

## HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date	5 February 2019	Time	10.00
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Venue	Boardroom, 5 floor, Station Plaza, Hastings
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Chair	Peggy Hall
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**Membership:** Peggy Hall (Chair), Steve Baldry, Clive Cooke (CEO); Simon Hubbard, Robert Mee, Joanne Rogers

**In attendance:** Tim Hulme (Executive Director Resources and Organisational Development), Melanie Price (Director of HR and Organisational Development)

**Apologies:** Simon Hubbard

	Item	Action
1)	<p><b>Apologies</b> Apologies were received from Simon Hubbard.</p> <p>Peggy Hall informed the Committee that some matters that had been scheduled for this meeting will be covered at an extraordinary meeting in May 2019:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Process for obtaining the views of staff and students on matters for which the Board is responsible</li> <li>• HR Strategy</li> <li>• Staff appraisal and development report – has been replaced by PMRS process</li> <li>• Workforce profile</li> <li>• Gender and diversity</li> <li>• Pay award update</li> </ul> <p>Marie Sangster, support staff member, has agreed to join the Committee and will attend the next meeting.</p>	Dir Gov
2)	<p><b>Declarations of Interest</b> There were none.</p>	
3)	<p><b>Minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2018</b></p> <p><b>Page 7.</b> Internal communication plan has now been launched and a report will be brought to the next meeting. Governors asked how staff are consulted on this. Clive Cooke explained that the plan is being developed by the SLT and managers, with the marketing team. The plan is developed on a model which has seven strands to ensure the basics are in place in order that further developments have firm foundations.</p>	Tim Hulme

	<b>AGREED: THE COMMITTEE AGREED THAT THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 27 NOVEMBER 2018 WERE A TRUE AND ACCURATE RECORD.</b>	
4)	<b>Matters arising</b> There were none.	
5)	<p><b>HR report</b></p> <p><b>Melanie Price offered the following updates:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Staff voluntary turnover</b> – initial reporting shows voluntary turnover is 6% which is relatively low.</li> <li>• <b>Total staff turnover including compulsory redundancies</b> – this is sitting at 10% against a sector average of 17% but it is expected that this will increase during the year. Governors asked why ESCG total staff turnover is lower than sector benchmark. Melanie Price said that staff tend to stay at the Group for a long time as it offers stability and this sometimes means that opportunities for new talent to join are limited so this is not always a positive situation. Governors also asked if those leaving are those employees whom the Group would like to lose. Melanie Price said that the Group in some cases had lost a few individuals that it would have liked to retain, but in others it was clear that leaving was the right decision for both parties. Tim Hulme reported that the Group has in excess of 60 managers which is a lot when compared against FE Sector norms. Steve Baldry said that at Marshall Tufflex they also have more stability than nationally and that this is partially due to the location. There was a discussion of the age profile of ESCG which is higher than the national average. Melanie Price explained that it is difficult to provide progression for new teachers as the longer-serving members of staff do not leave. The Committee recognised that performance is the key issue. Tim Hulme said that it is critical that teachers are kept up-to-date with new technologies. Jo Rogers suggested that reverse mentoring of older members of staff by younger members of staff or students informally is a useful mechanism. Clive Cooke welcomed this idea and will discuss it with the SLT.</li> <li>• <b>Absence reporting</b> – the Group has spent time ensuring that absence reporting is uniform across the colleges. The data presented appears low against sector benchmarks at 2.43 days per person per year but Melanie Price warned that this is in-year data and end-of-year data would be far more informative. There is ongoing work with managers on absence management and return-to-work programmes taking place across the Group. Governors ask how the Group manages long-term sick cover. Melanie Price said that cover is arranged when it is known that an individual is likely to be away for a significant length of time, guided by the appropriate area manager. Tim Hulme explained that the profile of part-time staff has meant that cover timetables for the existing teachers has been problematic. This will be addressed going forward. Clive Cooke said that Principals focus on ensuring that they have teachers particularly as the exam period approaches. With some specialist subjects it is difficult to secure teachers. There was an instance in Lewes where the Group had employed a law teacher from London for a 'hard-to-fill' post. The Group is working to develop its sessional bank staff provision further. The Group</li> </ul>	Clive Cooke

uses zero hours contracts rather than annualised hours.

Governors suggested that developing departmental cultures would be key to ensuring cohesion. Cover work should be set by teachers who are absent which ensures that a cover teacher can teach lessons.

