

People & Culture Committee Minutes

Date	17 th May 2023	Time	10:00-12:00
Venue	Room EC205, ECAT House, E	astbourne Campus	
Chair	Becky Cooke		

Membership – Becky Cooke (Committee Chair), Gill Short (Committee Vice Chair), Rebecca Conroy (CEO & Principal), Aly Coleman, Andy Davy, Ian Mehrtens

In Attendance – Marcus Abel (UCU Trade Unison Representative), Hannah Caldwell (Chief Operating Officer), Lauren Crawley (Director of People), Belle Howard (Director of Governance – *minutes*), Marilyn Hawkins (Education & Training Foundation – *observer*)

Quorum: The meeting was quorate throughout

Apologies: Becky Cooke, Debbie Baldock-Apps (Unison Trade Union Representative)

Virtual Attendees: Gill Short

There is a positive duty for the Executive Team to raise any issues about wellbeing of staff and working conditions with the Committee, as it occurs.

#	Item	Action			
PRE-MEETING					
-	INFORMAL DISCUSSION WITH UCU & UNISON TRADE UNION REPRESENTATIVES 10:07				
	0.1 The Chair of the Board advised that in the absence of the Committee Chair he would chair the meeting, explaining that as the Committee Vice Chair had joined the meeting virtually, it would be easier if the meeting was led by an in-person participant.				
	0.2 The Chair of the Board welcomed the UCU Trade Union Representative to the meeting and explained that this was an opportunity to have an informal conversation with the committee, as well as raise any issues or concerns.				
	0.3 The Chair of the Board also noted apologies from the Unison Trade Union Representative and noted their statement, which had been submitted to the committee in advance of the meeting.				
	0.4 The UCU Trade Union Representative shared the following reflections:				
	 During the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic, there were significant structural changes made to the Executive Team. Since then, there had been marked improvement in levels of communication levels from senior leaders and as a result, staff generally felt listened to. 				



- A new Workload Agreement had also been established, which had supported a successful transition to harmonised contracts for most staff, subsequent to the merger in 2018.
- Industrial action was avoided last year, following a successful pay negotiation process. At that time, the threshold was not met to proceed with strike action following a UCU ballot process.
- In terms of outlook, discussions were currently ongoing with the senior leadership team, with a particular focus on establishing a Pay Agreement for 2023-24.
- A particular issue had been identified for some staff related to pay spine points, which
 arose following the college merger. At that time, a decision was taken to amalgamate
 several pay spine points, which resulted in very small increments between each pay level.
 Consequently, an exercise to simplify pay spine points was now needed to ensure greater
 clarity for staff.
- This issue had been compounded following recent recruitment efforts, where some new staff had been appointed towards the top of the pay range, creating dissatisfaction for existing loyal staff.
- There was also a particular issue for technicians, who had been appointed across a range of different contract types. Consequently, greater consistency was now needed for this role type across the college.

0.5 The following discussion then occurred:

- A Governor asked when was the last time that a baseline job evaluation process took place? The UCU Trade Union Representative advised that this last occurred pre-merger and reflected that there had been a low appetite for harmonisation at that time.
- The Chair of the Board asked how receptive were the Executive Team to addressing these issues? The UCU Trade Union Representative advised that the Executive Team had been very open to discussion. As such, current negotiations (and associated plans) had been directly focussed upon these priority areas.
- A Governor asked from a pay perspective, how did ESCG compare with other colleges in the local area? The UCU Trade Union Representative advised that ESCG staff were currently the worst paid in the Sussex area, with staff typically paid an average of £1000 less than their counterparts at other colleges.
- The UCU Trade Union Representative reflected that as a result, pay remained fundamentally the biggest issue for UCU's membership. Teaching staff had experienced a significant loss in relative pay due to rising inflation. A clearly defined Pay Strategy was now urgently needed, particularly given the probable impact on staff retention and the college's ability to meet its future recruitment needs.
- The UCU Trade Union Representative noted that in recent years, several 16-19 teaching staff had left the college. Additionally, a number of old sixth form teaching contracts remained in place, impacting up to six members of staff.



