People & Culture Committee
Minutes

Date	8th February 2023	Time	10:00-11:30

Venue	Virtual Meeting (Zoom)

Chair	Becky Cooke

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

In Attendance – Hannah Caldwell (Chief Operating Officer), Clare Critchfield (HR Manager), Belle Howard (Director of Governance – *minutes*)

Quorum: The meeting was quorate throughout.

Apologies: Aly Colman, Lauren Crawley (Director of People)

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
STANDING ITEMS		
1)	**WELCOME & APOLOGIES** 10:01 1.1 The People & Culture Committee Chair opened the meeting at 10:01 with a warm welcome to colleagues and a particular welcome to new member, Andy Davy. 1.2 Apologies were received and accepted from Aly Colman and Lauren Crawley.	
2)	**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** 10:02 2.1 There were no declarations of interest received.	
3)	**MINUTES OF LAST MEETING** 10:03 *3.1 Approval* • Governors considered the minutes from the last meeting on 14th November 2022. • **Governors agreed that the minutes were a true and accurate record of what was discussed.**	

3.2 Matters Arising

- Matters arising were noted as per the Action Log:

Item	Owner	Action	Due Date
4.2.1	IM	Working in collaboration with the Director of People, EDI Link Governor to provide feedback on the proposed EDI categories for recruitment application forms moving forward.	**Complete**
4.2.2	LC	Develop an approach for addressing gaps in existing EDI data, as well as enhance the EDI classifications currently included on job application forms.	**Complete**
4.7.1	GS	Safeguarding Link Governor to schedule a meeting with the DoP, HR Manager and their replacement (Aly Coleman) prior to the end of the Autumn Term.	**Complete**
5.1.1	HC	Update Section 2.1.1 (Page 4) of the Health, Safety & Welfare Report to indicate which local authority that the referenced local councillors were members of.	**Complete**
6.1.1	RC	Draft a protocol for the annual meeting with Trade Union representatives, with input from the Director of People and Director of Governance.	**Complete** – discussion item 3.3
9.2.1	BH	Remove all Executive led policies from the People & Culture Committee Terms of Reference and Cycle of Business, with a view to recommend these revised documents to the Board for approval.	**Complete**

3.3 Protocol for the Annual Trade Union Meeting

- The CEO & Principal provided a brief overview of the proposed Protocol for the Annual Trade Union Meeting.

- Members reflected that the paper provided clarity for the scope and approach for these meetings moving forward.

- **RESOLUTION – The People & Culture Committee agreed to approve the proposed Protocol for the Annual Trade Union Meeting.**

- The People & Culture Committee Chair requested that the college's trade union representatives be invited to attend the next meeting.

  - **Action 3.3.1 – 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 17th May 2023.**   **BH**

4) PEOPLE SERVICES REPORT   10:07

4.1 Introduction

The People & Culture Committee Chair shared the following update:

- There had been a recent discussion with the Director of People (DoP) and Chief Operating Officer (COO) on the proposed format of the People Services Report moving forward.

- It had been agreed that this would be simplified, with greater emphasis on by exception reporting. Additionally, the COO advised that a dashboard graphic of key metrics had been included as a single appendix.

- **Governors expressed thanks to the DoP for the new format report, which more clearly summarised priority focus areas and issues.**
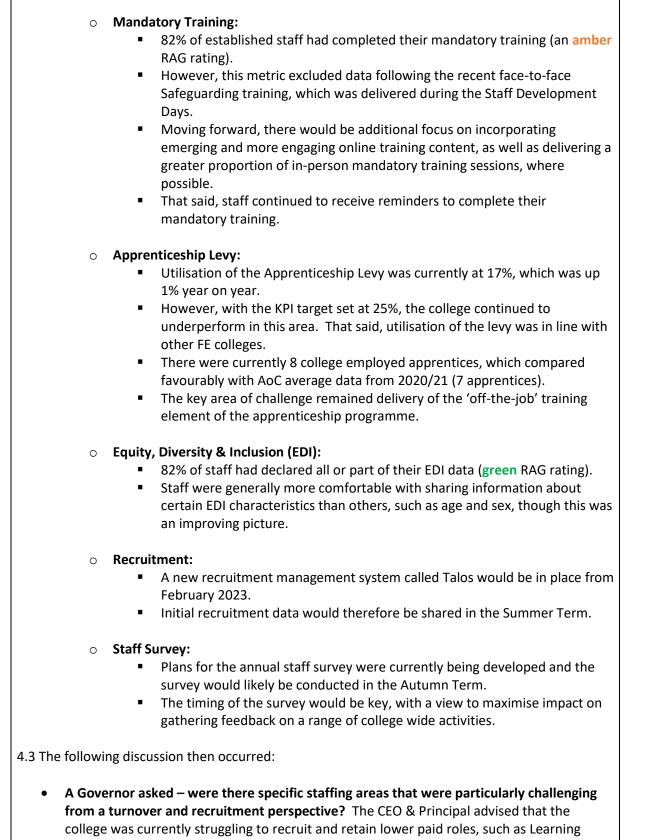
4.2 Key Performance Indicators