- **Performance management review** – the process is new for Eastbourne and Lewes but had been well embedded at Sussex Coast College before the merger. Up until the end of the academic year 2017/18, 50% completion was achieved and reports have been sent to the Principals in order that they can identify if the non-completion was due to lack of training or time. Further training will be given in order that this process is seamless by the beginning of 2019/20. A demonstration of this process will be arranged for the Committee for next year. Governors asked how many reports each manager has. Melanie Price said that this varies widely and can be as high as 15-20 which is difficult to manage and explains the length of time for PMRs to be completed. Clive Cooke said that the Group will review and address the total number of managers and this will inform the restructure. There may be a case that a supervisory role might need to be created to lead on PMRs to lessen the burden on managers. Governors asked how the Group has arrived at the conclusion that it has too many managers. Clive Cooke said that the CFO has worked with Steve Hutchinson to interrogate the Group's costs and benchmarked them against FE Commissioner norms and this had identified too many managers. Peggy Hall explained that Biram Desai, Chief Finance Officer, will be joining the extraordinary HR meeting which will be scheduled via Doodle Poll for May 2019 to offer a financial update. Clive Cooke said that the work done by Biram Desai, coupled with recent funding changes and higher costs, had identified the need for this further restructure. Tim Hulme explained that a rationalisation of courses and effectiveness of class size will be revisited as soon as possible. Steve Baldry asked how, since the courses had presumably been developed in response to customer demand, the Group would ensure that it doesn't lose students if the curriculum is rationalised. Tim Hulme explained that the curriculum plan is being developed taking many elements into account including detailed work with RCU, a specialist market intelligence firm specialising in FE. Governors asked if this next restructure would be the last of its kind to ensure that morale does not continue to be affected and confidence can be rebuilt. Clive Cooke responded that he and the Chief Finance Officer are clear that they have identified the lowest point and low levels of recruitment in Sept 18 made clear that the Group needs to rationalise to a realistic size rather than what it would like to be.

Melanie Price

Peggy Hall said that the experience at Sussex Downs had been that new courses were introduced without deleting older courses leading to many small groups and inefficiencies. Clive Cooke is consulting the LEPs and local businesses to ensure that the Group's offer meets the needs of the local community. There is a radical proposal that one solution for 16-18 year olds would be to remove qualifications but replace them with employability skills much needed by local employers. Dan Shelley has lead on this exciting work. Jo Rogers said that this chimes with the

practice in the commercial world where companies are developing new products in conjunction with customers.

- **Single Central Record** – is under constant review. Data gaps have now been populated and concerns about gaps have been addressed. All posts are now required to have a DBS. This work is ongoing and there is a risk assessment in place. There is a governor who visits and reviews this on a termly basis.
- **Gender Pay Gap** – this is the first combined report for the new Group. The 12.31% reported is based on data when the Group had just merged when there were a high proportion of females at Executive Level. Melanie Price explained that this is not an equal pay issue but that the figure is affected by the fact that females often choose part-time roles. The report will be published as required but the Group will ensure that there is a commentary to explain the context. This was welcomed as the Committee recognised that there might be an impression of imbalance of pay without this context. Melanie Price will be working on positive PR on the Group website on the issue of gender pay gaps and equality and diversity. There was discussion about the gender balance of male:female both on the Board and the Group management team that was 54:46%<sup>1</sup> and 51:49% respectively.
- **Restructures** – The process which had begun in October was completed by 21 December 2018. The target figure of £1.7m whole year savings had been made with the majority of savings coming in the ALS area. There are some vacancies which have arisen as a result of staff choosing to leave but this is being addressed. The Committee offered their thanks to the HR department and all involved. A review of IT provision has been completed and facilities are now being reviewed.
- **Talent Strategy Update** – the Group has secured DfE funding for a management development programme which has been devised by the ETF and is being delivered by sector experts. 25 places on this first cohort have been made available. Additional DfE funding for workforce development has also been secured. The Group will undertake a skills audit which will identify gaps and an expert will be provided to assist with this process. £100k will be made available to offer training needs identified. This will build staff morale and enable the Group to attract talent. Governors asked how the managers would be identified for the management training programme. This will be delayed due to the expected restructure but the initial invitation had received a good and balanced interest from managers from all colleges.
- **Trade Unions** – there was a UCU strike last week on the issue of pay and conditions in a national campaign. A 5% pay award is being sought. A total of 70 people were on strike across the campuses. Classes were covered or conflated to ensure team teaching. Jo Rogers commented that the coverage was empathetic to both the strikers and the Group and it had recognised that the issue was one of Government funding. The Group meets with the Trade Unions regularly and would hope to avoid a further three-day strike in March 2019. Governors commented that there was an impression of a positive relationship and dialogue with unions and Melanie Price confirmed that this was the case. Clive Cooke voiced concern that

<sup>1</sup> ESCG Board Search and Governance papers – Item 5.1 Board Profile 23.1.19

