

Agenda No: 02



## **PEOPLE AND REMUNERATION COMMITTEE**

**THURSDAY 18 NOVEMBER 2021**

**Report: Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 23 September 2021**  
**Author: Clerk**  
**Action: Approve**  
**Status: Open**

**Present:** Claire-Jane Rewcastle (Chair)  
David Alexander (DA - Principal & CEO)  
Lisa Crichton-Jones  
Sarah Stewart

**In attendance:** Paul Campbell (PC – Head of People and Organisational Development)  
Darren Heathcote (DH – Head of Student Services and Customer Experience)  
Nadine Hudspeth (NH – Director of Marketing, Communications, Estates and Health & Safety)  
Emma Moody (EM – WBD, Clerk)  
Suzanne Clark (Minutes)

### **PR/056 Chair's Welcome, Apologies and Conflict of Interest**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Lisa Crichton-Jones was welcomed to her first meeting as a member of the committee. No apologies were received.

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/057 Minutes of the People and Remuneration Committee meeting dated 1 July 2021**

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 July 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

### **PR/058 Matters Arising**

The Chair of the Corporation confirmed that a guest speaker on equality, diversity and inclusion had been arranged to facilitate part of the Autumn Conference.

The committee noted the updated action log circulated in advance of the meeting.

### **PR/059 Review of Staff Engagement Survey**

The report was presented by the Head of People and Organisational Development and was accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation.

In response to a question from LCJ, PC confirmed that the current staff headcount was approximately 500. Curriculum staff make up the largest single group and includes between 230 and 250 individuals. It was highlighted that the survey was conducted in June 2021, a time when curriculum staff were very much engaged with desk-based activity around the centre assessed grades process. This may have had an impact on completion rates.

PC asked the committee for their views on future areas of key focus in light of the survey results. The Chair indicated that there had been some previous discussions in relation to this. The Chair has asked that PC reviews the response rate. Whilst 44% could be deemed to be acceptable, the Chair felt it was important to look at why others are not engaging. The Chair was interested in understanding whether the response rate is impacted by the wider environment and whether staff being on or off site, or on different sites played a part in responses. Given that curriculum staff make up just under 50% of the overall headcount, the Chair would welcome further understanding of why their scores are not as high as other staff groups adding that she appreciated that this may be due to the timing of the survey. The Chair was also interested in looking at what has made the difference within sport, for this area to have such a positive increase, and whether this can be replicated elsewhere. The committee was advised that PC has a plan in place where focus groups will be used to look at how engagement levels generally can be improved. The Chair asked whether this was any reflection on the mood in College either then or now and whether those in attendance felt there were any particular issues the committee should be aware of (other than those discussed) that could have had a bearing. This information may come out of the focus groups.

LCJ indicated that she very much understood the work involved in improving engagement. LCJ felt that the information presented showed a number of areas that should be celebrated, particularly given the challenges of the last year. LCJ commented that the headline figures are very positive. LCR agreed that there should be focus on improving the response rate. The committee's aspiration would be to see engagement in the survey and LCJ was interested in what could realistically be achieved. LCJ stressed that line managers have a key role to play in working with staff to improve completion rates and asked how involved they are. LCJ would also be interested in whether there are any external trends to consider and she would welcome an understanding of how the College compares to others in the sector. Finally, LCJ advised that she was keen to see the plan in place to engage with staff by way of focus groups and how effective that was.

DH agreed that the College would look to increase the response rate going forward. He was very much heartened by the information presented, based on the last two years. He highlighted the College's financial challenges, FEC intervention and the pandemic as significant issues and indicated that staff have worked extremely hard to overcome these challenges. It was very interesting to see comments on the future as there had been some doubt at points over the last 18 months in light of recent financial uncertainty as to whether the College actually had a viable future as a standalone institution. The mood of staff is positive and staff are recognising the significant changes as the College emerges from recovery. Staff feel that there is a positive future and it was felt that this is reflected in the survey responses.

NH reported that the survey results are very much a moment in time. There is work to do to fully understand this and the team will be looking to explore how additional information can be captured in-year. The team will also be considering how this crosses over into equality, diversity and inclusion and whether all individuals have the

opportunity and feel able to share their views. The College needs to be inclusive in its approach and this was recognised to be a challenging opportunity.