- The COO and HR Manager shared the following update:

  o **Staff Turnover:**
    - Currently trending above target at 19%. Whilst this was above the national average for the FE sector at 17.8%, it was just under the average for the South-East region (19.4%).
    - Voluntary turnover, had however, decreased since the last report.
    - There were range of ongoing projects designed to maximise retention levels, including a new exit interview process, the introduction of the new 'My Welcome' induction programme and a new staff development programme called 'My Career'.
    - Additionally, work was underway to enhance the reward and recognition procedures, directly linked to values, behaviour and length of service.
    - The college were also currently trialling a more direct recruitment strategy, through leveraging social media and an emphasis on actively contacting potential candidates.

  o **Staff Absence:**
    - Sickness absence levels were currently **green** from a RAG rating perspective. However, this data may have masked incidents of sickness absence over the Christmas break.
    - The two main causes of sickness absence remained Covid-19 and mental health issues.
    - Covid-19 continued to be the top reason for short-term sickness absence, whilst mental health issues were the primary reason for long-term sickness absence.
    - Work was ongoing to develop a 'Workload Agreement' in collaboration with the trade unions. This key document would incorporate guidance related to hybrid working, staff welfare, wellbeing and resilience, which would be positioned alongside the college's Health, Safety & Welfare Policy.
    - The college now had 6 trained mental health first aiders in place.
    - Work was underway with East Sussex County Council towards securing a bronze Wellbeing Accreditation for the college, which would include the rollout of a programme of 'Mental Health Awareness' and 'Wellbeing Champion' training.
    - The accreditation would focus on the following areas:
      – Physical activity
      – Healthy eating
      – Sickness absence

- o **Mandatory Training:**
  - 82% of established staff had completed their mandatory training (an **amber** RAG rating).
  - However, this metric excluded data following the recent face-to-face Safeguarding training, which was delivered during the Staff Development Days.
  - Moving forward, there would be additional focus on incorporating emerging and more engaging online training content, as well as delivering a greater proportion of in-person mandatory training sessions, where possible.
  - That said, staff continued to receive reminders to complete their mandatory training.

- o **Apprenticeship Levy:**
  - Utilisation of the Apprenticeship Levy was currently at 17%, which was up 1% year on year.
  - However, with the KPI target set at 25%, the college continued to underperform in this area. That said, utilisation of the levy was in line with other FE colleges.
  - There were currently 8 college employed apprentices, which compared favourably with AoC average data from 2020/21 (7 apprentices).
  - The key area of challenge remained delivery of the 'off-the-job' training element of the apprenticeship programme.

- o **Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI):**
  - 82% of staff had declared all or part of their EDI data (**green** RAG rating).
  - Staff were generally more comfortable with sharing information about certain EDI characteristics than others, such as age and sex, though this was an improving picture.

- o **Recruitment:**
  - A new recruitment management system called Talos would be in place from February 2023.
  - Initial recruitment data would therefore be shared in the Summer Term.

- o **Staff Survey:**
  - Plans for the annual staff survey were currently being developed and the survey would likely be conducted in the Autumn Term.
  - The timing of the survey would be key, with a view to maximise impact on gathering feedback on a range of college wide activities.

4.3 The following discussion then occurred:

- **A Governor asked – were there specific staffing areas that were particularly challenging from a turnover and recruitment perspective?** The CEO & Principal advised that the college was currently struggling to recruit and retain lower paid roles, such as Learning Support Assistants, as well as staff working in specialist areas such as engineering, construction and electrical engineering. The COO noted however, that this issue was in-line with the wider FE sector.

