

Minutes of the Personnel Committee Meeting

Held Tuesday 8 March 2023

Present Mark Sterling (*Chair*), Raj Joshi (Vice Chair), Clair Graham and Shabir Chagan

In attendance Jacquie Carman (*Vice Principal and Chief Operating Officer*)
Rachael Charles (Human Resources Director)
Craig Tucker (Assistant Principal, Quality and Standards)
Jennifer Sunter (*Clerk to the Corporation*)

1	Apologies for Absence
	There were none.
2	Declarations of Interest
	The Clerk declared an interest in agenda item 10 relating to staff contracts.
3	Minutes of the Personnel Committee meeting held 1 December 2022 and Matters Arising
	The minutes of the Personnel Committee meeting held 1 December 2022 were approved as a correct record. Under Matters Arising from the Meeting held 1 December 2022: 6a, Risk – Recruitment and Retention of Staff, a deep dive approach was addressed under the current meeting. 11a, Frequency of Meetings, was also raised addressed under the current meeting.
	<i>It was agreed that the order of business would be changed and the minutes reflect this.</i>
6	Employee Recruitment Referral Policy
	Rachael Charles reported that the deployment of a rewards scheme for referrals arose from management seeking new mechanisms to support applications, which continued to be low in the current climate. The approach was not uncommon in other Colleges. In response to questions from members, it was confirmed that the College uses recruitment agencies and that the hardest to fill teaching vacancies were varied across subjects including Science, Maths, Computing, Psychology, Business, Health and Social Care and Early Years. Members suggested consideration of further incentivising the scheme through a phased payment approach, noting the need for careful management of staff agreements and in order to protect confidentiality around staff performance. Appropriate payment points of passing probation and three months following this were proposed.
	The Personnel Committee approved the Employee Recruitment Referral Policy, subject to review of points of scheme payment to be awarded.
8	Dignity at Work (Harassment Policy)

	<p>Members considered the new Dignity at Work Policy, meeting new laws on preventing harassment and modernising the language and definitions from the previous Harassment Policy.</p> <p>Members welcomed the policy asking how this related to codes of conduct, culture and values and the wider approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, suggesting consideration of opportunity to bring multiple elements of policy around inclusion together.</p> <p>Rachael Charles and Jacquie Carman assured members that a number of key documents worked together, referring to the Staff Code of Conduct, College Values, job descriptions, recognising that policies around culture and inclusion did need to permeate further through the organisation.</p>
	The Personnel Committee approved the Dignity at Work Policy.
10	Business Support Staff Contracts (confidential report)
	<p>Rachel Charles outlined the consultation with Unison and all College Support Staff on updating of contracts. Various business cases had been considered, resulting in a clear steer regarding contracted hours of work and annual leave.</p> <p>A collective agreement was now required.</p> <p>Members of the Committee felt that the contract was reasonable and checked how this benchmarked against competitor colleges.</p> <p>It was also noted that once agreed the positive benefits of working at the College should be actively marketed.</p>
	The Personnel Committee recommended to the Corporation the approval and adoption of the Business Support Staff Contracts, and the revised annual leave as contained therein, subject to union agreement.
4	External Factors Impacting on Recruitment and Retention of Staff
	<p>Members received a detailed presentation which addressed the national picture of funding and pay impacting on the College's ability to recruit and retain staff. It was noted that the Association of Colleges (AoC) was driving a national campaign to address the gap in College funding and the polarization of school and college teaching salaries. However, the national picture of public sector trade union action potentially placed Colleges below other high priority areas for the Government. Conversely, being classified as public sector, staff at colleges may have raised expectations of inflationary pay awards. At least, the expectation could be for an award that is higher than the funding increase the College may receive.</p> <p>Against the information provided, members considered and made suggestions on challenges to the College including, shortage of applications, marketing wellbeing, promoting employee advantages and support in working for the College, and considering more ways of generating income. The latter included a range of perspectives around use of assets, review of economic courses, ratios of student numbers, collaborative working and growing commercial activities.</p> <p>Jacquie Carman responded that the College was currently looking at the costed curriculum model, with support through the FE Commissioner's office, was successfully collaborating with other colleges through the Skills Accelerator and was providing a revised Finance Strategy for the Finance and Resources Committee to consider. The College sought to continue to strengthen its commercial activity, continued to bid for further funding and from a meeting with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) may need to consider future subcontracting.</p> <p>Members thanked staff for the presentation, which had been very informative.</p>

