

SOUTH WEST COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of a meeting of the **Staffing Committee**
held on Wednesday 29 March 2023 at 9.00 am
via Microsoft Teams

- PRESENT:** Mr Brian Ingram
Mrs Sandra Isherwood
Ms Alana Jones Campbell (Committee Chair)
Mrs Patricia McCaffrey
Ms Celine McCartan
Ms Anne McCleary (*from item 4.1*)
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Dr Jill Cush, Deputy Chief Executive
Mrs Camilla James, Head of People and Culture
Mrs Fiona McCauley, Secretary to the Governing Body
- APOLOGIES:** Mrs Gillian McDowell

1.0 APOLOGIES

Apologies were tendered on behalf of Mrs McDowell.

2.0 CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS

Dr Cush noted the reference to her resignation in the Staff Resource Report.

3.0 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 03 Minutes of the Staffing Committee Meeting held on Wednesday 1 February 2023.

There were no matters arising.

4.0 STRATEGIC PLANNING

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 04 Draft People Plan.

4.1 Draft People Plan

Ms McCartan and Mrs James introduced the draft People Plan in paper 04, making members aware of its draft nature, of the consultations undertaken to date and of its anticipated launch in June 2023.

Members commented favourably on the draft People Plan presented. In response to questions and comments, management then acknowledged the aspirational nature of the plan, confirmed that measures of success will be identified for each of the tasks listed which will aid monitoring of the embedding of themes, noted that tasks will be prioritized and scheduled over the 2023 to 2025 period and undertook to review the document through a trauma informed lens. Any further feedback from members was

welcomed and it was noted that a revised People Plan incorporating feedback from consultations will be brought to the 31 May 2023 Staffing Committee meeting.

Ms McCleary joined the meeting during the above discussion.

4.2 Update on Change Programme

Ms McCartan updated the Committee on the work of the Change Team under its four strands of Governance, Structure, Communications and Culture. She highlighted the strengthened governance through the revision of committee Terms of Reference, the ongoing communications with staff, the consultations undertaken and feedback received on the management realignment options and the activities organized through the Culture & Wellbeing Working Group. She also referenced the letter received from the Permanent Secretary of DfE expressing his confidence in the College's capacity to progress the change programme internally.

In response to a comment on the personal impact of the significant volume of work undertaken by the Chief Executive, Ms McCartan noted the positive effect that a fully resourced Senior Management Team will have on relieving pressures.

4.3 Industrial Relations

Referring to the letter received from the University & College Union (UCU) providing notification of enhanced action short of strike, Ms McCartan outlined the challenges faced by colleges from DfE's non-approval of the 2021/22 lecturers' pay award business case and detailed the background to the matter.

The potential for a further escalation of industrial action affecting college operations and the placement of the issue on the Corporate Risk Register was reported.

The divergence between the pay of college lecturers, university lecturers and school teachers was highlighted, as was the disparity in pay awards between lecturing and support staff. Management undertook to circulate an analysis of academic and support staff pay scales to illustrate this disparity.

The Committee discussed the consequences of the pay award issue in terms of staff, students and budgets as well as the consequences of non-approval of the pay award business case in terms of potential legal and industrial action and the inability of the sector to deliver on its responsibilities under the Skills for a 10X Economy Strategy.

It was noted that strong representations have been made to DfE and it was suggested that the consequences of non-approval of the pay award business case should be reinforced. Members offered to provide support to the sector in making further representations to DfE should the matter remain unresolved.

4.4 Difficult to Recruit Posts

Mrs James reminded the meeting of previous discussions regarding difficult to recruit posts, particularly in the Engineering discipline. She reported some progress evidenced through the recruitment of two new Engineering lecturers but acknowledged the continuing challenge in this area exacerbated by the divergence between sectoral and industry salaries. She advised that applications to the Part-Time Lecturing Register will now remain open throughout the year and that the part-time lecturing opportunities were promoted to Engineering firms at the recent Get Engineering event.

5.0 **MANAGEMENT REPORT**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 05 Management Report
- Paper 05.01 Health, Safety & Wellbeing Report
- Paper 05.02 Staff Resource Report
- Paper 05.03 Fixed Term Contracts Report
- Paper 05.04 Stress Prevention and Management Policy
- Paper 05.05 Recruitment & Selection Policy
- Paper 05.06 The FE NI Threshold Scheme Handbook.

5.1 **Health, Safety & Wellbeing**

Ref: Management Report Section 1.0 and Paper 05.01

In response to a questions from members, management provided assurances on the sufficiency of the number of staff trained as Fire Marshalls; confirmed that none of the minor injuries reported have led to personal injury compensation claims; and commented on the scope for a review of First Aiders.

