

**The College of West Anglia
Minutes of
The Employment Policy Committee
7 October 2020
8.30 am
Remote Meeting – Microsoft Teams**

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

1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Danny Huddleston, Health & Safety Officer.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Minutes of the previous meeting – 3 June 2020

The Minutes of the meeting held on 3 June 2020 were agreed as being an accurate record.

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.

5 Election of Vice Chair

The committee agreed that Andrew Cave would continue to serve as Vice Chair of the Employment Policy Committee.

6 Policy Review – Implementation of Pay Review

The Head of HR reported that the necessary changes following the pay review from the summer of 2019 had been fully implemented for lecturing staff. For support staff, this was ongoing and was currently awaiting the completion of the job evaluation costing.

The following discussion was deemed “Confidential.”

The update was noted.

7 Policy Review – Covid 19

Governors commented that the Covid 19 policy was clear and concise, and provided a useful tool for management, whilst giving reassurance for staff.

The Chair noted a mis-typing at the top of page 2 of the policy relating to Coronavirus-19, which should read as Covid 19. This would be corrected. **ACTION-HoHR**

Under section 3.2 – Becoming ill at home, the Chair asked if staff were aware of how to arrange a test if needed. The Head of HR advised that this had been communicated to staff via regular emails, although for clarity, this would be added to the policy for completeness. **ACTION-HoHR**

Governors asked about the testing kits supplied to the College. The Principal confirmed that the College had priority status for test kits to ensure staff, students and the College remained operational, with a faster response time in obtaining the results from the tests carried out.

The Committee noted the Covid 19 policy.

8 Legal Updates – Covid 19

The Committee had no questions or comments on this report.

The update was noted by the Committee.

9 Curriculum Impact Report

This item was deemed “confidential.”

10 Annual HR Report

The Head of HR asked the Committee to be cautious when reviewing the report and noting areas of performance improvements and concerns, emphasising the need to consider how much of the year had been affected by the coronavirus pandemic and how this had impacted across the College. The Chair noted the positive feedback received from unions in respect of the good quality communications issued to staff during the lockdown period and since, and gave her thanks to the Head of HR for this. Governors asked how staff were being supported as many had recently returned to on-campus working. The Head of HR explained that vulnerable staff and those thought to be in need were being communicated with by the HR team. Where issues were evolving these were being swiftly dealt with, liaising with the Health & Safety Officer, Marketing, Property Services and other departments where appropriate.

Looking at the staff profile, Governors were interested in how the College compared with the sector. The Head of HR explained that the average age of staff compared similarly to the sector and that the average age of 40 reflected that those moving into FE teaching tended to do so after their first career. The high number of females again was similar to the sector as term time working attracted females, who were usually the main child care provider in the home. The Principal commented that the number of non-white applicants to various positions had increased over the last 2 years, but the actual number of non-white appointments had not. The Head of HR would investigate this to ensure there was no bias in the recruitment process. **ACTION-HoHR**

Governors reviewed the statistics relating to disciplinary and capability and reflected if the number of investigations reflected the work of the Support to Improve process. The Head of HR confirmed that the process focused attention on an individual's

performance and if found to be lacking then action was taken, adding that most staff tended to respond positively to the support offered and improvements were seen.

The report was noted.

11 Staff DBS Compliance/Safeguarding & Prevent Training Update

There were no questions or concerns raised on this report.

The report was noted.

12 Annual Staff Development Review

The Head of HR advised that a great deal had been done to support staff with their training needs, particular during the pandemic where there became an increased need for the use of IT and digital/remote teaching methods. Governors commented that it was good to monitor the impact this was having on the teaching being received by the students.

Governors noted from the report that 99 academic staff did not hold a level 5 teaching & learning qualification. The Head of HR advised that the level 5 qualification was the aspiration of the College and that all new staff were contracted to obtain this within 3 years. However, historic staff held qualifications at Level 3 or 4 and were encouraged to gain the Level 5.

The Chair asked about extended learning walks for teaching staff. The Head of HR explained that this process was carried out over time and included a review, agreed development plan and then a further review and tended to focus particularly of any areas of concern noticed during the initial review. The Principal added that the feedback and guidance given to individuals was more comprehensive than that offered following a normal learning walk. The teacher training opportunities offered by Huddersfield University had encouraged individuals to undertake the higher level of qualification, funded from the apprenticeship levy.

The Chair asked about the delay to the planned observations of learning support staff and progress coaches, as listed in the table of strengths & weaknesses. The Principal advised that this was awaiting sign-off by the unions. This would be followed up.

ACTION-HoHR

The Chair commented favourably on the report from the Hospitality & Tourism area where tutors had been experimenting with on-line escape rooms to provide questions to students in order to test their learning.

The report was noted.