- The Chair of the Board advised that the college had been working to develop a Five-Year Financial Plan and pay remained a priority focus area of that plan. A Strategy Day had been scheduled for October 2023 and it would be important to involve the trade unions in the output of that process.
- The Chair of the Board also reflected that the job evaluation process would typically take
 an extended period of time. As such, it would also be important to balance such longerterm activities with identifying imaginative short-term solutions. Most importantly, it
 would be important to ensure open and transparent communication throughout this
 process. Governors agreed.
- The UCU Trade Union Representative explained that a national aggregated UCU ballot process was not likely in the short-medium term. Instead, negotiations would be managed locally. This had already proven successful last year, particularly given the expectation that a further pay award had been indicated for this year as well.
- A Governor reflected on the impact of pay related concerns on staff recruitment and retention and asked had the Executive Team also engaged on this issue as well, particularly in view of the current cost of living crisis? The UCU Trade Union Representative reflected that there had been dialogue with the Executive Team on this important issue, but goodwill from staff had weakened in recent times. Several colleagues had recently left the college, some of whom had accepted roles at other colleges that were located closer to home, with a view to save on their travel expenses.
- A Governor reiterated the need for a clearly defined strategy to address issues related to pay, recruitment and retention.
- The Chair of the Board thanked the UCU Trade Union Representative for joining the meeting.

Marcus Abel left the meeting at 10:32. Rebecca Conroy, Hannah Caldwell and Lauren Crawley joined the meeting at 10:33.

- The Chair of the Board summarised the issues raised in earlier discussion.
- The CEO & Principal confirmed that a job evaluation exercise was currently underway and advised that the trade unions would be updated as output of this process.

1. STANDING ITEMS				
1)	WELCOME & APOLOGIES	10:35		
	1.1 The Chair opened the meeting at 10:35 with a warm welcome to colleagues.1.2 Apologies were received and accepted from Becky Cooke and Debbie Baldock-Apps.			
2)	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	10:36		
	2.1 There were no declarations of interest received.			



3) MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

10:37

3.1 Approval

- Governors considered the minutes from the last meeting on 8th February 2023.
- Governors agreed that the minutes were a true and accurate record of what was discussed.

3.2 Matters Arising

Item	Owner	Action	Due Date
3.3.1	ВН	Include a pre-meeting trade union discussion on the agenda and extend invites to the college's Unison and UCU Trade Union representatives, ahead of the next People & Culture Committee meeting on 17 th May 2023.	Complete
4.3.1	LC	Liaise with peers within the FE sector to identify examples of best practice in utilisation of the apprenticeship levy.	Complete
4.3.2	RC/HC	Liaise with the Vice Principal, Business Development to explore the feasibility of leveraging the partnership with SGN to deliver the college's apprenticeship levy provision.	Complete – this had been discounted as SGN do not currently use their levy in full.
5.3.1	ВН	Issue the Environmental, Social & Governance Statement to Governors by email and Diligent Boards, with a view to gather feedback as appropriate.	Complete
6.1.1	НС	Update the Health, Safety & Welfare Policy to indicate any linkages to other policies, e.g. Safeguarding Policy.	Complete
6.1.2	HC	Update the Health, Safety & Welfare Policy to ensure role titles were captured accurately, with clarity around areas of responsibility vs accountability.	Complete
6.1.3	НС	 Update the Health, Safety & Welfare Policy to include the following: Additional content in Section 4.12.3, with regards to levels of coverage regarding the Construction, Design & Management Regulations, 2015 and determine whether a separate protocol (or an associated appendix) was needed for this area. Additional content in Section 4.12.4	Closed – further update shared later in the meeting, per Item 7.1.



Item	Owner	Action	Due Date
6.1.4	RC/HC	Explore the feasibility of establishing a RACI (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed) Chart, with a view to ensure greater clarity around critical tasks, documents, responsibilities and accountabilities at the college.	Complete – at the point of policy review, RACI diagrams would now be incorporated moving forward.
6.1.5	ВН	Source a Health, Safety & Welfare Link Governor role description and share this with the Chair of the Board and CEO & Principal.	Complete
6.1.6	BH/RC	As output of the changes identified to the Health, Safety & Welfare Policy, determine the most appropriate process for facilitating subsequent review and approval by the People & Culture Committee.	Complete

- The following discussion then occurred:
 - The CEO & Principal advised that work was ongoing to maximise any opportunities for spending the college's apprenticeship levy, including giving careful consideration to each vacancy to determine whether it could potentially become an apprenticeship role.
 - The Chair of the Board suggested that leveraging channels to engage with external stakeholders may create additional apprenticeship levy opportunities for the college. Governors agreed.
 - The Chair of the Board noted that there were a range of different RACI chart diagram types, some of which could be leveraged to help the Executive Team to explore key relationships and processes within the organisational hierarchy.