5	<p>Deep Dive - Attraction and Retention of Staff</p>
	<p>Following on from the presentation Rachael Charles outlined the College's approach when recruiting staff, including the use of agency websites, Job Centre, Linked-In and recently a local recruitment fair. Current use of the Association of Colleges offer was both supportive and provided economic value.</p> <p>The new College website had a refreshed landing page for jobs, and staff had attended training which had further supported a refreshed approach. The College was also updating the application process with a new HR system supporting e recruitment.</p> <p>The College wished to employ the best staff and it was not uncommon to not recruit through the first process. This drive for standards did, however, impact negatively on staff covering vacancies.</p> <p>Members responded to the College's approach noting that there was much activity. Key points to note in moving forwards included:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understanding the size of the community, (combining the number of people at the College, those using the social media sites and the website) and how information on vacancies is reaching that community. 2. Understanding how job seekers get directed to Halesowen College. 3. Modernising the application process, to not have to be through an application form only. 4. That marketing and employment brand remained very important, including understanding how staff behaved, either as detractors, as passive or as promoters of working at the College. The use of staff videos on working for the College could be a useful tool. <p>Jacquie Carman recognised that the College Leadership Team were addressing the need to increase marketing and particularly digital communication. The College was currently advertising for a new Head of Marketing and Sales to build capacity.</p> <p>Members discussed the standard use of application forms and meeting the compliance needs for Keeping Children Safe in Education. Members discussed this further, noting that there were hybrid models and creative solutions, that while meeting the need to make necessary checks, could make applications more streamlined and accessible for applicants.</p> <p>Members considered the information provided on staff turnover and the high volume of recruitment activity. Understanding reasons for leaving and by length of service was informative, however, it would be helpful to focus on any identified areas which are solvable. It was noted that focus should be on retention of specialist staff. The challenges around paying a premium rate for some staff was discussed. Members also asked about future consideration of the mix of curriculum offer to support the greatest ability to move forward.</p> <p>Craig Tucker summarised the work undertaken to support and retain staff once employed by the College. While pay was significant, the College wanted staff to feel valued and supported and to enjoy working for the College. A new teacher Development Team was now in place to support staff through probation, to be successful and excel.</p> <p>Members recognised the value of case studies which illustrate staff journeys to success.</p> <p>The Chair thanked managers for their hard work and summarised that while there remained constraints, there was much arising from the discussion for further consideration.</p>
7	<p>Deep Dive - Staff Wellbeing Update</p>

	<p>Rachael Charles outlined how the College offered a range of health and wellbeing support, which was evidenced through policy, through procedures such as appraisal meetings, through internal and external support groups and agencies.</p> <p>Members recognised the good opportunities offered and focused on two key points of communication about what is provided for staff and increasing trust in the confidentiality of the external services provided.</p> <p>Members also noted the use of feedback to benchmark and influence planning to meet support needs.</p> <p>Members asked what success equated to. Jacquie Carman responded that it was desirable to evidence that a supportive culture was known and that there was transparency from senior leaders that had built trust. A hard measure of success would be reduced staff turnover, with 2023 data expected to be similar to 2022, and 2024 to reflect a more stable position.</p>
9	<p>Update on Training and Development of Staff (compliance and impact)</p> <p>With regard to Safeguarding and Prevent Craig Tucker reported that 100% of staff had received the annual update training. The College had also achieved the Gold Leaders in Safeguarding accreditation, which highlighted the compliance of mandatory training.</p> <p>The College had a culture of staff development for all with cross College development days and opportunities for both internal and external training. There was training focus on the craft of teaching and the College had supported staff to progress.</p> <p>There was also an increased focus on capturing impact of training, particularly on teaching and learning and outcomes for students.</p> <p>Members appreciated the fundamental and supportive approach taken and asked about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training needs analysis • Capturing and sharing best practice • Cultural competence and anti-racist practice • Industry relevant employer skills needs <p>In response it was noted that specific training needs were considered through staff appraisals, that resources and best practice were captured centrally and shared, that the Equality and Diversity Forum worked well in addressing training needs and that some staff had industry appropriate positions and that industry relevant development is linked to work placements.</p>
11	<p>Target Monitoring Update</p> <p>Members noted that the data for staff absence remained above target, recognising the impact this had on staff covering for absent colleagues.</p> <p>Reasons for absence remained mostly due to respiratory infections.</p> <p>Members discussed the approach to measuring staff satisfaction and benchmarking.</p> <p>The report was received.</p>
12	<p>Committee Terms of Reference, Cycle of Business and Frequency of Meetings</p> <p>It was agreed that the current terms of reference remained fit for purpose and that it would be recommended to the Corporation that the frequency of meetings be increased to three each year.</p>

		The Personnel Committee recommended to the Corporation that in considering the committee terms of reference and cycle of business the Personnel Committee increase annual meetings to three.
13		Meeting Impact Review
		<p>The Chair summarised that the Committee had been able to explore a variety of people related issues, including the major challenges faced by the College. As part of this a deep dive of staff recruitment, retention, wellbeing and development was undertaken which supported understanding.</p> <p>The Committee felt that the College had done well to identify and mitigate the main risks, particularly with regards to staff recruitment and retention. In particular, the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constructive engagement with the trade unions to change to improve Terms and Conditions for support staff (increased annual leave). • A revised approach to marketing. • The introduction of an employee referral scheme. <p>The meeting had afforded opportunity to provide constructive feedback and share suggestions. Managers were strongly encouraged to reflect on application forms and whether an application is still needed, although the Committee acknowledged the financial envelope within which the College is operating.</p> <p>The Committee were reassured with the work undertaken around wellbeing and the development of a wellbeing portal.</p> <p>The Committee thanked the College for providing an overview of the external environment. Jacquie Carman reflected that the Committee had raised questions consistent with current management thinking which was reassuring. It had also been helpful to hear viewpoints from other sectors to avoid being insular.</p>
14		Any Other Business
		There was none.
15		Date of Next Meeting(s)
		The Committee would add a meeting in May or June to address staff contracts as required. The date remained to be determined.

The meeting closed at 8pm

Actions from Meetings			
Ref	Agenda item and action	Review Date	Reported by
Personnel Committee Meeting 1 December 2022			
Action 6a	Risk – Recruitment and Retention of Staff Members requested a deep dive approach on attraction and retention of staff, ‘considering the art of the possible’ for review at the next meeting of the Committee.	March 2023 Closed	JCa/ RCh
Action 11a	Frequency of Meetings It was agreed that frequency of meetings for the 2023/2024 calendar would also be considered at the meeting in March 2023.	March 2023 Closed	JSu