	<p>this is a national campaign and that the Group may be targeted in order that the Union can see that its strike is reaping positive results. Governors commented that the community's perception that the Group is a good employer will be key in balancing any negative publicity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Legislation</b> – increases in the national minimum wage will impact on the Group's pay budget. The Group's pay scales have been eroded with lack of pay awards over the past few years. The CFO and HR have agreed that the bottom pay scale points will be removed. The total impact of pay increases as a result of this minimum wage rise will be circa £20k. Governors recognised that control of the pay budget was in the hands of the Government due to these changes.</li> <li>• <b>Exceptions</b> – confidential item. Governors asked how the Group can protect itself against claims from contractors in the future. Melanie Price explained that the IR35 framework is very difficult to navigate but this is being monitored.</li> <li>• <b>Settlement agreements</b> – there was only one settlement agreement since the last meeting which had no enhancement or compensation payments.</li> </ul>	
6)	<p><b>Project Harmony</b></p> <p>Tim Hulme reminded the Committee that following merger full harmonisation still required a great deal of work. The Group harmonisation team meets monthly to review and ensure progress against the priorities. The report outlined the current year priorities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Access control</b> in Hastings has worked well. In Eastbourne and Lewes the Group will roll this out in April 2019.</li> <li>• <b>Website</b> – the Group website has been launched but the Sussex Coast website continues for this year to support applications and enrolments. Migration to one integrated website and intranet will take place by the start of academic year 2019/20</li> <li>• <b>MIS systems</b> need to be harmonised and the Group is evaluating Dynistics™<sup>2</sup> as a common platform for both legacy Colleges to allow effective reporting</li> <li>• <b>Helpdesk</b> – The Group is evaluating one solution to offer a combined platform for IT and Estates and HR. The new system called TopDesk™<sup>3</sup> might integrate all the services seamlessly.</li> <li>• <b>Policies</b> – there is a great deal of work to do on making many of these policies streamlined and ensuring that policies are labelled as procedures where appropriate.</li> <li>• <b>Commercial outlets</b> – The Group is trying to harmonise this.</li> </ul> <p>Governors asked how the Group is managing the issues and workload of GDPR legislation and requirements. Tim Hulme reported that the Group has gone to major stakeholders to ensure compliance. One more problematic issue has been the data held on external parties such as guests to art shows, and all those on whom the Group holds data have been contacted. There had been a recent example of a miscommunication to an external party in error by a member of staff which had led to a GDPR complaint. Training is being given to staff to mitigate the</p>	

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.dynistics.com/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.topdesk.com/uk/>

	<p>risk of this being repeated. Staff and students taking data off site is one major challenge. Permission for data or images is sought on enrolment for students. Governors asked if project harmony reports feed into other committees. Tim Hulme explained that it is a regular item for SLT and it will feed into the main board and the newly formed Capital Infrastructure Committee.</p> <p>Governors asked if Tim Hulme felt that he is able to make the progress he had wanted and if there is enough capacity in the staff to achieve this. He had discussed risk with Clive Cooke and the resultant pressures on management bandwidth. Clive Cooke commented that his suspicion would be that when the SLT scopes the final savings plan and restructuring this will have a negative impact on the progress of project harmony. Non-critical items may have to be deferred but mission critical items such as the merging of MIS systems will remain a priority. It was agreed that communication of progress was key.</p>	
7)	<p><b>Health and safety report</b>  Tim Hulme presented Debbie Leslie's report.</p> <p><b>RIDDOR</b> - The Group is investigating the accident of the student with the chisel. The major incident was the slip of a visitor to Station Plaza which is being addressed. The altercation at an external event at Station Plaza which led to injuries has led to a complete review of processes and numbers of security staff.</p> <p><b>Policies and procedures</b> – Group is working to reduce policies and ensure that it would be a procedure where this is appropriate.</p> <p>Governors expressed concern that this report emanated a sense of anxiety about the amount of work that the individual who wrote it is experiencing. The SLT is addressing this to ensure that non-essential tasks are redirected. Clive Cooke said that he recognised that it is important that this concern is addressed and more staff have been appointed to support this area.</p> <p>Governors asked if the full audit of safety procedures and equipment is now complete. Tim Hulme said that a full register of inspections are managed by Estates and are completed on an annual basis. Clive Cooke reported that a number of health and safety risks have also been addressed. Governors asked if the issue of smoother fire evacuations in Eastbourne had been addressed. Tim Hulme said that there is room for improvement and work is ongoing.</p>	
8)	<p><b>Any other business</b>  Peggy Hall reported that there had been a suggestion that the Board may have too many committees and asked the Committee if they considered that HR might be merged with Finance. Peggy Hall said that as Finance is such a critical issue she would advise that a conflation may not be advisable as HR issues would not be effectively addressed. Robert Mee concurred and said that he had considerable experience of combining these two committees for another organisation. It was agreed that finalisation of the HR strategy and the plans to deliver it will take some time. The option to combine the Committees could then be considered in a couple of years and in the long term this might be a sensible option.</p>	

	<b><i>The meeting closed at 11.40</i></b>	
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