4) PEOPLE SERVICES REPORT & DASHBOARD

10:41

4.1 Staff Turnover

- The Director of People shared the following update:
 - Staff turnover was currently trending at 20.1% (with 13.4% voluntary turnover and 6.7% compulsory turnover).
 - Whilst staff turnover levels remained above the stretch target of 15%, current levels remained below the peak of 21.9% in 2021-22. Additionally, the college's turnover levels were in line with the sector.
 - That said, the college's turnover profile had become slightly more erratic, with exit data no longer directly mirroring the usual key exit points in the academic year.
 - The key voluntary reasons for staff leaving included 'looking for new challenges', 'a different career path' and 'personal/family reasons'.
 - The National Education Union (NEU) had reported that 16% of its members had indicated their intent to resign from their roles within the next two years, with 45% planning to leave within the next five years.



- The following discussion then occurred:
 - A Governor asked do we have further information on the types of 'new challenges' that staff were leaving to pursue? The Director of People advised that a new exit interview process had recently launched, enabling the college to gather more comprehensive exit data. Staff who had expressed an interest in pursuing 'new challenges' had typically secured non-teaching roles outside of the FE sector. Other key themes included concerns related to 'workload' and 'wellbeing'. However, 'pay' had not been highlighted as a significant area of concern thus far.
 - A Governor asked what other key themes/trends had arisen from the new exit interview process and does this vary by campus? The CEO & Principal explained that in the case of the Lewes campus in particular, some teaching staff had left to pursue similar roles at a well-known Brighton based college, due to enhanced pay and benefits. Similarly, non-teaching-based staff had particularly been attracted to roles in Student Services at each of the Brighton based universities, where enhanced pay and benefits packages were available, along with broader career progression opportunities.
 - The Director of People suggested that another useful data point could be to track the timeframe after qualifying that teaching staff were typically leaving the organisation. Governors agreed.
 - The CEO & Principal explained that a key element of the Pay Strategy, would be to develop a sufficiently well-rounded pay, benefits and career development proposition to meet the college's longer-term recruitment and retention needs.
 - The CEO & Principal also acknowledged that whilst there was currently a variance in pay levels relative to other colleges, ESCG was comparatively generous in its annual leave provision, though noted that this needed to be communicated more widely to staff.
 - The Chair of the Board also reflected on the need to promote the total reward package for staff, rather than just focus on pay. The Director of People proposed that a Total Reward Statement could be developed and communicated to each member of staff.
 - A Governor reflected on the key messages that arose during the earlier conversation with the UCU Trade Union Representative, and asked would it be possible for the 'People Services Summary Dashboard' to include a breakdown of teaching vs support staff for turnover and reasons for leaving data? The Director of People Services confirmed that this would be detailed in the next report.
 - Action 4.1.1 Include a breakdown of teaching vs support staff for the 'turnover' and 'reasons for leaving' data points in the next People Services Report.

4.2 Key Projects

- The Director of People shared the following update:
 - Each of the currently active key projects were directly linked to driving improvements in staff turnover, career progression and recruitment.

