**People & Culture Committee**

**Minutes**

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| Date | 22 September 2021 | Time | 2 pm |
| Venue | Online | | |
| Chair | Gill Short | | |
| **Membership** Gill Short (Chair), Rebecca Conroy, David Smith, Averil Price, Becky Cooke, Marie Sangster  In attendance - Mia Bryden, Careen Green. | | | |
| **Apologies:** Becky Cooke | | | |

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.

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|  | **Item** | **Action** |
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|  | **Apologies**  Apologies were noted from Becky Cooke.  Trade Union representatives were invited to attend the meeting but opted not to attend in this instance. All reps have been advised of the new Chair and an invite extended to contact her via the DoG at any time. |  |
|  | **Declarations of Interest**  There were none**.** |  |
|  | **Minutes of the last meeting & Matters Arising**  MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING WERE APPROVED AS A TRUE AND ACCURATE RECORD.  *Matters arising*  Items were covered on today’s agenda, apart from the following matters –  John Cooper, Lecturer, has provided a short video presentation for the Committee to talk about his role at the College, his journey towards achieving his doctorate, how the College supported his and what his achievement means for his students, himself and the College. This will be circulated with the minutes.  John’s first published paper, co-authored with Dr Lawrence Nixon last year, can be read here -  <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1250536.pdf>  Costs on professional development – Dir of P&C will consider a KPI relating to the use/impact of the professional development budget, e.g % professional development income. GS asked if there was a CPD plan. The Dir of P&C advised there are quality training elements and peer work with other Colleges, and work in Strategic Plan should influence any programme. This will be revisited in due course. DS mentioned a comment made by new Governor Nicola Taylor re the golden thread from the classroom to the Strategic Plan (ref. Ofsted).  MS said there should be further support and upskilling for business support so they can rise within the organisation. The Dir of P&C advised the College did some work over the summer on identifying training needs for business support staff, and this message was heard and she described it as work in progress.  AP reiterated what she said at the Strategic Session on 16 September regarding the absence in the Strategic Plan of succession planning for staff. This will be addressed.  DBS compliance clarification – There is 100% compliance now and the risk assessment process was explained.  ESCG recruitment and selection processes are attuned to EDI principles – The EDI Committee is now in place and a paper was provided that showed the College has a third of staff who have chosen ‘prefer not to say’ in terms of declaring their ethnicity. Onboarding and People Strategy activities were noted as vehicles to ascertain why new starters are opting not to provide ethnicity responses and to encourage new and existing staff to provide this useful information.  ‘Celebration Event’ - due to covid restrictions this did not take place.  Stress at work has now been included in the Health, Safety and Welfare Policy – this was confirmed.  **A confidential item was discussed.** |  |
|  | **People & Culture Annual Report (including Health, Safety and Welfare)**  The Dir of P&C updated the Committee on key P&C issues.  Headcount and turnover were noted.  The number of working days lost increased by 219 in 20/21, however the count of instances of absence is considerably lower. Long term absences make up 75% of the total days lost to sickness absence in the College and one third of LTS absences are for mental health reasons. DS noted that Hastings figures and the Strategic Partnerships area of business appear to be outliers. He raised that there has been longstanding concern about staff morale at Hastings following the merger. The Dir of P&C advised there is some long term sickness in some areas, and she is looking into how HR are providing support to impacted staff and teams.  AP asked if it would be possible to have the numbers of staff within each section going forward. The Dir of P&C confirmed this will be added. **Action for Dir. Of P&C.**  With regards the single central record there are no DBS outstanding. There was one safeguarding incident last year and the staff member’s contract was terminated following investigation. Gill asked if the individual had a cleared DBS. In this instance the DBS was clear but the previous employer had failed to disclose a low level incident.  The Committee were advised that due to the pandemic, employers have been given an extended deadline by which to submit and publish their Gender Pay Gap report relating to 2020/21. An update on Gender Pay Gap figures will be provided at the next Committee. **Action for Dir to P&C**.  