



PEOPLE AND REMUNERATION COMMITTEE – MAIN MINUTES

Monday 17 October 2022

| Governors | Type | Initials | Attendance | Apologies |
|-----------------------|--|----------|------------|-----------|
| Claire-Jane Rewcastle | Chair of Committee – Independent Governor | CJ | X | |
| Sarah Stewart | Committee Member – Independent Governor | SS | X | |
| David Alexander | Committee Member – Principal / CEO <i>Committee Member for People items only.</i> | DA | X | |
| Lisa Crichton-Jones | Committee Member – Independent Governor | LCJ | X*^ | |
| Attendees | | | | |
| Ivan Jepson | Director of Business Development and Innovation | IJ | X^ | |
| Julie Skinner | HR Strategic Consultant | JS | X*^ | |
| Sara Reay | Senior People and Organisational Development Business Partner | SR | X^ | |
| Emma Moody | Clerk - WBD | EM | X^ | |
| Nicola Taylor | Director of Governance & Compliance / Clerk | NT | X | |

*Attended virtually / ^Attended for part of the meeting.

PR/120 1. Chair's Welcome, Apologies and Conflict of Interest

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. There were no apologies however it was noted that LCJ needed to leave at 1pm.

The Committee agreed that the meeting was quorate.

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/121 2. Minutes of the People and Remuneration Committee meeting dated 21 June 2022

The minutes of the meeting on 21 June 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

PR/122 3. Matters Arising

The action log was noted. NT confirmed that the Terms of Reference had been updated relating to the co-option of Board Members to assist with quoracy where required. EM noted that it was agreed at the June 2022 meeting that a more thorough review of the Committee remit would take place within the current academic year.

The update was noted.

PR/123 4. Core People Key Performance Indicators

The report was presented by JS and the following was noted:

- Trend analysis had been included to help identify any pattern in the data.
- Headline figures had been included with supporting context.
- KPIs would link to the Strategic Plan going forward, using measurable outcomes to monitor performance.

JS noted that data relating to absence / turnover could be placed in the HR annual report going forward, with the Committee having the ability to also consider this throughout the year and highlight any areas for discussion.

The Committee discussed the following:

- The sufficiency of HR IT systems and associated HR processes, seeking assurance that relevant data would be captured going forward. JS confirmed that the data for the proposed measurable outcomes was available.
- The ability to benchmark against other organisations, not just specific to Colleges. It was agreed that not all comparator colleges would be a worthy benchmarking source, and that the AoC data in relation to turnover and absence was sometimes provided some time after a year had ended, and therefore on occasion may not be meaningful.
- The need to understand the outcomes and benchmarks Gateshead College were aspiring to achieve, and how these would be measured.
- The need to understand the shape and demographics of the workforce to understand succession planning, links with the Curriculum Strategy and pay costs.
- The focus of KPIs being the biggest challenges relating to people, with a suggestion of the following key areas:
 - Recruitment and retention
 - Wellbeing
 - Development
 - Reward
- The need to ensure consistency of KPIs across all areas of the College by the Board in its oversight role.

The Committee queried the following:

- Plans to address absence figures – IJ confirmed that there had been an increase in cases relating to mental health arising from the period since covid restrictions had ended, and noted the College had implemented initiatives to ensure a proactive approach, such as recruiting mental health champions and

hosting events to encourage positive mental health. SR also suggested that the increase in figures may relate to staff feeling more open to having conversations about their mental health, evidencing a positive culture for staff. SR confirmed that HR business partners continued to work with line managers on a case by case basis.

- Next steps – it was agreed that the 4 areas of Recruitment & Retention, Wellbeing, Development and Reward would be considered further in terms of creating specific KPIs with approval being sought at the December 2022 Committee.

Action: Approval of Committee KPIs to be approved at the December 2022 meeting.

The report was noted.

