. The wellbeing survey had allowed HR staff to follow-up where concerns or issues had been raised by employees. Future surveys would include returning to the campuses and catering.

From the survey, governors noted that 31% of staff indicated that they did not have what they needed at home to do their job effectively. The Head of HR explained that, through follow-up, in most cases this referred to wi-fi accessibility and furniture (eg. office chairs). In most cases this had been resolved for affected individuals.

Governors asked why the Maths and English department particularly had not returned to campus working this term. The Principal explained that the usual area occupied by Maths and English had been re-allocated to Foundation Students, who, due to social distancing requirements, needed a larger area to operate in. Further, the College had planned for Maths and English to be delivered remotely. The Principal added that attendance for the on-line lessons had been slightly higher than other colleges.

The Chair gave her own thanks to the Head of HR for the high quality of communications to staff during the pandemic.

The report was noted.

6 Curriculum Impact Report

This item was deemed “confidential.”

7 Policy Review

There were 3 policies for review by the Committee:

i. CWA Leave Policy

Governors asked about unused holiday by staff. The Head of HR advised that, unless for specific legal reasons, holiday was not generally carried over to the next year and so was “lost” by the employee, and that staff were fully aware of the requirement to ensure they took their full allocation of holiday each year. The Head of HR would review the policy to ensure that this instruction was clear.

ACTION-HoHR

Governors referred to the additional monies paid to hourly paid teachers and similar in lieu of holiday days/hours. The policy referred to “other” staff whose entitlement was managed on the CWA People system. Governors suggested that “other” staff should be clarified to mean those with permanent or fixed term contracts. The Head of HR would review this.

ACTION-HoHR

The Chair asked about maternity leave being brought forward should an employee be absent due to a pregnancy related illness within 4 weeks of the notified due date. The Head of HR confirmed that this was the case, emphasising that the absence needed to be a pregnancy related illness.

On page 5 of the policy, adoption pay, after the initial 6-week period, this was noted as being 33 days at a fixed rate; this should however be for 33 weeks. This would be corrected.

ACTION-HoHR

A typographical error was noted in the last paragraph on page 8 of the policy: “There SPL will begin...” should read “Their SPL will begin...” This would be corrected.

ACTION-HoHR

ii. TOIL for Academic Staff Policy

This policy was reviewed. There were no questions or concerns raised.

iii. Flexible Working Policy

Governors noted the benefits that homeworking had generated for staff and the College over the period of the pandemic. The Head of HR explained that the policy, once approved and implemented, would formalise homeworking arrangements for those staff members who would be able to work effectively from home, should they request it. Managers at CWA were currently considering implications for their own staff and departments. The Association of Colleges (AoC) was awaiting legal advice from its solicitors, Irwin Mitchell, before issuing guidance to colleges.

Governors asked if the College would consider imposing a maximum limit on the numbers of staff who could work from home. The Head of HR considered that the College would be flexible in its approach and would review both the needs of the College and the employee. The Principal noted that staff morale had improved as they were trusted to work from home without the close supervision from line

managers, with oversight in the form of a review of the outputs of work, rather than the hours being worked.

The policy would be brought to the Committee's next meeting, by which time hopefully further guidance would have been issued by the AoC. **ACTION-HoHR**

8 Legal Updates – Covid 19

The Head of HR commented that the College was awaiting the relaxation date for Covid restrictions on 21 June 2021. The Job Retention Scheme, closing on 30 September 2021 would not impact on the College as most affected staff had returned to work. One remaining member of staff on the scheme would return to work at the beginning of the autumn term.

Governors asked about the EU Settlement Scheme and the expiry date of 30 June 2021. The Head of HR reported that some employees would be affected by this and that information had been issued advising them to take the required action to ensure they could remain living and working in the UK. There was no significant risk expected to College operations from this legislation.

Governors noted that legislation regarding the right to disconnect was on the horizon and would need to be considered in the next year. Governors were supportive of the need to ensure staff felt able to “switch off” from work, outside of working hours. The Principal added that flexibility was good for both the College and employees, especially when allowing for emergencies. The Principal was mindful of the need for managers to avoid sending emails to staff to during evenings and weekends.

The report was noted.

9 Staff DBS Compliance/Safeguarding & Prevent Training Update

This item was deemed “confidential.”

10 Strategic Targets 2020/21 Progress Review

The Clerk advised that the latest updates to the strategic targets were reviewed by the Board at its meeting on 19 May 2021. There were no questions or concerns raised.

The report was noted.

11 Annual Pay Settlement

This item was deemed “confidential.”

12 Any Other Business

Governors commented on the retirement of Andrew Cave from the Board in December 2021, noting that as well as serving on the Employment Policy Committee, Andrew also served as Chair of the Remuneration Committee. It was suggested that Chris Ashman, Vice Chair of the Board, be asked to take on the role of Chair of the Remuneration Committee. This matter would be considered in due course. **ACTION-CHAIR/CLERK**

13 Chair's items for briefing to the Corporation

- The Committee wanted to highlight again to the Board the work of Nicky Rowland, Head of HR, Danny Huddleston, Health & Safety Officer and the HR team in supporting managers and staff during the Covid-19 pandemic. This had been a very busy time with ever-changing rules and regulations regarding how staff should work and in how the buildings and premises should operate.
- Review of the draft Flexible Working policy which, once finalised, would include guidance on home working. One side issue of the pandemic had been the realisation that some work could be satisfactorily undertaken at home and that there was value in giving individuals greater control over how they worked.
- Review of safeguarding matters, noting that all staff currently had a DBS check, with checks also in place for all on site contractors, those engaged through partnerships providers, self-employed and agency staff. At the time of the report, 18 staff had yet to complete their initial safeguarding training, although they would have received the safeguarding handbook prior to their first day at work. 26 staff had still to complete their PREVENT training.

14 Date and time of next meeting

Wednesday, 6 October 2021 at 8.30 am.

The meeting closed at 11.45 am