Restructures were noted impacting Student Services, Finance, Commercial food outlets and the closure of the Subway franchise.  The Committee noted frequent discussions with Trade Unions have taken place over the year, with a focus on:   * Terms of Reference – and establish future task and finish groups. * Workload Agreement * Hybrid working approach. * Annual leave proposal and amendments to Holiday Policy & procedure * Amendments to Sickness Absence policy   MS raised the issue of visibility of union representatives. **Action: The Dir of P&C said she would speak with the regional representative about union visibility**. Gill suggested encouraging unions to be more engaged in the Committee. CG suggested there is also an opportunity to canvass staff on whether a Staff council forum would widen employee participation.  Workforce profile data was discussed by the Committee. A small shift in the distribution across age groups, with an increase in all groups under 50 was noted, however a focus on longer term succession planning is still required. AP asked if the workforce profile is usual in relation to the FE sector. This was confirmed as being commonplace. AP asked about legacy coaching and retirement offers. The Dir of P&C advised of sessions run during CPD week around pensions to help inform staff. She said that such sessions in the past tended to focus on how to plan for retirement, but now there is a focus on building flexibility to retain knowledge base – e.g. flexible working arrangements to lessen the impact of skills shortages. GS asked whether new recruits are younger. The Dir of P&C said she would need to review our workforce data. **Action for Dir of P&C.**  The Committee were advised last year there were no incidents of staff whistleblowing.  Staff appraisals should be completed by October half term. Focus is being given on ensuring an appropriate ‘golden thread’ that links the college strategic aims and values with the objectives for all staff. GS queried spans of control. The CEO said they were all relatively large and this is being reviewed.  MS said the follow up after appraisal could be improved. The Dir of P&C acknowledged this as an area that should be improved as a result of the vision and values work. AP said it was about developing a culture of having two way accountability for performance. The CEO agreed and said the College as a learning organisation should encouraging people to take control.  A CPD week was run in July 2021, training in key areas such as Industry updating, Schemes of work, Ofsted preparation and digital skills was provided. There was a focus on wellbeing and resilience.  *KPIs*  The Director of P&C presented the proposed KPIs for 2021-22/ linked to the P&C strategic intention in the Strategic Plan. Staff pride and wellbeing were noted as new KPIs.  The Committee asked for a KPI to be added about apprenticeship levy spend/impact and there was an earlier discussion about the inclusion of professional development budget and how utilised. **Action for Dir of P&C**.  There was some feedback at the Board Strategic Session on 16 September that the KPIs could be more meaningful to demonstrate impact e.g PMR/PMO completion. The CEO suggested a KPI of % of staff benefiting from PMR/PMO, and ensuring linkage to the staff survey.  *Health, Safety and Welfare Report*  The DoG advised this report was discussed by ARaC on 20 September who focused on the H&S elements. Today’s meeting is to look at the Welfare aspects. She advised that Ian Merhtens had asked if the College use the HSE stress risk assessment and that the EDROD took away an action to clarify with the Director of P&C. The Dir of P&C confirmed there is a framework in place which follows HSE standards.  GS noted there was a lot of mention about contingencies around fire and much less about any other type emergency. e.g risk of flooding. GS said there may also be gaps around post-covid major risks. **Action: CEO to feedback to CFO. Rebecca will feed back to Martin.**  Welfare initiatives over the last academic year were noted as per the report. | **Careen**  **Careen**  **Careen**  **Careen**  **Careen**  **Rebecca** |
|  | **Update on People Strategy & Update on the new approach to staff objective setting**  The Director of P&C updated on People Strategy activity. A summary report by Change that Matters was discussed which discussed outputs from activity undertaken between Feb and June 2021. The paper presented to the Committee was confidential for the purposes of this Committee only.  The CEO said the outputs of all activity clearly demonstrates that there is some way to go to re-build trust and confidence in leadership across the College and that there is still work needed on a ‘tone re-set’. The Dir of P&C talked about the need to ensure leadership and management styles in all areas of the College are in alignment with the College’s mission, vision and values.  DS referenced previous staff feedback that the CEO’s approach and communication style is welcomed but is not always modelled throughout the rest of the College.  