

Agenda No: 02



PEOPLE AND REMUNERATION COMMITTEE

THURSDAY 4 FEBRUARY 2021

Report: Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 5 November 2020
Author: Clerk
Action: Approve
Status: Open

Present: Claire-Jane Rewcastle (Chair)
Andy Cole (Interim Principal / CEO)
John Hogg

In attendance: Paul Campbell (Head of People and Organisational Development)
John Gray (Director of Student Experience)
Nadine Hudspeth (Director of Marketing & Communications)
Emma Moody (WBD, Clerk)
Chanel Hunt (Minutes)

PR/001 Chair's Welcome, Apologies and Conflict of Interest

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Darren Heathcote.

No conflicts of interest were declared at the start of the meeting and members were reminded to declare any conflicts that arose during the discussions in the meeting.

PR/002 Minutes of the People Committee meeting dated 4 March 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

PR/003 Matters Arising

The Interim Principal/CEO reminded those present that there had been a change in approach to presentation of the minutes such that only those truly confidential minutes would be marked as such going forward.

The Clerk confirmed that this is something that was now being actioned.

PR/004 Committee terms of reference and annual cycle of business

The Clerk presented the committee terms of reference as approved by the Board on 2 October 2020. Members were asked to note the remit of this committee as stated in section 5 of the terms of reference.

In order for the remit of the Committee's function to be fulfilled, the Clerk noted that certain actions must be completed/decisions taken throughout the year and also that only Members of the Committee (no College staff) must agree the remuneration of senior post holders. Therefore, meetings would be structured to facilitate the undertaking of business throughout the year.

The Chair noted that she felt the terms of reference were clear and comprehensive.

The Clerk asked Members to authorise her to work on the cycle of business for every academic cycle in order to discharge the remit, together with the Head of HR.

Members agreed.

The terms of reference were received.

PR/005 People KPIs

The report was presented by the Head of People and Organisational Development and members were given an opportunity to discuss.

The Head of People and Organisational Development confirmed that in August 2020 there were 27 leavers due to redundancy or TUPE, with 14 leavers in September 2020.

The Head of People and Organisational Development advised Members that the October Management Accounts will have more meaningful figures associated with the costs implications of this.

The Head of People and Organisational Development advised Members that staff ratio costs were being monitored closely, with figures of 61.3% in September 2020 and 64.3% in October 2020.

The Chair commented on the significant change from 80% in 2019/20 and wondered if there has been any impact on staff morale or impact on students/the delivery of College business following the restructure.

The Head of People and Organisational Development stated that teams are working well and that the work that the Director of Marketing & Communications has kept staff informed and staff understand why the changes are happening and there are new Managers in place who are working very closely with their staff. The changes have been fairly well received but it is felt that the changes are blurred somewhat by the impact of COVID-19. Changes such as these are never completely welcome but they have been well managed.

The Chair noted that the Employee Survey results look as if staff are unhappier than in previous years, and asked the reason for this and is it solely down to the restructure.

The Head of People and Organisational Development stated that the results are contextual and some of the reasons are due to the restructure, but some are historical issues.

The Director or Marketing & Communications added that there has been an impact on staff survey results due to reducing headcount in some areas and there is still some further transformation needed. The added issue of COVID-19 had impacted staff morale in general. It was noted that staff morale was important and should continue to monitor,

taking appropriate action to address issues. This will be an ongoing identified for discussion.

The Chair asked if the Head of People and Organisational Development could arrange for the KPI's to be presented alongside local and national comparatives to gain better understanding of how the College is measuring.

The Interim Principal/CEO stated that the comparative information would be useful although this could be difficult to obtain. *The Interim Principal/CEO advised that he would go back to the AoC to see what information can be obtained.*

The Chair advised that there are some curriculum areas within the College where there are some absences in reporting. The Interim Principal/CEO stated that information will be easily available in relation to pay to income ratios.

The Interim Principal/CEO said there would be a need to consider where in the cycle and relate information back to the strategic objectives. This would need to be given some thought.

The Clerk stated that she would support some KPI's being developed which are strategic and thematic and feels this would be a positive move for the College, and suggested that KPI's could be developed around diversity, flexible working, mental health and work/life balance. The Chair supported the Clerk's suggestion and feels that it is simply a question of where monitoring of these indicators would sit in the cycle of business.

The Chair advised that her view on the purposes of the KPI's would be to give an early indicative sign of how the College is doing strategically and whilst it would also be useful to have a comparative, setting targets against certain KPI's could be counter-productive.

A member stated that asking the reason why we measure these things is important and felt that this could be a useful induction exercise for new Governors – what is being measured and why - telling the governors about the College.

The Chair commented that in March 2020 the College seen a steep rise in reports of mental health absences and that the numbers seem to have flat-lined.

The Head of People and Organisational Development stated that absences relating to mental health would usually be found in long-term absences. The College now have Mental Health Champions and has done a lot of work in relation to mental health, meaning that managers are more aware and skilled to deal with mental health reports and feels these measurements have been the reason behind the decline in absences. A recent project looking at mental health (launched in September) will be re-launched – sharing the College's commitment to mental health issues. See page 5 for more discussion on this.

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The Interim Principal/CEO stated that he had discussed this with the Head of People and Organisational Development following an observation he had made. There would

need to be some contextualisation of some of the figures and a separate paper would be useful in relation to informing the committee of any tribunal claims.

The report was noted.