LC



- The college had recently joined the Black Leadership Group (BLG) and all vacancies were routinely being promoted on the BLG Job Board.
- The college was also now part of the 'Moving On Up' Programme, which was
 designed to support individuals living in temporary accommodation within the local
 area, to transition into employment.
- The feasibility of sponsoring international candidates for certain priority roles was currently being explored, which would include the arrangement of any required visas. Potential candidates would be targeted through available social media channels within priority international locations.
- Following the recent launch of the 'Taking Teaching Further' programme by the DfE, opportunities to enhance the college's career development programme was also being explored.
- A Careers Website was scheduled for launch during the summer break and would incorporate a range of resources for both staff and managers. The site would also include new functionality to enable the effective tracking of the 'time to recruit' timeframe for each vacancy.
- A range of innovative solutions continued to be applied as part of the college's ongoing recruitment efforts, through various social media channels and recruitment fairs.
- The college's staff induction processes were also being enhanced, through the 'MyWelcome' platform, which would launch from September 2023 and would be accessible to all staff members.
- A project was currently underway with FE Sussex and the Education & Training
 Foundation (ETF) to embed leadership and management standards into colleges.
 As such, all managers recently had the opportunity to undertake a training needs
 analysis, the output of which would inform the staff development programme.
- Staff behavioural competencies, that directly aligned to the college's values, were currently in the latter stages of development.
- The following discussion then occurred:
 - The CEO & Principal advised that the college was currently leveraging its network of People Services contacts at other colleges to explore potential recruitment opportunities that may arise as staff exit other organisations.
 - The Chair of the Board asked does the college actively engage with Job Centre
 Plus to promote current vacancies and/or promote teaching opportunities at
 ESCG as an alternative career pathway? The CEO & Principal advised that this
 recruitment channel was typically utilised for entry level roles, though noted that
 there may be an opportunity to promote broader career opportunities at the ESCG.
 - A Governor reflected on the current project with FE Sussex and the ETF and suggested that the emphasis should be upon the development of leadership, rather than management skills. Governors agreed.



- The CEO & Principal and Chief Operating Officer considered the need to develop leadership skills at all levels of the organisation.
- A Governor suggested that use of the RACI (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed) Chart could also support efforts to ensure emphasis on leadership, rather than management skills. Governors agreed.

4.3 Mandatory Training

- The following discussion occurred:
 - The People & Culture Committee Vice Chair reflected on the recent mandatory training results, noting that completion levels were markedly better for new starters, and asked had the new induction process been used to specifically target new starters in their completion of mandatory training? The Director of People confirmed that as part of the induction programme, all new starters were required to complete their mandatory training. As such, 100% of new starters who joined last month had successfully completed their mandatory training.
 - The People & Culture Committee Vice Chair asked was the college likely to meet its target for mandatory training completion this year? The Director of People advised that there had been a marked improvement in this metric since the last report was shared. Monthly Management Reports were now being issued, which detailed a range of useful staffing data, including mandatory training completion levels. Senior leaders routinely reviewed these reports, with a view to actively increase mandatory training completion levels. Additionally, from the start of the 2023-24 academic year, a greater proportion of the mandatory training courses would be delivered in person in order to maximise engagement and impact, e.g. Health & Safety, Equality & Diversity Awareness, Safeguarding etc.
 - The CEO & Principal reflected that further work may be needed to rationalise the current list of mandatory training courses, as not all of the existing courses should necessarily be categorised as mandatory. Governors agreed.
- A confidential discussion then occurred.

4.4 Restructuring & Staff Pay

A confidential discussion then occurred.

4.5 Other Key Performance Indicators

- The following discussion occurred:
 - The Chair of the Board asked, would it be possible for the KPI table in the main report to include an extra column to indicate any +/- movement between reporting periods. The Director of People confirmed that this was feasible.
 - Action 4.3.1 Update the Key Performance Indicators table within the People Services Report to include an additional column detailing any +/movement between reporting periods.

LC



- The Chair of the Board noted the continuing improvement in the college's Equity,
 Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) profile. The Director of People advised that the new
 Monthly Management Reports included EDI data, which had helped to increase the
 volume of staff feeling confident in disclosing this sensitive information.
- The Director of People advised that the Government had recently shared new guidance on the reporting of ethnicity related pay data, which was currently under review by the college. Similarly, new guidance had been shared around 'positive action' for diversifying the workforce and potential opportunities at the college were also being explored.