SS commented that the discussion during the meeting had been very helpful and useful. SS agreed with the comments made earlier in the meeting suggesting that some of the key points should be celebrated and recognised the importance of ensuring that as many staff as possible are engaged in future plans. SS highlighted that where expectations are being raised about what the future may hold, this needs to be deliverable. Planned work around engagement was felt to be absolutely the right focus. This will give the committee confidence that the team have reflected on the views of all staff.

DA acknowledged that the College has been through some significant challenges. Considering these challenges, he felt the scores to be high and associated this with the connection individuals have with the organisation. The survey responses are very much the starting point of engagement. The team will adopt different methods of communication using the survey outcomes which will allow staff to engage. DA confirmed that he will be working with NH and PC to plan an engagement strategy and is looking forward to seeing this area progress.

In relation to publication, PC confirmed that the survey responses will be shared with trade union colleagues at a meeting later in the day. Following this, a session will take place with senior managers and the team recognise the need to include all stakeholders. The team will consider how the responses can be shared and celebrated.

***The report and presentation were noted.***

## **PR/060 Core People Key Performance Indicators**

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

The Chair highlighted current absence data relating to mental health and asked whether there were any particular departments where absence is a concern. PC advised that the Annual HR Report that will be presented at the next meeting will give a more detailed breakdown. Currently, there are no specific areas of concern for either absence reason or department.

LCJ indicated that she would find it interesting to consider what is currently measured. LCJ would welcome the opportunity to have discussions outside of the meeting to understand this more. LCJ was also interested to understand where any particular hotspots and risks are, to aid the committee in focusing in on areas of any concern.

PC reported that the Annual HR Report is not RAG rated. Applying a RAG rating can be challenging and/or inappropriate for certain indicators as setting targets was not possible and/or unhelpful bearing in mind what was being measured. PC indicated that he was happy to have further discussions in relation to this outside of the meeting to help LCJ understand the context of what was being measured and why, and the potential benefit (or not) of having targets for some of these indicators. DA also advised that the College risk register was in place and the Committee would have the opportunity to consider this later in the meeting and to reflect upon risk and how it is captured at that point.

The committee was reminded that it had considered people related indicator targets in the past and considered the possibility of setting them, in the context of understanding

whether a target was useful or not. PC confirmed that there is no set target for 2021/22 and that the previous year's data was being used as a benchmark to see trends/patterns, rather than measure against an agreed target. PC added that analysis data within the FE sector is not routinely shared to allow for benchmarking against other providers. It was suggested that the Executive Team could set targets for discussion by the committee against the KPIs. It was felt that some of the KPIs will lend themselves to this but other areas would be more challenging. DA confirmed that the data within the report is a statement of where the College is currently, against the previous year. DA agreed that some work is needed to consider what is being measured and why, what is the purpose and this would involve considering previous discussions on this and revisiting why the KPIs were set as they were (which went back to when the terms of reference were re-set). There is a need to consider what the committee want to have included as part of the framework and this should form part of the overall College strategy discussion. DA suggested that committee members consider whether there are additional items they would want to have visibility on. DA reiterated that applying a RAG rating would be difficult. The report is not intended to manage people related risk as there is a separate risk register that would capture this. KPIs are intended to articulate the current position but obviously if a trend emerged that created a risk, its inclusion on the risk register would need to be considered. The people strategy framework when in place will help the committee to understand how KPIs fit into the overall strategic approach.

***The report was noted.***

#### **PR/061 Mandatory Training Review**

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

In response to a question from SS, it was confirmed that staff who have outstanding mandatory training included a mix of staff who have yet to complete the training and staff who are required to undertake a refresher. PC advised that the Learning and Development Steering Group are reviewing mandatory training as a whole and will be considering what is appropriate for different groups of staff. Compliance data is only one aspect of monitoring. The review will also consider how knowledge is tested once training has been undertaken. The Chair indicated that she was encouraged to hear that mandatory training was meaningful and not a tick-box exercise. The Chair was very interested to see the impact that the work of the steering group will have on improving compliance. NH reported that College managers are accountable for ensuring staff complete mandatory training and have a specific responsibility to ensure that this is followed up. There is a level of rigour applied to the monitoring of completion. The Chair requested an update on the position at the next meeting.