PR/124 5. Review of Staff Engagement Survey

A presentation was shared by IJ which covered the following:

- The survey had been issued to staff which included 32 questions covering areas of personal development, engagement, wellbeing, workload, mental health and equality.
- There were 275 responses compared to 210 the previous year, which represented a 54% response rate compared to 44% in 2021. This included all Gateshead College staff, including casual and fixed term workers.
- There were a number of free text questions which had resulted in the following common repeated themes: pay, resource, work life balance, friendly working environment, mental health, wellbeing.
- A summary of the responses (including the different response rates per campus).
- Next steps included presenting the headline results to staff; IJ was due to meet with the College future leaders' group to consider the outcomes and how best to engage with these, and further review by the College Executive Team to consider particular areas where further understanding was required around the outcomes scoring. This information would then be used to create suggestions / proposals with associated actions. IJ confirmed that he would have emerging themes for the December 2022 meeting.

Action: IJ to provide emerging themes from staff engagement survey deep dives at the December 2022 meeting.

The Committee discussed the following:

- The importance of ensuring a continuum of conversation through an overall staff engagement process and not relying only on an annual focus.
- The difference in responses across the different campuses and the challenges associated with having a number of different campuses.
- The need to be able to look at trends over a number of years.
- The regularity of the survey, noting that not all improvements would be imminent or see immediate impact.
- Linkage with the overall engagement strategy, DA confirmed that this would be considered further following the Director of People and OD taking up post in January 2023.

The Committee queried the following:

- Comparative response rates – JS expressed the view that that the survey response figure of 54% could be improved going forward. The Committee **agreed** that it would be good to know the response rate by campus.
Action: IJ to provide to response rate per campus at the December 2022 meeting.
- Quick wins – DA confirmed that comments relating to staff not being able to heat food on campus had been acted upon where possible, and conversations were ongoing regarding the ability to provide warm spaces (including food) for students and staff. The College were also considering how they might be able to work with the college catering provider, Aramark, regarding the cost of College food.
 - EM confirmed that she would look into the ability of the Foundation to assist with the provision of food.

The report was noted.

PR/125 6. Aspire Update

The report was presented by IJ and the following was noted:

- There was an overall response rate of 74%.
- This meant there were colleagues who hadn't yet undertaken a review with their line manager and this was undergoing review by HR in order to gain an understanding of how this might be improved going forward. IJ noted that this response rate had a correlation to the responses of the Staff Engagement Survey relating to Aspire, whereby staff felt it could be improved.

The Committee was advised that that the Aspire process would be reviewed going forward to consider how it may best link to the new College strategic plan and the operational planning process.

The report was noted.

PR/126 7. Renewal of Occupational Health Contract

The report was presented by IJ and the following was noted:

- The current contract was coming to an end and the supplier was unable to offer a renewal. The organisation had confirmed that they would retain some overlap cover until a new provider was sought.
- The College had agreed to move to an alternative organisation which offered a broader range of services. The change in provider would take place in November 2022.
- Work would be undertaken with the new provider relating to mental health to provide a more proactive approach.

The Committee queried the following:

- The process of due diligence – IJ confirmed that he had spoken with a number of customers currently working with the proposed new supplier to seek their feedback and was content with the quality of the OH provider.
- The purpose of the paper being brought to the Committee – DA confirmed that the paper was brought for information only, to keep the Committee updated on the College approach to OH and managing absence.

The Committee **sought assurance** that the following improvements would be made:

- The quality of support given to staff who use the service.
- The quality of the reports provided.

It was noted that both areas were thought to improve with the new system.

The report was noted, with the Committee specifically noting the change in provider.

LCJ left the meeting.

