

# Personnel Committee

Wednesday 05 February 2025, 6:00-7:10pm

Block 1 Boardroom (1.204) and MS Teams



Meeting papers link: [Personnel Committee 05Feb25](#)

## Committee members in attendance:

Aisha Benachour  
Joanne Chilton (Virtual)  
Sarah Dawson  
Raj Joshi, Committee Vice Chair  
Mark Sterling, Committee Chair

## Officers in attendance:

Jacquie Carman, CEO & Principal  
Steph Morley, Director of Governance  
Jon Priest, CIO (Items 1, 2 & 4)

## APPROVED MINUTES

Item	Discussion	Action
1	<b>Welcome</b> The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed all in attendance.	
2	<b>Procedural matters</b>	
2.1	<u>Apologies</u> Apologies were received from R. Charles.	
2.1	<u>Declarations of interest</u> There were no declarations of interest for this meeting.	
2.3	<u>Minutes of last meeting and actions/matters arising</u> The Committee <b>approved</b> the minutes of the meeting held on 09 October 2024 as a true record, subject to the following addition: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Item 5b: The Committee noted the proportion of new starters who had yet to complete their mandatory safeguarding training and asked for an update to be provided on the latest position.</li></ul>	SM
	The following progress updates to the previous meeting's actions were provided: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- LEAD programme impact: actioned, self-evaluation by participants had been. introduced to capture feedback on impact throughout the duration of the LEAD programme.</li><li>- SPH probation length: actioned and implemented.</li><li>- Annual targets within dashboard: to be covered under Item 4.</li><li>- Safeguarding training update: see Item 9.</li><li>- Corporation membership, recruitment and appointments: actioned.</li><li>- Skills audit: confirmed as incorporated into the governance development plan.</li></ul>	
4	<b>Performance against targets and staff data metrics</b> J. Priest presented live performance data for the college's HR KPIs using the PowerBI dashboard and confirmed national data/narrative would be incorporated into the dashboard once published by the AOC later this year.	

The Committee noted, despite the college's continued focus on improving staff attendance, the high proportion of staff members (approx. 50%) absent due to sickness this academic year. It was acknowledged the overall number of days lost to sickness was an improving picture and comparatively low based on the national picture; however, the number of staff members affected was a concern. J. Priest and J. Carman spoke about the action being taken to work with staff and managers to address this, including the new proposed absence management procedures and explaining the disruption to students' learning caused by absence.

The Committee asked if there were any highlighted pockets of absence and it was confirmed the following areas had been identified – learner support and some curriculum teams, in particular resit English and Maths; and the 20-30 years age group. The Committee discussed the possible contributing factors to the higher absence rates for these groups.

The Committee asked if absence caused by injury at work would be recorded as such. J. Carman confirmed any absence would be recorded as due to an industrial injury and the appropriate record made via the college's health and safety systems, including RIDDOR if required.

The Committee acknowledged the benefit of comparing college data with available public health data and R. Joshi agreed to provide published local data (where available).

RJ

The Committee noted colds and flu-like symptoms as the most common reason for absence at the current time, which was not unusual for the time of year but could be a symptom of undetected stress. J. Carman confirmed reasons for absence were explored during return-to-work interviews, with action taken regarding further support if required.

## **5 Staff absence management**

J. Carman presented the report and the updated draft policy/procedure for staff health, wellbeing and attendance management, which would undergo consultation with staff members and unions following the meeting. She advised the procedure introduced new and more robust methods for reporting and managing absence, and confirmed the Bradford Factor would be used as a management tool to help identify absence risks.

The Committee asked how staff members received training in absence management. J. Carman confirmed training was regularly delivered by the Director of HR and 1-1 sessions were provided as needed, as well as being covered during the LEAD programme. She also confirmed managers would receive training on the new policy/procedures once finalised.

The Committee asked if staff members' medical records could be accessed in the event of attendance concerns. J. Carman advised this would be requested and reviewed by the Occupational Health professionals following a referral from the college.

The Committee noted the likely impact on workload for the HR and Occupational Health teams following the introduction of a more robust policy and asked if there was sufficient capacity in place for increased demand. J. Carman confirmed capacity had been recently increased within the HR team and reported no concerns about capacity or quality with the college's occupational health provider at the present time.

The Committee asked if the right to self-certify absence could be removed if there were attendance concerns. J. Carman advised the college's employment contracts included self-certification for absence and did not allow for removal of this right.

The Committee sought clarification regarding when the decision to dismiss became effective. J. Carman confirmed dismissal would be with immediate effect; however, the employee's final salary payment would reflect the notice period and any owed leave. The Committee requested this be clarified within the policy.

JCa

The Committee asked if the governor panel hearing an appeal would have access to legal advice. J. Carman confirmed any panels convened for an appeal would have access to appropriate legal advice.

The Committee asked what would happen when a line manager might not be the most appropriate person to manage a staff member's absence. J. Carman confirmed, in this situation, this would be undertaken by the line manager's line manager.

The Committee agreed an amendment regarding the wording of the policy in relation to ill health and disability.

JCa

### **3 Strategic/staffing updates**

#### **3.1 National pay negotiations and funding**

J. Carman provided an update on the latest position regarding national pay negotiations and funding for the sector, and highlighted the following:

- £50m of the £300m announced as additional funding for FE would be made available this year and provided to colleges as a one-off, non-consolidated payment.
- Due to the non-consolidated/one-off nature of the payment, using the funding for staff pay awards would not be appropriate.
- Details about this payment and also the funding for National Insurance increases were awaited.
- Managers and the wider staff team were being kept updated as appropriate.