13 Health & Safety Summary 2019/20

The Head of HR reported to the Committee the efforts put in by Danny Huddleston, Health & Safety Officer since March 2020 in dealing with coronavirus and its impact on the College, across all campuses and in all departments and faculties. The Chair said that Governors were appreciative of the work carried out and asked the Principal to write a brief letter of thanks to Danny on behalf of the Governors and the College.

ACTION-PRINCIPAL

Governors asked about possible health & safety implications of staff working at home. The Head of HR advised that to date, only one work-related accident at home had been reported. The main concern currently was musculoskeletal injuries caused by

staff creating work stations at home with suitable desks and chairs. The College was currently looking at a policy to formally allow working from home and in time this would cover areas such as appropriate work stations, equipment and compliance checks/assessments at home.

In the table at Appendix 1 listing staff accidents, Governors asked what the heading of “2508” referred to for one of the columns. The Head of HR explained that this referred to those incidents that needed to be reported to the Health & Safety Executive.

Governors noted that the number of accidents within the Technology faculty had reduced from 33 in the previous year to 4 in 2019/20. The Head of HR explained that this reduction was due to coronavirus and campuses being closed since March 2020 with very few practical sessions taking place. As an aside, the Head of HR added that in future reporting when using comparators, report writers (and readers) would need to be mindful that 2019/20 was a unique year and that many statistics and performance indicators would be skewed for this particular year.

The Committee agreed the proposed audits for 2020/21 as being Property Services, the small animal unit and hospitality, with the addition of the Applewood Nursery.

ACTION-H&SO

The Head of HR was concerned about the poor level of compliance in some areas for Safesmart training, where the minimum level had been set at 75%. This matter would be raised at a CLT meeting.

ACTION-HoHR

The report was noted.

14 Health & Safety Policy Review

The Head of HR highlighted that the policy was now presented in the new College format for policies. The Principal added that the policy now made reference to coronavirus. Governors noted the need for visitors to sign in at Reception and asked if this applied to Governors. The Principal explained that this was not required as Governors were authorised visitors to the campuses, providing they wore their College lanyard.

The approval of the Health & Safety Policy was proposed by Andrew Cave and seconded by Chris Ashman. This was agreed.

15 Review of Draft SARs

The Head of HR advised that the report was currently missing accident figures for the year under review; these would be included in the final version of the document.

ACTION-HoHR

The Head of HR was pleased with the proposed grade of 1, subject to validation. The Committee agreed with the grading proposed. It was noted that at times the current report was not clear if the subject for review was the HR Department itself, or human resources more generally across the College.

Governors considered that the support from the HR Department across the College impacted positively on the experience for learners.

The Head of HR shared her thoughts with the Committee regarding the self-assessment review process and considered that the use of a service level agreement would be a more appropriate method of performance review for support departments.

The report was noted.

16 JNC Summary Report 2019/20

The Head of HR reported that the College enjoyed a good working relationship with the unions, and this had particularly been the case since March 2020 with the need to work closely and swiftly together regarding the coronavirus pandemic. Governors were pleased to note this. The Principal added that the efforts of the Head of HR had been key to maintaining good communications and relations with the unions. The Committee recognised the need to always maintain good relations, especially when dealing with difficult issues such as staff restructures.

The report was noted.

17 Restructure Consultation

This item was deemed “confidential.”

18 Review of Committee’s Terms of Reference, Performance and Future Business Agenda Plan

The Committee reviewed the proforma as prepared by the Clerk and concluded that it provided a fair and accurate summary of the Committee’s performance during the past year.

For its next meeting, the Committee asked to review the HR Strategy, last seen in June 2017, and the TOIL and Leave procedures, both last seen in 2015. The Head of HR noted that the proposed flexible working policy would be presented for review in due course.

ACTION-CLERK/HoHR

The Committee reviewed the current terms of reference, with no changes requested.

No changes to the proposed future business agenda plan were required.

The report was noted.

19 Any Other Business

There were no items of other business.

20 Chair’s items for briefing to the Corporation

- The restructure paper was approved by the Committee for consultation with staff and the unions. Details following the consultation period would be brought to the Board in due course. Accepting that this had been a particularly busy start to the academic year, the Committee was grateful to the Principal and SMT colleagues for their work in preparing the restructure paper.
- The Committee was impressed with the work carried out by Nicky Rowland, Head of HR since March 2020, in supporting and communicating with staff, advising managers and continuing to run the HR function in the College. Similarly, the Committee noted the excellent work carried out by Danny Huddleston, the Health & Safety Officer for co-ordinating all of the safety arrangements across all buildings on all campuses over the summer period.

21 Date and time of next meeting

Wednesday, 3 March 2021 at 10.00 am, if required, or, Wednesday 2 June 2021 at 10.30 am.

The meeting closed at 10.08 am