DA advised that due to the continuous turnover of staff, it is very difficult to achieve 100% compliance with any form of mandatory training. There is work that can be done by the team to give the committee clarity on whether staff are new to the organisation or need to refresh. Developments will be undertaken to give the committee further assurance.

*Action: Update on mandatory training compliance to be provided at the next meeting.*

*Action: Enhanced reporting to be investigated, to give the committee clarity on the status of outstanding training.*

***The report was noted.***

## **PR/062 COVID Update**

The report was presented by the Director of Marketing, Communications, Estates and Health & Safety.

In response to a question from SS, NH indicated that the College does not have access to data identifying the proportion of students who had been vaccinated. .

NH reported that there were currently 4 active staff cases with 66 cases reported in total since the start of the pandemic. There were also 15 active student cases. It was highlighted that less people were wearing masks on campus. DH added that students are very accepting that the measures in place are part of every day life. The College's mass testing process was managed very effectively. The Chair recognised that mass testing required significant logistical preparation and indicated that she was very impressed that it had been managed so effectively.

The Chair asked whether staff have required any additional support in returning to campus. PC advised that there has been ongoing communication with staff to keep them informed of restrictions, safety measures and any changes needed. There were no significant issues to report. NH added that the testing centres were very visible and results were shared with staff on the number of tests undertaken to give a level of assurance. LCJ noted her appreciation for the work of the College team in responding to requirements. LCJ asked how the College keeps abreast with local community information. NH advised that the College's Health & Safety Manager attends weekly steering group meetings with local public health teams. The Health & Safety Manager also has a direct line of contact with the Gateshead public health team. Although it is no longer a requirement, the College has continued to work with public health colleagues and send data relating to any positive cases. The College is also collaborating with other regional stakeholders including Trinity Square and Northumbria University.

DA summarised that there had been a tremendous team effort where all staff worked together to prepare a very coherent programme.

SS commented that the College environment appears to have a sense of normality and feels relaxed. NH advised that staff have welcomed the reduction in restrictions on campus.

***The report was noted.***

## **PR/063 Update on Governor Safeguarding Training**

A verbal update was given by the Clerk.

It was reported that there are two governors who are still required to attend safeguarding training. A further session will be arranged before the end of the calendar year to ensure that all governors have completed this as it is an annual requirement.

*Action: Additional safeguarding session to be arranged for Lisa Crichton-Jones and Sara Vening.*

***The report was noted.***

## **PR/064 Safeguarding Update – Training and Development**

The report was presented by the Head of Student Services and Customer Experience

DH reported that, in response to the earlier discussion on mandatory training, compliance data is available at granular level and this is RAG rated. All College managers are able to see this detail for their respective areas. It was confirmed that the team will discuss how the data can be best shared with the committee.

The committee was reminded that the Curriculum and Quality Standards Committee had reviewed the safeguarding report from a customer safety and well-being perspective, and this committee was to ensure that training, conduct and development in this area was adequate.

The committee was advised that five additional safeguarding referrals have been received since the report was produced.

The Chair stated that she was assured in the knowledge that there is an increased number of individuals who can now respond to any safeguarding incidents. She was also encouraged that work is planned to increase compliance with mandatory training in this area. The Chair asked for an update in relation to this at the next meeting.

EM indicated an understanding that learners engaged via College partners are still regarded as Gateshead College learners, highlighting that it was imperative to ensure that staff working with these learners are trained in the right way and therefore the training compliance data should be viewed by the committee with this in mind. This was true from a regulatory as well as a reputational perspective. EM also asked whether there were contractual levers to support increased compliance by partners as required in this area. DH advised that the largest third-party provider working with the College is SORA. SORA have very effective safeguarding mechanisms in place and DH has previously worked very closely with their safeguarding lead. **THIS ITEM IS CONFIDENTIAL AND NOT FOR PUBLICATION.** There are a number of third parties who are engaging staff that are in fact College-based and DH outlined the plans in place to increase the engagement rate especially for those persons who are within the supervision of the College.

Following a suggestion from EM, DH advised that a number of short quizzes will be used following the training to test the understanding of staff and the way in which practice was embedded.

*Action: Update on safeguarding training compliance to be included at the next meeting.*

***The report was noted.***

#### **PR/065 Public Interest Disclosure – Raising Concern at Work**

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

It was reported that the updated policy and procedure will be presented to the Board for approval on 13 October 2021. A copy of the updated document was circulated to the committee with suggested amendments highlighted. In the main, the changes reflect changes to post holders.