The Dir of P&C said the People Strategy presented at the Committee is still a draft and has been shared to show the traction to date. This has informed the Strategic Plan’s intention around people and culture.  The Monitoring Performance section requires further consideration. The section on Wellbeing, Workload and Resilience is a key area. Developing a diverse, respectful and inclusive culture is also a significant area, and it is recognised the workforce is not representative of East Sussex demographics. Recruitment and retention will become an increasing issue, post pandemic and as part of the levelling up agenda and known and anticipated skills shortages. There was a discussion about whether there is a perception employment within the public sector is ‘safer’ than the FE sector. The CEO said it will be important to think about positioning and the articulation of the ESCG working offer e.g the T&Cs, performance, rewards and recognition, training, lifestyle, social/cultural fit, and benefits. There will be more of a focus on exploring working arrangement partnerships with local employers, industry, and neighbouring Colleges, particularly in specialist roles. Ongoing recruitment, not just when there are vacancies, will be a priority. There will be more information added to the Engagement and Communications section following work by the Wisdom Council.  AP asked if there a staff intranet and clarification on what staff communication vehicles were employed. She suggested not only communications from the Chair, but blogs and vlogs across the Exec and SMT. The CEO advised a  new staff newsletter has been developed to facilitate two-way communications.  The Director of P&C updated on the new approach to objective setting.  AP asked whether the values will be translated into appraisals to support the golden thread from the Strategic Plan. This was confirmed, the Dir of P&C explained the focus will be not just what people do, but how they do it.  GS asked when the People Strategy will be published. The CEO said the EDSPE will support with aligned Strategic Plan strategies ready for Board in October 2021. |  |
|  | **Arrangements for obtaining the views of staff/students on the matters for which the Board is responsible**  The Instrument & Articles of Government of the College require the publication of arrangements for consulting with students and staff at the College on the determination and periodic review of the educational character and mission of the College and the oversight of its activities. A paper has been produced by the DoG, Dir of P&C and Deputy Director setting these out. This was discussed and methods agreed by the Committee.  GS said it was very important to have student members on the Local College Board.  DS asked about progress on the ‘post-merger’ issues raised by staff discussed at the last meeting. **Action: to be discussed at the next meeting.**  **Action: DoG to arrange of the paper to be available on the ESCG Governance webpage.** | **Mia**  **Mia** |
|  | **For Board Sign Off – Whistleblowing Policy (joint with ARaC)**  The DoG reminded the Committee this is a policy under ARaC, and will be tabled for ARaC sign off in December and approval by Board in December.  The Dir of P&C said the policy has been updated post changes to legislation and legal advice has been sought during the re-draft.  DS asked why ‘employee’ had been changed to ‘worker’. The Dir of P&C advised this is because whistleblowing is not just an ‘employee’ responsibility. **Action: Dir of P&C to clarify this within the policy.**  There is now an obligation to raise concerns with the organisation first.  AP asked who the WB Officer is. The following is set out in the policy - *Where the disclosure involves a member of HR or the Executive Team, the matter should be raised with the Director of Governance, who will refer it on to the Chair of the Corporation.* She asked who ‘all other staff’ go to. There was a discussion about whether this should be the Dir of P&C and the Dir of P&C will speak to the legal team about this. **Action for Dir of P&C.**  There will be training on whistleblowing for Governors, as well as for the Exec and HR team.. **Action for Dir of P&C.** | **Careen**  **Careen**  **Careen** |
