

**The College of West Anglia
MINUTES OF EMPLOYMENT POLICY COMMITTEE
14 October 2009 – 8.30 am Boardroom**

Present:	Derek Stringer	Chair
	Di Atkinson	
	Kate Barnett	
	Sharon Cambridge	
	Sandy Willatt	
	David Pomfret	Principal
Attending:	Hilary Reid	Clerk to the Corporation
	Nicky Rowland	Head of Human Resources
	Danny Huddleston	Health and Safety Officer (part)

1 Apologies

None - all members present.

2 Minutes of last Meeting –17 June 2009

The Minutes of the meeting of 17 June 2009 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

3 Matters Arising

(i) Page 1 item 3(i) Teacher Education/Qualification

The Principal explained that he was not in a position to report back on teacher education/qualification benchmark data.

(ii) Page 3 item 6 Grievances

The feedback as to whether there were themes arising from grievances would be brought to the next meeting.

(iii) Page 3 item 6 Staffing Profile

The error in the benchmark data had been corrected.

(iv) Page 4 item 8 Health and Safety Update

- (1) The Head of Human Resources advised that formal training on project management and established systems was being developed.
- (2) The Principal reported discussions with the Head of Organisational Development and Quality regarding the inclusion of health and safety processes in the BSQI annual review. It was noted that the H&S audits were separate from BSQI because of the need for specific expertise and were undertaken by the College's Health and Safety Officers. He confirmed that H&S processes were being addressed across the College.

(v) **Page 5 item 9 Succession Planning for Key Posts**

The review following restructure to identify where succession planning might be most critical would be reported to a future meeting.

4 Appointment of Vice Chair

The Clerk invited nominations for the position of Vice Chair from within the membership of the Committee.

Sandy Willatt proposed Sharon Cambridge, seconded by Di Atkinson.

There being no other nominations, **Sharon Cambridge was duly appointed Vice Chair of the Employment Policy Committee for a further year.**

5 Restructure - Update

The Principal presented a report to update members on the implementation of the new structure and the scale of the impact on individuals within the College. He explained that in excess of 80 posts were at risk as a result of restructure, 29 staff took voluntary redundancy, 6 staff were made compulsorily redundant and the remainder were assimilated into the new structure.

Dialogue with the Unions was on-going. UCU had been particularly concerned about the re-structure process and remained so in relation to further savings around curriculum delivery. Staff concerns about the next stage were being recognised and it was hoped that, by November, the Principal would be in a position to communicate more fully with staff.

From discussion the following comments were noted:

- Because of pre-planning, no classes had closed as a result of the imposition of a minimum class size of 15
- There was flexibility, for example, the new Equine Foundation Degree course at Milton was running with 14
- UCU attention was now being focused on larger classes operating at 25+ students
- The outcome of the UCU ballot was for industrial action short of a strike. Many concerns were around teaching large numbers in inappropriate accommodation

The Principal continued his report. He advised that costs were within the budget identified for re-structure and had been met in last year's budget. Further, that coaching and management development proposals were being planned for the critical posts within the new structure.

Governors commended the work of the Head of Human Resources and the team in the Department for their commitment to, and management of, the heavy additional workload the re-structure had created. The Principal reiterated the views of the governors adding that positive feedback had been received from staff closely affected by the restructure.

The current position was noted.

Danny Huddleston joined the meeting at 9.05 am

6 Health and Safety Activity for June 2009 to September 2009

The Head of Human Resources presented the report and Action Plan circulated with the agenda, the contents of which were noted.

The Health and Safety Officer reported the huge amount of activity during the period June to September 2009, some of which had resulted from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigation into the serious accident in June. The HSE were looking at everything across College sites and most recently had queried stress amongst the workforce. The HSE were now arranging for their structural engineers to attend.

The Committee were advised of the likelihood of a period of 2/3 years of involvement by the HSE.

The LSC had continued to be regularly briefed by the Principal.

Comments from discussion were noted as follows:

- HSE demands will impact on the decisions to be taken on the estates strategic plan
- The action plan was being reviewed on a weekly basis and progress was being audited by the Head of Organisational Development and Quality
- The condition of 'C' Block at Isle and the Technology Block in King's Lynn was of serious concern
- The new off-site facilities had been subject to rigorous health and safety checks
- Faculty staff had done an excellent job in keeping students engaged whilst unable to undertake practical work off-site
- Swine flu figures were comparable to flu figures in the same period in 2008
- Orchard Hall was condemned as a building. Currently all windows were being boarded up
- Health and Safety officers were working closely with Property Services - procedures were being developed, training had been increased and there was close monitoring of specific issues.

The report was noted.

Danny Huddleston left the meeting at 9.45 am.

7 Summary of Joint Negotiating Committee Meetings and Activities

The Principal presented the annual summary of JNC meetings and activities. He reported that the most significant actions discussed with all 3 trade unions were around the restructure. He had continued to hold a planning half-day with the unions looking at the direction of the College and the wider environment. The session was an opportunity to introduce the concern about the future budget and to raise concerns about future actions.

ACM in particular had been very understanding during re-structure. They had focused on what the college was going to do to support their members pre and post re-structure. Although there was no permanent presence at King's Lynn, there was a strong relationship with the Regional Officer of Unison and regular dialogue.

The Principal advised that a recent ballot for industrial action by UCU was of significant disappointment to both himself and the Head of HR. Looking at the information provided by UCU on the outcome, only 35% of their membership took part in the ballot with only 20 people looking for strike action (representing 13.6% of their membership or 3.8% of the academic workforce). The Head of HR advised that this indicated a small number of individuals who were driving the action and it is believed that these are likely to be people who took exception to decisions made during restructure.

The Principal confirmed that the relationships with UCU remained open and constructive.

The report was noted.

8 Update on Sickness Absence

The Head of Human Resource presented a report to update the Committee on sickness absence monitoring. She highlighted the following points:

- This was the first year of a year-on-year comparison
- Short-term absence overall had increased year on year from 3.66 days to 4.85 days per person
- The top three areas all showed more than 70% of their absence to be long term
- Admin and SMT, HR and Finance had no long term absence
- The average number of days lost at 12.23 remained high compared with 9 in the public sector and 7 in education and had only fallen marginally from the previous year.

The Head of Human Resources concluded her report by explaining the new Sickness Policy and Procedure which came into force on 1 October, an outline of which was attached to the report. It was to be applied as robustly as possible. All line managers had been provided with a profile of their staff and the policy was being rolled out across the College. The policy was to be implemented more strongly in the New Year.

Governors commented that there was not enough in the policy about "being missed" and were advised that this was a key message in the detail of the full policy document.

In conclusion, the Head of Human Resources advised that only UCU had failed to support the Policy, withdrawing from a commitment to it at the last minute.

Governors commended the Policy.

9 Any Other Business

None.

10 Chair's items for briefing to Corporation

- Health and Safety versus planned maintenance
- UCU response to restructure
- Sickness absence Policy

11 Date and time of next meeting

Wednesday, 24 March 2010 at 8.30 am.

The meeting closed at 10.15 am