*Action: Public interest policy to be presented to Board for approval on 13 October.*

***The report was noted.***

**PR/066 Draft People and OD Strategy**

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

It was confirmed that the draft shared has been shaped by the HR team with input from the executive. The draft will also be shared with Trade Unions and other stakeholders. This is very much an evolving document and a further update will be provided at a future meeting. PC stated that the strategy will give direction and focus.

DA stressed that the strategy is very much in draft currently. The planned Autumn Conference will discuss the overall College strategy and its development. All elements of work at the College is centred around people and a strategy is needed to underpin the overall strategic approach. DA felt that the draft shared gave pillars to build upon. The Executive Team have already had the opportunity to review and input. As indicated by PC earlier, the draft will be shared with trade union colleagues. The draft will also form part of the planned discussions with staff focus groups. The people KPIs give a framework to consider what the team is trying to achieve and what measurements are needed. The strategy will be brought back to governors for final approval. The Chair stated that she was comfortable with the principles and themes outlined in the draft. LCJ indicated that she had found it helpful to understand the context and welcomed the inclusion of the description and aspiration, particularly around culture and how the strategy can be used as a recruitment tool. LCJ suggested adding in an exciting description of the future. LCJ also suggested that consideration be given to the enablers needed to deliver the strategy. LCJ advised that she would be happy to work with the team to assist with future work on the strategy. Work on the strategy will continue after the Autumn conference as the overall College strategy develops. The people strategy will develop alongside this piece of work to ensure they are interlinked.

***The report was noted.***

**PR/067 Workforce Planning Update**

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

The Chair commented that the report gave her assurance that regular discussions are taking place to ensure that resource is deployed effectively.

***The report was noted.***

**PR/068 Strategic Risk Register**

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

PC highlighted that the full register has been shared with the committee rather than only the risks associated with the committee, to give members a comprehensive oversight of risk and an understanding of how it fit into the overall risk matrix.

The Chair highlighted that the committee currently has responsibility for one item which is felt to be a low risk. Members were asked whether they felt this to be appropriate or if there were any additional items they thought should be considered. LCJ, as newer member of the committee indicated that as an initial thought, she felt

the register to be very light in terms of people risks however she indicated that she may need to develop her understanding having only recently joined the Board.

DA outlined that the current risk register has been in place for the last year and considers risk arising over this period. The Executive Team have primarily looked at mitigations and ratings for the risks currently included. It was acknowledged that there is a need to revisit the risk strategy and the overall risk framework. The College has recently appointed new internal auditors who have committed to work with the team on the risk framework. The internal auditors will undertake a formal review of the register and have also indicated that they will facilitate a training session for governors on risk appetite. There is a plan to review the risk framework and appetite considering how this permeates through the organisation, as part of a risk planning process. It is an item high on the executive's agenda and the register is being taken to all committees who are being asked to consider their own risks whilst having oversight of other areas. SS highlighted the point made about appetite for risk and indicated that this was also coming through strongly in discussions with governors. The Chair suggested that it might be useful to have a broader discussion with other Board members. DA advised that he envisioned that the Board will have a separate session on risk in the future and to look at Board appetite to risk generally. This will be considered as part of the overall Board training plan for the year.

***The report was noted.***

**PR/069 Annual Schedule of Business 2021/22**

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

The Chair asked members whether there were any specific areas that they felt were missing from the proposed schedule. LCJ indicated that she would review the schedule outside of the meeting. SS suggested that the People and OD strategy should be added as a standing item to allow the committee to receive regular updates.

*Action: People and OD Strategy to be added as a standing agenda item to future meetings.*

***The report was noted.***

**PR/070 Aspire Demonstration and Update**

It was agreed that this item would be deferred to a future meeting.

*Nadine Hudspeth, Darren Heathcote, Sara Reay and Suzanne Clark left the meeting at 1.50pm*

**PR/071 ACAS / Employment Tribunal Update**

A verbal update was given by the Head of People and Organisational Development.

**THIS ITEM IS CONFIDENTIAL AND NOT FOR PUBLICATION.**

***The report was noted.***

**PR/072 Any Other Business**

There was none.

**PR/073 Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Thursday 18 November 2021 at 12.00pm.