PR/006 Employee Survey

The report was presented by the Head of People and Organisational Development.

The Head of People and Organisational Development stated that the score of 7 is a strong score given the restructuring work undertaken. The score of 2018 was 8.2 and the reason for the slight dip in score was determined by the comments within the survey, such as trust and confidence in the College and comments around the appraisal system, Aspire.

Following the comments surrounding Aspire, work has been undertaken to rectify any issues with the Aspire system now being remodelled. Testing has been carried out by staff following the remodelling and the feedback has been positive.

The Head of People and Organisational Development advised Members that the response rates were down from last year, with 43% response this year and 50% response last year.

The survey was sent at the peak of the changes and explained why the response rates were lower, however the data is rich given that the survey was completed during this period.

Results of the survey echoed a feeling of satellite offices often feeling "left out", with the Baltic Campus being the centre of all events and meetings. Following this feedback, all satellite offices now have a senior manager and a transformation programme will be put in place which will be reported on further at the next meeting.

The Chair queried whether Members may have previously been too accepting of the figures regarding locational dissatisfaction. The figures show that staff in satellite offices are generally unhappier than in the Baltic Campus.

The Director of Marketing & Communications stated that this is something that the College is very conscious of and she is looking at satellite offices hosting events such as Christmas events, however due to the national lockdown and COVID-19 restrictions this may not take place. The Clerk noted that this issue has been on the radar for some time as this committee used to receive face to face briefings from staff at different campuses, however felt that the data showed that measures being taken were not entirely effective to mitigate these feelings.

The Chair advised that she was looking forward to hearing about the work undertaken at the next committee meeting.

The report was noted.

PR/007 COVID Update

The report was presented by the Director of Marketing & Communications.

It was noted that this section of the agenda was an update to the report circulated on 28 October 2020.

The College currently has 16 cases of positive testing of COVID-19 with 3 active cases and 12 staff currently self-isolating.

The Director of Marketing & Communications advised that the College has managed this far due to a blended approach, whereby any teaching staff affected are teaching from home via Zoom and some students affected are still attending classes virtually via the same method.

The College is currently open following the commitment from the Government to keep schools, colleges and universities open during the second national lockdown. The College has advised that staff can work from home if they wish, however has appropriate measures in place to keep them safe at College.

It has been noted following conversations and feedback from staff is that some staff are finding that they are falling back into old habits (if in the office) and not following the guidelines as strictly as they should. It was confirmed that staff will be reminded of the guidelines and the importance of following these guidelines inside and outside of College.

It was noted that some staff generally feel that being at College is better for their mental health and preferred to be at work.

Members were advised that the College had secured funding via a pilot scheme in relation to mental health and wellbeing called 'Lets Chat' which sees one-to-one counselling, mental health MOT's and mental health workshops being available to staff. This was rolled out to the College from September and will run until 31 March 2021.

The Director of Student Experience confirmed that the outcome of the funding pilot with be passed to the Department for Education (DfE) with a view to roll out to all FE providers.

The Director of Student Experience confirmed that as this scheme was rolled out in September, which is busy period the uptake hasn't been as high as first hoped, therefore there will be a relaunch in the hope for a bigger uptake.

A member stated that he is concerned about mental health issues in the reality of COVID-19 and the guidelines in place during this period, for example working from home. His concerns were around some that may feel embarrassed about how they feel, working from home breeding a sense of unreality and needing some form of social interaction.

The Chair stated that following the Employee Survey, a high number of staff commented that they felt able to raise issues of this kind and has took comfort from this data.

The Director of Student Experience confirmed that although the pilot will end officially on 31 March 2021, this does not mean that the scheme will end completely and they are working to extend this going forward.

The Director of Marketing & Communications stated that the College was surveyed in June with particular focus on COVID-19 and have used this information in subsequent communications to staff. The College are looking to survey again imminently and will feedback to the committee in due course.

The Director of Marketing & Communications advised that she has seen staff working collaboratively during this uncertain period, in relation to both the restructure and COVID-19, which is seeing staff working together despite strain on certain areas of the College.

The Chair stated that we are now learning to work in different ways and are able to support learning and development going forward.

The Head of People and Organisational Development advised that work has been undertaken to rebuild relationships with trade unions in relation to COVID-19, with recognition of the difference between higher education and further education and are confident we have a good working environment.

The Chair raised a question over costs for working from home and whether there is a measurement in place to monitor financial impact.

The Director of Student Experience advised that the College has a 'Vulnerable Learners list' which has seen some equipment loaned to students during the lockdowns. The College has also used the Learning & Support Fund and other funding to ensure learners have what they need. The 'Vulnerable Learners list' is currently being rebuilt for the new academic year.

The Director of Marketing & Communication advised Members that the Interim Finance Director has a list of any items purchased as a result of COVID-19.

The report was noted.

PR/008 Any other business

The Interim Principal/CEO advised that he had met with the AoC for its regional consultation meeting and the subject of the National Pay Award was approached.

The AoC has asked for feedback on what route they should take when issuing guidance in relation to the National Pay Award from the following 4 options; a) do not make a pay award as a sector i.e. 0% pay award, b) each College to award what pay it can afford, c) defer recommendations of pay awards to February/March 2021, or d) the AoC issue a recommendation % pay award as per previous years.

Following discussion between members, it was agreed that the Interim Principal/CEO would report back to the AoC in favour of option 'c', deferral of recommendations.

PR/009 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Thursday 4 February 2021 at 10.00am.