PR/127 8. Proposal for Contract Extension

The report was presented by IJ and the following was noted:

- The College had been using Itrent for the past 14 years, and noted the rarity to change either HR, payroll, MIS or finance systems.
- The current contract was due to expire in December 2022, resulting in the option to move to an alternative system or extend the contract with the current provider. IJ noted that the provider was the sole supplier of Itrent and offered a minimum contract term of 3 years.
- The College had recently had the assistance of an Itrent consultant working on a number of areas to assist with compliance.
- The new proposed contract would include the advantage of additional functionality and the move to a cloud-based system which would result in the College no longer needing to host data on its own servers and thus streamlining updates.
- Additional modules included;
 - Onboarding of staff, meaning that staff could complete new starter documentation and mandatory training ahead of commencing their employment, creating a more streamlined experience and assisting with internal systems.
 - Survey builder, resulting in the removal of some paper processes.
 - Learner Management, which would prevent the manual input of training records from one system to another.
- There was a slight increase in costs due to the additional modules and the move to the cloud-based system, and there was also a one-off fee for the transfer of data to the cloud-based system.
- The College Financial Regulations stated that any contract with a value of under £250,000 could be approved by the Principal and Chief Executive, but there was also a requirement for any tender over £100,000 to be subject to three quotes. However, it was also stated that, in the case of a good or service only being available from one supplier a written justification must be prepared and approved by the Deputy Principal Finance and Resources. As the College had agreed to remain with Itrent, and there was only a single supplier, the Committee were being asked to recommend that the Board approve the contract extension at its meeting on 19 October 2022.

The Committee **noted** that they were pleased to hear that the system was being utilised better, and **queried** as to whether there was sufficient support and capacity within HR to develop it further. SR confirmed that there was.

It was confirmed that the new Director of HR & OD was familiar with the current system, and the Committee **sought assurance** that the new appointee would be involved in any future decisions to move to a new system. It was confirmed that this would be the case.

The report was noted, and the Committee endorsed the recommendation of the contract extension which would be submitted to the Board for overall approval.

PR/128 9. Strategic Risk Register

A verbal update was given by IJ and the following was noted:

- The College were in the process of updating and revising the strategic Risk Register so that it aligned to the new strategic plan, with the number of overall risks being reduced.
- All new / revised risks would be underpinned by operational risk registers.
- The risks pertinent to the Committee remained, however the transition from the old format of the register to the new format remained a work in progress which would be complete by the next meeting cycle, once the Audit Committee meeting in November considered this.

IJ also noted that there had been challenges with recruitment in some areas, however overall no areas of concern. IJ noted the importance of organisational culture when seeking to appoint to posts. SR noted the work being undertaken in recruiting people from industry to teaching within the college.

The Committee queried the following:

- Any areas where the College were struggling to recruit – IJ confirmed that the area of Construction remained a challenge and that the HR teams were considering different approaches to recruitment, however there were not currently concerns as posts were being filled. SR noted that there had been historical challenges with trade areas however confirmed it had been more difficult this year. IJ reassured the Committee that the College were still able to deliver high quality learning and that the area for recruitment remained an area of focus.

The report was noted.

PR/129 10. Mandatory Training Update

The report was presented by JS and the following was noted:

- A new system of mandatory training had been in place since the summer with all staff, which included a more focussed package of essential training with a reduction in the number of hours required to complete this. JS confirmed that this had been well received by staff and completion rates were high to date.

The Committee agreed for this item to no longer be a standing agenda item, and instead only be highlighted where there were issues.

DA confirmed that the Executive Team would continue to monitor this.

The report was noted.

SR and JS left the meeting.

Separation of meeting – DA in attendance as an attendee only from this point forward.

PR/130 11. Employment Tribunal Case Update

Covered under a confidential minute.

The report was noted.

PR/131 12. Director of People OD Appointment and HR Staff Update

A verbal update was provided by DA and the following was noted:

- The new Director of HR & OD was due to start in January 2023. They had attended the Governors Dinner on 5th October 2022 and had met with College staff.

The Committee **noted** that the appointment would assist with capacity and the progression of key plans.

Remainder of this item covered under a confidential minute.

The report was noted.

PR/132 13. Update on 2022/2023 Pay Discussions

Covered under a confidential minute

The report was noted.

IJ left the meeting.

PR/133 14. 2021/22 and 2022/23 Senior Postholder Objectives

Covered under a confidential minute

The report was approved.

PR/134 15. Any Other Business

There was no business highlighted.

PR/135 16. Date of Next Meeting

1st December 2022 at 12pm.