|  | **Annual Leave Policy**  The Dir of P&C advised the Executive Team and JCC on 1July 2021 have discussed the fact that the ESCG Annual Leave Policy has not been reviewed since merger and some differences still exist within the two legacy colleges’ entitlements, custom & practice.  The ESCG Sickness & Attendance Policy has also been discussed, see item 9.  Key factors for consideration are:   * Actual entitlements and any recommendations to change. * Amount of leave permitted to be taken in a block over the summer period. * Communication of the removal of the 100% attendance allowance * Approach to Christmas closures & clarity on use of annual leave   It was confirmed that teaching staff entitlement was harmonised at 50 days for all staff regardless of type of contract during negotiations in 2019. This is a generous entitlement, and considerably more than some partner AOC colleges offer and is a significant benefit for working at ESCG.  ESCG Business Support staff commence at 20 days which is low by comparison with other partner colleges and has always been less than previously offered at SDC. The Committee were asked to consider an Executive Team recommendation to consider an increase to entry entitlement from 20 days. The proposal is to increase up to 25 days, 28 days after 5 years and 30 after 10 years. MS said there is inconsistency across the campuses for staff on legacy contracts.  **Action: The Dir of P&C to explore this.**  **A confidential item was discussed.**  **Resolution**  The Committee resolved to recommend the changes in the policy to Board on 12 October. | **Careen** |
|  | **Sickness Absence Policy**  The Committee were asked to review the Exec Team recommendation on the *Additional annual leave for Staff with an exemplary sickness absence record.* The Exec Team propose this be removed ahead of the 21/22 leave year for the following reasons:   * Potentially discriminatory for those with a disability where more frequent absence can be expected. * Absence reporting is generally unreliable and therefore an evaluation of 100% attendance becomes problematic. * Encourages presentism and discourages staff feeling able to take time off when they genuinely need it.   **Resolution**  The Committee agreed to recommend to Board this be removed. **Action for DoG.**  **Christmas Closure**  The Exec Team have also been discussing how leave is expected to be taken over Christmas. This has been previously different dependent upon terms and conditions, and for the last two years the compromise has been as follows:   * *All Teaching staff and any remaining SDC Support staff – required to use 3 days of their personal leave entitlement over Xmas closure.* * *Any staff on SCCH/ESCG terms and conditions – not required to use any leave*.   The following is proposed to take effect from the 2021/22 Academic year   1. Teaching staff are required to use their Annual Leave entitlement. (Please note as part of the proposed workload agreement review – 3 days TOIL will be offered to recognise work at evenings and weekends (this is mainly marketing activity/parent’s evenings) and should be taken in closure periods 2. All support staff on SDC/SCCH/ESCG terms and conditions – not required to use any annual leave.   It is acknowledged that any changes to terms and conditions of employment will require formal consultation.  DS asked how the College compares with neighbouring Colleges with regards to contact hours per week. The CEO said contact hours are slightly less than at neighbouring colleges.  **Resolution**  The Committee agreed to recommend this proposal to Board. **Action for DoG**. | **Mia**  **Mia** |
|  | **Pay Policy Update**  The Dir of P&C advised this new policy for the College, to replace existing policies pre-merger.  She advised clarification regarding pay protection has been drafted to support staff who accept roles at a lower grade than their previous grade for reasons which are not connected with their conduct or performance in role. It was confirmed that pay protection will usually apply for a maximum of one calendar year.  Acting up arrangements have also been clarified and market supplements added.  DS suggested not referencing specific Committees but to make reference to the Board instead.  MS said the Hastings pay scale differs from pay scales at the other campuses and that harmonisation did not take place prior to merger. **Action: The Dir of P&C to explore this.**  There was a discussion about the timing of increments and the Dir of P&C advised this had been discussed with the CFO.  **Resolution**  The Committee resolved to recommend the Pay Policy Board approval in October 2021. | **Careen** |
|  | **Live Committee Effectiveness**   |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | |  |  | **Yes** | **No** | | 1. | Did the agenda and papers arrive seven days in advance? | Y |  | | 2. | Were the agenda papers written with clarity? | Y |  | | 3. | Were the issues considered at the meeting appropriate? | Y |  | | 4. | Did you have all the information you needed to fully participate in the discussion and decision? | Y |  | | 5. | Was sufficient time available for thorough debate? | Y |  | | 6. | Were you satisfied that the decisions were arrived at in a proper manner? | Y |  | | 7. | Were you able to express your views? | Y |  | | 8. | Was the meeting chaired effectively? | Y |  | |  |
| **13)** | **Any Urgent Matters**   * Governor’s car parking – updated to get into meetings. |  |

Date of next meeting 17 March 2022

Carried forward

* Current Workforce Composition
* ESCG recruitment and selection processes and comparator data
* Staff Code of Conduct (as required)
* Annual Gender Pay Gap Report

Pay framework for College staff/ pay award update