5) PEOPLE SERVICES KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR TARGETS – 2023-24

11:12

- 5.1 The Director of People shared the following update:
 - No significant changes had been proposed to the KPIs, given the direct linkage to the college's strategic objectives.
 - However, a new metric related to staff recruitment ('time to fill rate') had been proposed
 with a 90-day target, which was in line with the three-month notice period that was typical
 within the FE sector.
 - It was also proposed that the 'Performance Management Review Complete' target be replaced with 'Termly Check-ins', to reflect a more continuous, rather than annual, approach to staff appraisals.
- 5.2 The following discussion then occurred:
 - A Governor noted that three of the proposed KPI targets related to the staff survey, had been set at levels lower than the results achieved in the prior year, and asked – should these targets be more challenging? The CEO & Principal reflected that there may be opportunity to include stretch targets for some of the KPI metrics, though noted that there had historically been relatively low levels of staff engagement in survey completion, so a balanced approach would need to be adopted. Governors agreed.
 - The Director of People explained that a key driver for historically low levels of staff engagement with the survey, was likely due to its timing. This had now been moved to October 2023, which should facilitate increased staff participation. Governors agreed.

6) GOVERNANCE MATTERS

11:16

6.1 Resources, Culture & Impact Committee Terms of Reference

 The Director of Governance provided an overview of the approach adopted in developing a new format for the Committee Terms of Reference for 2023-24, which had been produced as part of a wider project to ensure alignment with the cycle of business and core governance framework documentation.



- Governors suggested the following additions:
 - Relationship With Other Committees additional Curriculum, Skills & Quality Committee sub-section as follows:
 - Matters related to staff recruitment, resourcing and wellbeing are directly linked to the effective delivery of the curriculum provision.
 - Oversight of sub-contracting arrangements.
- Culture additional bullet point as follows:
 - To ensure that a culture which inspires a sense of belonging and pride has been established, benefiting both staff and students alike.
- Action 6.1.1 Update the Resources, Culture & Impact Committee Terms of Reference to incorporate the changes requested by Governors.
- RESOLUTION The People & Culture Committee agreed to recommend the Resources,
 Culture & Impact Committee Terms of Reference to the Board for approval, subject to the agreed amendments.

6.2 Draft Cycle of Business - 2023-24

- The Director of Governance summarised the approach that had been taken to develop a new format Cycle of Business for the next academic year, which had focussed on the following core objectives:
 - To maximise opportunities to delegate key reports/policy approvals to committee level, with a view to reduce the burden of activity on the main Board.
 - To simplify information communicated to the Board and thereby enable a holistic approach to decision making.
 - To rebalance the timing of key reports and activities to ensure that each governance meeting will have an even proportion of policy reviews, reports and strategic discussion items.
 - To consolidate the extensive scope of work for the existing Finance Committee and People & Culture Committee into a manageable workload for a single 'Resources, Culture & Impact Committee'.
- The Chair of the Board reflected that the Cycle of Business would continue to be reviewed, with a view to identify additional opportunities to rationalise the number of policies currently scheduled for review. The CEO & Principal also advised that an additional resource had recently been appointed to review the full portfolio of policies at the college with this aim in mind.
- RESOLUTION The People & Culture Committee agreed to recommend the Resources,
 Culture & Impact Committee Cycle of Business to the Board for approval.

ВН



6.3 Draft Schedule of Governance Meetings

• Governors considered the following draft schedule of meetings for 2023-24:

Committee	Autumn Term	Spring Term	Summer Term	Joint Annual
Resource, Culture	Thursday 28 th	Thursday 8th	Thursday 20 th	ARaC and RC&I
& Impact	September 2023	February 2024	June 2024	Thursday 30 th
Committee	15:00-17:00	15:00-17:00	15:00-17:00	November 2023
	Thursday 30 th			14.30-15:30
	November 2023			
	13:00-14.30			

- The following discussion then occurred:
 - The Chair of the Board reflected on the value of continuing the practice of joint meetings with the Audit, Risk & Compliance Committee in the Autumn Term to review the annual financial accounts. Given the audit focus of these discussions, the Chair of the Board suggested that there may be limited value in this practice.
 - Action 6.2.1 Propose that the current practice of joint annual meetings be discontinued, following alignment conversations with members of the Finance Committee and Audit, Risk & Compliance Committee.
 - The People & Culture Committee Vice Chair requested a more even distribution of meeting venues for Committee meetings moving forward, with a view to ensure a greater proportion of these would be held at the Lewes Campus. Governors agreed.
 - Action 6.2.2 Update the draft Schedule of Governance Meetings to indicate proposed meeting locations and formats for 2023-24.

