

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

Present:	Derek Stringer	Chair
	Kate Barnett	
	Sharon Cambridge	
	Sandy Willatt	
	David Pomfret	Principal
Attending:	Hilary Reid	Clerk to the Corporation
	Danny Huddleston	Health and Safety Officer (part)

1 Apologies

None received.

2 Minutes of last Meeting – 11 February 2009

The Minutes of the meeting of 11 February 2009 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

3 Matters Arising

(i) Page 3 item 5 Teacher Education/Qualification

The benchmark data remained outstanding and would be brought to a future meeting. Initial teacher training action was on-going.

4 Restructure - Update

The Principal provided a verbal report to update members on the restructure process. The revised proposals had been approved by the Board on 5 June 2009 and were being implemented.

Meetings had been held with all individuals whose posts were affected by the proposals, attended by a member from SMT and the HR team. A meeting with the Unions followed and the final document was released to all staff at lunchtime on 10 June. A series of briefings were currently being arranged across all campuses to communicate further with staff around the detail and main changes arising as a result of feedback to the consultation.

The Principal explained the next stages for staff affected by the changes and the way in which posts would be filled. He advised that he would not be involved in the selection and recruitment processes to enable him to consider any appeals that may arise.

The number of people requesting early retirement/voluntary redundancy would be known by close of business on 19 June. There was a net gap of 20-25 posts.

Staff were concerned, disappointed and anxious. ACM had observed that, for some of its members, the outcome from consultation had been worse than the original proposal. Some of the concerns raised by staff were aired for information. In the main, there was an acceptance of the process and acknowledgement of the need to move forward.

The current position was noted.

5 Annual Pay Settlement

The Principal presented a report to support members' consideration of the annual review of pay levels for staff. He reminded the Committee of the role of the AoC in national negotiations and of the College's past practice. Further, of the expectation set out in the restructure proposals of a 0% increase for staff.

The AoC had offered 1% for 2009/10, which unions had rejected. A significant number of colleges were proposing not to award a pay increase, although some would take up the AoC recommended offer.

Early indications had been given to local unions about the expected outcomes following consideration of the budget and the huge challenge to achieve a break-even position.

Derek Stringer proposed, seconded by Sharon Cambridge, 0% to all staff from 1 August 2009. Agreed.

6 Annual Report: Recruitment/Staffing Profile/Sickness Absence Analysis/ Equal Opportunities Monitoring

The Principal presented the Annual Report on behalf of the Head of Human Resources. The following key points were noted:

- Recruitment had increased during the period to December 2008, but from January 2009 the activity level had declined markedly
- Staff turnover had reduced
- There were pockets of concern within the age staffing profile. The restructure process could impact on these but there were teams of staff with similar ages who could leave around the same time. Management were exploring options to address these circumstances.
- Sickness/absence remained a key issue for the College. A revised sickness policy had been discussed with the unions. Two unions were in agreement. A third, UCU, had rejected it. The College was to impose the policy on the basis that it had been agreed by the two other unions. Training was to be undertaken by managers shortly.

The Faculty of Foundation and Skills for life had averaged 20 days sickness/absence per member of staff and this was being challenged.

Long-term sickness/absence was problematic. HR closely monitored it and took a central role in dealing with the individuals concerned. The update on detailed absence figures over the past 12 months noted in the report "to follow" would be forwarded by the Head of HR to members of the Committee. **Action: NR**

The Principal advised that he was offering open appointments for staff to share matters of concern. Questions and comments were invited and noted as follows:

- The Committee welcomed the return of the "Principal's surgery".
- Turnover remained high for the period. The statistics would be affected by restructure and the future report would need to define what was annual and what was as a result of the restructure.
- Was there a theme to the grievances raised? A review of the process was being considered. Details of any links within the grievances would be brought back to the Committee. **Action: DP**
- Do the AoC provide benchmark data? If so, could the Committee receive it? **Action: DP/NR**
- There was an error noted in the data for mixed white/black Caribbean recruitment. **Action: NR**

The report was noted.

7 Single Equality and Diversity Policy

The Principal presented the Single Equality and Diversity Policy on behalf of the Executive Director Customer Services and Cambridgeshire Liaison. He noted the only change to the policy had been the inclusion of community cohesion.