5.2 **Equality**

Ref: Management Report Section 2.0

The update provided on Equality was noted by the Committee.

5.3 **Human Resources**

5.3.1 **Human Resources Team Structure**

Mrs James updated the Committee on the progress made in rebuilding the Human Resources (HR) team and noted the continuing resourcing challenges.

With reference to the Staff Resource Report she drew attention to the proposal to dedicate a HR Advisor to the implementation of the sectoral HR Information System project as well as to the proposal to redefine and merge the vacant Equality Officer and HR Officer positions to create a single Band 5 HR and Equality Officer post.

Referring to the resourcing challenges, Ms McCartan acknowledged Mrs James' leadership of the HR team with limited resources.

5.3.1 **Appointments**

Ref: Management Report Section 3.1 and Paper 05.02

AGREED: that the appointments listed in paper 05.02 be ratified by the Chair of the Governing Body on behalf of the Governing Body.

5.3.2 **Staff Requests**

Ref: Management Report Section 3.1 and Paper 05.02

AGREED: that the staff requests listed in paper 05.02 be approved by the Chair of the Governing Body on behalf of the Governing Body.

5.3.3 **Other Resourcing Issues**

Ref: Management Report Section 3.1 and Paper 05.02

AGREED: that the Maternity Leaves, Resignations, Retirements, Redeployments and Career Break Extension listed in paper 05.02 be noted / supported as appropriate.

5.3.4 Fixed Term Contracts

Ref: Management Report Section 3.1 and Paper 05.03

Whilst acknowledging the challenging recruitment environment and the employment rights accrued by some staff working under fixed term contracts, the Committee raised concerns regarding the risk associated with offering permanent contracts to these employees and requested that legal advice is sought on this matter with a view to developing a policy to provide a formal framework for such proposals.

In response to queries and comments from members, the circumstances of a number of the fixed-term contract recommendations were outlined and the current practice of advertising fixed-term posts with a scope for permanency was highlighted.

It was then agreed that contracts are extended for a minimum period whilst a review of fixed term contract recommendations is undertaken informed by the legal advice requested.

AGREED:

- **that legal advice is sought on the risk of offering permanent contracts to staff employed under fixed term contracts;**
- **that contracts are extended for a minimum period; and**
- **that a revised Fixed Term Contracts Report is presented to the Committee informed by the legal advice requested.**

5.3.5 Absence Management

Ref: Management Report Section 3.2

Mrs James reported on the January 2023 and February 2023 absence rates noting the reduction in the rates recorded in the September to December 2022 period.

5.4 Workforce Development

Ref: Management Report Section 4.0

Mrs James drew attention to the update provided on the workforce development activities undertaken in February and March 2023 as well as to the training proposed in the forthcoming period to meet statutory obligations and best practice.

5.5 Policy Reviews

Ref: Management Report Sections 5.1 & 6.0 and Papers 05.04 & 05.05

In response to queries from members, it was noted that the Stress Management & Prevention Policy had been reviewed for compliance purposes that that a further comprehensive refresh will be undertaken through a trauma informed lens as part of the People Plan.

AGREED: that the Stress Management & Prevention Policy and the Recruitment & Selection Policy be recommended to the Governing Body for approval.

5.6 Other

Ref: Management Report Sections 5.2 & 5.3

Members were advised of an error resulting in the under-payment of First Aid allowances in recent years and agreed that arrangements should be made for back payment of allowance owed and adjustment of the payment amount going forward.

AGREED: that arrangements are made for back payment of First Aid allowance owed and adjustment of the payment amount going forward.

6.0 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS

In response to a comment on the Committee's Programme of Business, it was agreed that the Programme of Business is reviewed to streamline reporting.

7.0 REVIEW OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 07 List of Outstanding Actions.

A review of the actions contained within paper 07 was undertaken during which it was noted that all actions had been addressed. A revised list of outstanding actions is contained within Appendix A.

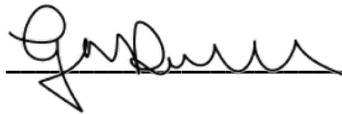
8.0 REFLECTION ON EFFECTIVENESS OF MEETING

Members commented favourably on the pace of the meeting.

The meeting went into confidential session.

**CONFIRMED AND ADOPTED BY THE GOVERNING BODY AT A MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY
26 APRIL 2023**

VICE CHAIR



DATE 26/04/2023

SUMMARY OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

Meeting Date	Minute Ref	Action
29/03/2023	4.3	Analysis of academic and support staff paycales to be circulated.
29/03/2023	7.0	Programme of Business to be reviewed to streamline reporting.