 RESOLUTION – The People & Culture Committee agreed to recommend the 'Resources, Culture & Impact Committee Schedule of Governance Meetings' to the Board for approval, subject to the agreed amendments.

2. POLICIES

7) POLICIES REQUIRING BOARD APPROVAL

11:28

7.1 Health, Safety & Welfare Policy

- The Chief Operating Officer shared the following update:
 - At its last meeting, the People & Culture Committee identified a number of changes to the Health, Safety & Welfare Policy, which had been reviewed jointly with the Audit, Risk & Compliance Committee in the Spring Term.
 - A number of changes were incorporated following Governor feedback, as detailed in the Policy Change Summary Sheet.

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BH



- The following discussion then occurred:
 - The Chair of the Board reflected that the enhancements that had been made since the last meeting had made the policy much clearer and thanked the Chief Operating Officer for incorporating these changes.
 - A Governor considered the college's processes for the disposal of hazardous substances (Section 6.5) and suggested that the wording be amended to include 'storage' of such substances. Governors agreed.
 - The Chair of the Board requested a minor amendment to Section 5.12.4, to reference 'Governors' in the list of visitors to the college. Governors agreed.
 - The People & Culture Committee Vice Chair asked did the policy adequately address procedures for 'flooding' and 'terrorism'? The Chief Operating Officer advised that this was more explicitly detailed within the college's emergency procedures.
- Action 7.1.1 Update the Health, Safety & Welfare Policy to detail 'storage' in Section 6.5 (Hazardous Substances) and include 'Governors' in the list of visitors to the college (Section 5.12.4).
- RESOLUTION The People & Culture Committee agreed to recommend the Health, Safety
 & Welfare Policy to the Board for approval, subject to the agreed amendments.

3. CLOSE

8) ANY OTHER BUSINESS

11:35

- 8.1 The following discussion then occurred:
 - The CEO & Principal noted that this was the final meeting of the People & Culture Committee and extended thanks to the People & Culture Committee Chair and Committee Members for their contributions and support to the college.
 - The Chair of the Board also thanked the Director of People for her work in collaborating with the People & Culture Committee to develop a new format People Services Report, which had ensured clarity of information and enabled robust scrutiny and discussion.

9) DATE OF NEXT MEETING

11:37

11.1 Governors noted that this was the last meeting of the People & Culture Committee.

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	. Three survey responses were received from Governors, online during the meeti	ng via Google
For	ns:	
#	ASSESSMENT QUESTION	RESULT
1.	Did the agenda and papers arrive seven days in advance?	100%
2.	Were the agenda and papers written with clarity?	100%
3.	Were the issues considered at the meeting appropriate?	100%
4.	Did you have all the information you needed to fully participate in the discussion and decision?	100%
5.	Was sufficient time available for thorough debate?	100%
6.	Were you satisfied that the decisions were arrived at in a proper manner?	100%
7.	Were you able to express your views?	100%
8.	Was the meeting chaired effectively?	100%

Action Summary

Item	Owner	Action	Due Date
4.1.1	LC	Include a breakdown of teaching vs support staff for the 'turnover' and 'reasons	September
		for leaving' data points in the next People Services Report.	2023
4.3.1	LC	Update the Key Performance Indicators table within the People Services Report	September
		to include an additional column detailing any +/- movement between reporting	2023
		periods.	
6.1.1	ВН	Update the Resources, Culture & Impact Committee Terms of Reference to	Complete
		incorporate the changes requested by Governors.	
6.2.1	IM	Propose that the current practice of joint annual meetings be discontinued,	15 th June 2023
		following alignment conversations with members of the Finance Committee	
		and Audit, Risk & Compliance Committee.	
6.2.2	BH	Update the draft Schedule of Governance Meetings to indicate proposed	Complete
		meeting locations and formats for 2023-24.	
7.1.1	HC	Update the Health, Safety & Welfare Policy to detail 'storage' in Section 6.5	7 th June 2023
		(Hazardous Substances) and include 'Governors' in the list of visitors to the	
		college (Section 5.12.4).	