- **The Chair of the Board noted that the greatest proportion of leavers to the organisation, were those who were 'looking for new challenges' and asked – could the college be more innovative in terms of the retention and retraining of its staff?** The CEO & Principal noted that the new structure for the Curriculum Teams now included Deputy Head of Curriculum roles, which had increased the range of career progression opportunities for staff. That said, more work was needed to further develop career pathways for staff in other areas, particularly technicians and those working in the Estates Team, with a view to address areas of resourcing shortage. As such, a more coherent career pathway strategy needed to be developed.

- The Chair of the Board reflected that the college's apprenticeship levy and adult learning budget could also potentially be leveraged to support staff retention. Governors agreed.

- **A Governor asked – could secondments also be utilised to increase the range of career progression opportunities available to staff?** The CEO & Principal reflected that secondments may present a unique career pathway opportunity for staff, potentially between other colleges and more widely within other industries, such as the Local Authority and the NHS.

- The COO suggested that further work was now needed to empower line managers to consider a breadth of innovative learning and development opportunities for their direct reports, through robust communication and training. Governors agreed.

- The People & Culture Committee Chair reflected that the college may wish to consider developing a talent management strategy, with a view to outline a range of innovative mechanisms for career progression and staff development.

- The Staff Governor volunteered to become a Mental Health Champion, having recently completed the required training.

- The CEO & Principal explained that the 'Workload Agreement' had been developed over several years in collaboration with the trade unions. Chichester College had already expressed interest in leveraging ESCG's 'Workload Agreement' as a model example of good practice. Led by the Deputy (CEO & Principal), the new agreement had directly supported the contract harmonisation agenda, enabling the college to address some key elements of former staffing contracts.

- **The People & Culture Committee expressed thanks to the Deputy (CEO & Principal) for his work in leading the development of the new 'Workload Agreement'.**

- The Safeguarding Link Governor advised that they had recently met with the Director of People and advised that a new system was in place, which more effectively logged the completion of staff mandatory training.

- **A Governor asked – if the college had not spent the apprenticeship levy by the end of the academic year, could this be carried over?** The COO advised that any underspend would be lost, though clarified that the deadline for spending the apprenticeship levy was typically 2 years.

- **The Chair of the Board asked – were there examples of colleges that had been significantly more successful in utilising their apprenticeship levy? If so, could the college benefit from their best practice?** The COO advised that the DoP was part of a network of People Services Directors and would therefore be able to liaise with their peers to identify examples of good practice in the use of the apprenticeship levy.

  - **Action 4.3.1 – Liaise with peers within the FE sector to identify examples of best practice in the utilisation of the apprenticeship levy.** **LC**

- **A Governor noted that the college had historically offered the apprenticeship levy to key industry partners and asked – could this approach be adopted again?** The COO confirmed that there remained an option for levy paying employers to work with their suppliers in delivering staff apprenticeships. As such, it would be possible to investigate this further.

- The CEO & Principal noted that the college had recently established a partnership with SGN (a regional gas distribution company), in delivery of the Gas Network Operative Standard apprenticeship course. As such, there may be an opportunity to leverage this relationship in delivering the apprenticeship levy provision.

  - **Action 4.3.2 – 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.** **RC/HC**

- The Chair of the Board noted that significant progress had been made in recent years in improving the quality of EDI data gathered, which was evidence of a culture of transparency and trust at the college.

- The People & Culture Committee Chair noted that staff EDI data was being gathered both at the point of onboarding and through periodic requests for staff to update their EDI information.

- **The People & Culture Committee Chair asked – were regular requests being made to staff for any outstanding EDI information?** The HR Manager advised that staff were periodically reminded to update their EDI information during Staff Development Days via the My View system. Additionally, an extensive EDI data gathering campaign was conducted at the start of the academic year to improve the quality of the college's EDI data. Similarly, new staff were being encouraged to submit their EDI information during their induction, as part of the 'My Welcome' onboarding process.

- The Chair of the Board suggested that it may be useful to facilitate a campus wide desk drop to all staff, with a view to include an EDI information card and possibly a small confectionary gift to encourage staff EDI declarations. Governors agreed.