#### **3.2 Industrial relations (CONFIDENTIAL ITEM)**

The Committee noted the contents of the report and the update provided by J. Carman regarding the current position.

### **6 Compliance and policy review**

#### **6.1 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Annual Report 2023/24**

J. Carman presented the annual report, which was noted by the Committee.

The Committee asked how intersectionality was being considered by the college. J. Carman confirmed this was facilitated through the appointment of the EDI champions, who regularly met as a group, and agreed this was an area for further development. She spoke about how Halesowen College was working as part of Colleges West Midlands on the EDI agenda, how she was personally leading the LGBTQIA+ and the agreement to host a regional conference later this year, all of which provided opportunities for learning from within and outside the sector.

The Committee commended the new initiatives implemented throughout the year as part of the college's new approach to EDI and emphasised the importance of also celebrating the well-established EDI practice.

The Committee welcomed the use of infographics within the report to present key data and suggested the inclusion of community cohesion in future reports, which would reflect the

importance of the college as a community anchor and the decision to include its own protected characteristics of looked after children and social-economic challenge.

The Committee requested the Director of Governance schedule the report earlier in the meeting cycle going forward.

SM

## 6.2 HR Annual Report 2023/24

J. Carman presented the annual report, which was noted by the Committee.

The Committee agreed, as the data was routinely being presented via the dashboard items, the annual report could be in the format of a snapshot report as at 31<sup>st</sup> July each year.

JCa

The Committee acknowledged the positive feedback received through the staff engagement activity, particularly the comments regarding the senior team.

## 7 **Governance update**

S. Morley introduced the item and explained there would be a more detailed report at the next meeting due to the planned governance development activity across the year.

### 7.1 Corporation development and training

S. Morley confirmed the training and development offer for Corporation members would be fully reviewed, as part of the wider governance development activity.

### 7.2 Membership, recruitment and succession planning

S. Morley advised, in addition to the vacancies/skills gaps previously discussed by the Corporation, there had been two further resignations received – A. Benachour (with effect from April 2025) and T. Harvey-Pallent (by end of year). This would therefore be factored into the recruitment activity planned this year. S. Morley reported she would be looking at how past vacancies had been advertised, what had worked well and how the college's social media platforms could be used as a recruitment tool.

J. Chilton emphasised the need for more effective succession planning, not just for the role of Chair but also for Committee Chair/Vice Chair and link governor roles. The Committee acknowledged the importance of mapping the results from a refreshed skills audit against a desired collective skillset, expertise and experience of the Corporation.

### 7.3 Committee terms of reference

The Committee confirmed there were no urgent changes required to the current terms of reference.

The Committee requested the Director of Governance incorporate SPH performance concerns when undertaking the wider review of committee terms of reference.

SM

## 8 **Committee discussion – LEAD programme**

J. Carman reported the LEAD programme was progressing well, with a further successful managers' session and employers' dinner both in January 2025. She informed the Committee she was seeking funding and accreditation through the WMCA and that the programme had received external interest from employers requesting bespoke packages.

The Committee commended J. Carman on the LEAD programme and welcomed updates on the developments discussed.

## 9 Any other business

### 9.1 Safeguarding training update

J. Carman provided the following update, further to the Committee's request at the previous meeting:

- 97% of the 34 staff members joining the college in August/September 2024 had completed the mandatory safeguarding training.
- 86% of the 29 staff members joining during the first two weeks of January 2025 had completed the mandatory safeguarding training.
- All staff members, regardless of contract type and working arrangements, must complete the training and appropriate action would be taken for failure to comply.

### 9.2 Leadership changes

J. Carman informed the Committee of R. Charles' decision to retire towards the end of this year and the recruitment activity underway for a Director of People & Culture. She hoped she would be able to confirm an appointment (and hopefully introduce the successful candidate) and the next meeting.

### 9.3 Strategic discussion items

The Committee requested time on the meetings' agendas for strategic discussion. It was agreed this would be implemented for the next meeting and would be focused on skills mix and the whole-college focus on recruitment, onboarding and retention. SM

The Chair acknowledged this would be A. Benachour's last meeting and thanked her for her contributions during her time on the Personnel Committee.

There was no further business for discussion and the Chair closed the meeting at 7:10pm.

### 2024/25 remaining meeting dates:

- Wednesday 15 May 2025, 6:00pm

### Actions from this meeting:

Item	Action	Owner	Timescale
2.3	Make the agreed amendment to the minutes before finalisation	SM	06/02/25
4	Provide local public health data re sickness absence if available	RJ	-
5	Clarify the wording re dismissal being with immediate effect in policy	JCa	Prior to consultation
5	Amend the wording relating to ill health and disability	JCa	Prior to consultation
6.1	Schedule annual EDI report earlier in next year's meeting cycle	SM	May 2025
6.1	Forward information on intersectionality to the college	AB	-
6.2	Review reporting approach for next year	JCa/DofP&C	Autumn 2026
7.3	Consider remit for SPH performance concerns when undertaking review of committee terms of reference	SM	Summer 2025
9.2	Include strategic discussion item on next agenda re skills mix, linking to the focus on recruitment, onboarding and retention	SM	Next meeting