Sandy Willatt proposed, seconded by Derek Stringer, that the Single Equality and Diversity Policy be approved and recommended to Corporation for adoption. Agreed.

Danny Huddleston joined the meeting at 9.30 am.

8 Health and Safety Update

The Health and Safety Officer presented a report for the period September 2008 to June 2009. He advised that there had been a small drop in accidents and incidents and that RIDDOR accidents were currently at the same level as the previous year. The largest cause of accidents had been slips, trips and falls.

The report highlighted health and safety team activities; fire activations; investigations; and training. In particular, the Health and Safety Team had focussed on the areas of higher risk. In excess of 350 risk assessments had been carried out, including off site visits and WBL placements.

Slips, trips and falls remained difficult to target. The quality of the estate had deteriorated and outcomes would remain uncertain in spite of increased spending. These areas would continue to be the highest risk areas.

Staff accidents were reducing. There had been one incident of fire at Wisbech due to degradation of the estate.

Two HSE inspections had been undertaken in Hospitality and of management systems at Milton.

The next Health and Safety Audit was planned for Property Services in November 2009.

Referrals of students were increasing and needs were becoming more complex. A high level of overstretch for the H&S team was anticipated.

Governors' comments on the report were noted, as follows:

- Concern that the H&S team were not getting involved at an early stage of planning departmental projects and changes in order to ensure a safe working area.

The H&SO provided assurance that there had been some improvement. A lack of project management skills, a lack of ownership and/or reconciliation with budgets were highlighted as being problematic.

- Recognition that project management skills needed to be developed further and that planning the process in advance was key.

The Principal agreed to discuss with the Head of Organisational Development and Quality adding in to the BSQI annual review the health and safety processes. Governors requested feedback on this matter for the next meeting. **Action: DP**

- Recognition of the positive impact of the continuing work of the H&S team.

Serious Health and Safety Incident

Full details of the incident which had occurred on the King's Lynn Campus on 12 June 2009 were disclosed by the Health and Safety Officer and considered by the Committee.

The Principal advised that insurers had been informed and legal advisers involved.

Advice for governors was requested.

Governors felt that support should be sought from the LSC.

Derek Stringer proposed, seconded by Sharon Cambridge, that, should certain events unfold which lead senior managers and/or the management team to incur legal fees, this meeting recommends to Corporation that support and appropriate financial aid be provided. Agreed unanimously.

The Principal confirmed that the Senior Management Team, at its next meeting, would be discussing a contingency arrangement for the Faculties affected on the King's Lynn campus.

Governors noted the current position and expressed a view that appropriate action was being taken and that all proper steps were being, and would continue to be, taken.

Governors' appreciation of the Health and Safety Officer's professionalism and support was noted.

Danny Huddleston left the meeting at 11.05 am.

9 Succession Planning for Key Posts

On behalf of the Audit Committee, the Clerk presented a report referring the matter of succession planning for key posts for consideration by Employment Policy Committee.

The issue had arisen from discussion of a report by the Executive Director of Finance and College Services addressing a number of points, including staffing/recruitment difficulties and MIS problems.

The Principal advised governors that there was no formal succession planning process in place. He felt it was important to avoid a position where there was limited expertise in a particular area and the College needed to put in place a plan to make sure that the MIS problems did not happen again.

The Principal agreed to undertake a review following restructure to develop an age profile across Faculties and Departments in order to identify areas at risk and to determine, with the Head of Human Resources, where succession planning might be most critical. He would report back to the next meeting.

Action: DP/NR

10 Appointments/Resignations – Staff Numbers

The Principal referred governors to the statistical report from the Head of Human Resources. He commented that the current position was not reflected in the data and that, post restructure, the process would be repeated to provide a more accurate picture.

Noted.

11 Any Other Business

None.

12 Chair's items for briefing to Corporation

- Annual pay settlement
- Recommend Single Equality and Diversity Policy
- Succession Planning feedback

13 Date and time of next meeting

Wednesday, 14 October 2009 at 8.30 am.

The meeting closed at 11.30 am