- The CEO & Principal reflected that a similar mechanism could also be leveraged to stimulate responses to the annual staff survey process.

- The Staff Governor suggested that some staff may be reticent to complete the annual staff survey, due to a misperception that any results as output of the survey may not be acted on.

- The CEO & Principal explained that extensive work had been completed to communicate with staff on the work that had completed as output of the annual staff survey, e.g. via *'you said, we did'* updates at the recent Staff Think Tank meetings and via staff briefing updates (accessible to all staff through a recorded copy, transcript and summary notes).

- **A Governor asked – can you clarify the statement *'57% of 2022-23 performance management set'*, given that the college was currently mid-way through the Spring Term?** The CEO & Principal advised that the deadline for staff objective setting had been the end of the Autumn Term. Further work was needed now to close the gap in completing this process, though noted that this was a significant improvement year on year (up from 30% in 2021-22). As such, this would continue to be a priority focus area moving forward.

- The HR Manager also advised that extensive work was currently underway to develop a meaningful performance management process for staff. Additionally, the COO reflected that most staff performance management conversations had already taken place, though some managers had yet to report this in the appropriate HR systems.

- Governors reflected on the need to ensure high quality appraisal and feedback processes, rather than overly complex annual performance management processes. The COO agreed, noting that rolling performance reviews were becoming increasingly popular in many organisations.

- **The People & Culture Committee Chair again expressed thanks to the Director of People for a comprehensive report and also thanked the COO and HR Manager for sharing additional context on the report.**

5)	**ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL & GOVERNANCE STATEMENT** **10:47**	

5.1 The CEO & Principal shared the draft Environmental, Social & Governance Statement as follows:

ESG Statement: We will…

Environmental
- Focus on reducing our carbon footprint
- Increase our investment in renewable energy
- Educate our communities on sustainability throughout our curriculum
- Develop green travel plans for each of our locations
- Develop strategies to procure sustainably and ethically
- Assess and improve our waste management strategy
- Reduce our use of non-sustainable materials and resources

Social
- Improve employment and economic growth within our communities
- Champion EDI and challenge community inequity
- Develop partnerships to become greater than the sum of our parts
- Promote community health and wellbeing
- Role model progressive labour standards and working conditions

Governance
- Ensure that our decisions are ethical, people and community centred
- Prioritise local procurement and investment
- Protect our cyber security
- Support our people's health, safety and security
- Increase leadership and workforce diversity

	5.2 The CEO & Principal then shared the following update: • The Environmental, Social & Governance (ES&G) Statement had been produced as output of discussion that arose from a previous Finance Committee meeting, following a request for additional information on the college's strategy for managing its impact on the local communities that it served. • Feedback was now being gathered from all the Committees, prior to submitting the statement to the Board for approval. Following this, a detailed action plan and associated KPIs would be established, with a view to track progress and impact from 2023-24. • The framework for ES&G statements were increasingly popular in both private and public sector large organisations, though not necessarily as yet in FE colleges. 5.3 Governors noted that the Environmental, Social & Governance Statement had been excluded from the meeting papers in error, so Governors agreed to share any comments ahead of the next Full Board meeting, by email. • **Action 5.3.1 – Issue the Environmental, Social & Governance Statement to Governors by email and Diligent Boards, with a view to gather feedback as appropriate.** 5.4 The People & Culture Committee Chair suggested that the wording *'labour standards'* may need to be amended.	**BH**
POLICIES		
6)	**POLICIES REQUIRING BOARD APPROVAL** 10:52 *6.1 Health, Safety & Welfare Policy* • The COO advised that this policy was reviewed on an annual basis with the Audit, Risk & Compliance Committee. Further (separate) guidelines were also being developed on wellbeing and resilience, with a view to provide clarity on the additional support in place at the college from both a wellbeing and welfare perspective. • **A Governor noted the linkages between the Health, Safety & Welfare Policy and the Safeguarding Policy and asked – should this policy clearly indicate any linkages to other policies?** The CEO & Principal reflected that any linkages to other key policies should be indicated in the policy. o **Action 6.1.1 – Update the Health, Safety & Welfare Policy to indicate any linkages to other policies, e.g. Safeguarding Policy.** • The Chair of the Board noted the need to ensure that any role titles in the Health, Safety & Welfare Policy were accurate, given that the Health & Safety Executive would leverage this policy document to determine responsibility/accountability and challenge as appropriate. • **The Chair of the Board asked – following recent changes to the Senior Leadership Team, were the role titles captured in the policy accurate?** The COO agreed that further updates were needed, particularly with regards to the COO role.	**HC**

- A Governor also reflected that further clarity was needed for each role, as regards to *'responsible'* and *'accountable'*. Governors agreed.

  o **Action 6.1.2 – Update the Health, Safety & Welfare Policy to ensure role titles were captured accurately, with clarity around areas of responsibility vs accountability.**   **HC**

- A Governor suggested that further detail may need to be included in Section 4.12.3, with regards to contractors and levels of coverage regarding the Construction, Design & Management Regulations, 2015. **A Governor asked – was a separate (and linked) protocol for contractors needed for this area?** The COO advised that this would be explored in depth with the Director of Estates.

- A Governor reflected that Section 4.2.4 (Visitors/Members of the Public) may also require further detail (and/or a separate protocol), particularly with regards to welfare, safeguarding and reporting. The Chair of the Board also suggested that additional content was needed in this section to outline associated responsibilities for Governors. Governors agreed.

- A Governor noted that the policy included limited references to learners, particularly with regards to the use of visual display units. Additionally, Section 5.8 (Evening Classes) currently contained limited content and suggested further detail may be needed, possibly by way of a separate protocol or appendix. Governors agreed.

  o **Action 6.1.3 – Update the Health, Safety & Welfare Policy to include the following:**   **HC**

    ▪ **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 (Visitors/Members of the Public), including guidelines for Governors, and determine whether a separate protocol (or an associated appendix) was needed for this area.**
    ▪ **Additional content with regards to associated health, safety and welfare considerations for learners.**
    ▪ **Additional content in Section 5.8 (Evening Classes) and determine whether a separate protocol (or an associated appendix) was needed for this area.**

- The Chair of the Board suggested that it may be helpful to establish a RACI Chart (responsibility assignment matrix), with a view to comprehensively detail critical tasks, documents, responsibilities and accountabilities. The CEO & Principal and COO reflected that this may be a useful tool and agreed to explore this further.

  o **Action 6.1.4 – 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.**   **RC/HC**

• Governors considered whether there was value in introducing a specific Health, Safety & Welfare Link Governor. ◦ **Action 6.1.5 – Source a Health, Safety & Welfare Link Governor role description and share this with the Chair of the Board and CEO & Principal.** • **Action 6.1.6 – 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.** *Subsequent to the meeting, a decision was taken to defer review/approval of the Health, Safety & Welfare Policy to the Summer Term, pending completion of the actions raised above.*	**BH** **BH/RC**

CLOSE

7)	**ANY OTHER BUSINESS** 11:03 7.1 There were no additional items for discussion.	

8)	**DATE OF NEXT MEETING** 11:04 8.1 Governors noted that the next meeting had been scheduled for **17th May 2023, 10:00-12:00**, which would be an in-person meeting.	

9)	**LIVE COMMITTEE SELF-ASSESSMENT** 11:05 12.1 8 survey responses were received from Governors, online during the meeting via Google Forms:	

#	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?	83%
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%

10)	**CLOSE** 11:06 **13.1 The meeting closed at 11:06.**	

Action Summary

Item	Owner	Action	Due Date
3.3.1	BH	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 17th May 2023.	17th May 2023
4.3.1	LC	Liaise with peers within the FE sector to identify examples of best practice in utilisation of the apprenticeship levy.	17th May 2023
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.	17th May 2023
5.3.1	BH	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	HC	Update the Health, Safety & Welfare Policy to indicate any linkages to other policies, e.g. Safeguarding Policy.	17th March 2023
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.	17th March 2023
6.1.3	HC	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 (Visitors/Members of the Public), including guidelines for Governors, and determine whether a separate protocol (or an associated appendix) was needed for this area. • Additional content with regards to associated health, safety and welfare considerations for learners. • Additional content in Section 5.8 (Evening Classes) and determine whether a separate protocol (or an associated appendix) was needed for this area.	17th March 2023
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.	17th May 2023
6.1.5	BH	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**