

HARPER ADAMS UNIVERSITY

Minutes of a Meeting of the Staffing Committee held on 13th June 2019 at 1.15 pm in the Board Room.

Present: Mr M Lewis - Chair
Mr P Nixon
Mrs A Haycox
Mr M Simcock
Dr D Llewellyn
Mrs C Snell (via telephone)

In attendance: Miss D Crowther - Secretary
Dr C Baxter
Mr A Allen (for item 12)

Apologies: Mr M Thomas

Members were reminded to update their entry in the Register of Interests if required.

18/34 Terms of Reference

Reviewed: the Terms of Reference were reviewed and it was confirmed that they accurately reflected the purpose and structure of the Committee. It was noted that Mr S Vickers had now left the Committee.

18/35 Minutes

Approved: the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 17th January 2019 (18/19 – 18/33).

18/36 Matters Arising

Received: a report from the Head of HR on matters arising.

Noted: that the Finance and General Purposes Committee had noted the proposal to suspend the staff bonus scheme for 2019 and were happy with this approach. The Staffing Committee endorsed the decision. Mrs Haycox expressed concern about the negative messages that may be sent to staff in suspending the staff bonus scheme, as well as not awarding a day off in lieu over the Christmas period. It was confirmed that any day off in lieu was discretionary and the Board should consider the granting of such a day in the November meeting.

CEB

Noted: i) that the quarter one meeting with Health Assured, providers of the Employee Assistance Programme, would take place on Wednesday 19th June. The initial usage report indicated that the University's statistics to date were representative of the benchmark level.

ii) that Mrs Haycox had queried whether the information on the well-being offer was housed only on the 'work for us' page or on the portal also. It was confirmed that it was housed on the 'work for us' page so that this could be viewed both externally and internally. It was confirmed that details of the information had been included in the Weekly Diary. *Post-meeting note* – this information appeared in the 29th April 2019 edition of the Weekly Diary.

18/37 Risk Management

Received: a report from the University Secretary on risk areas monitored by the Committee.

Noted:

- i) that with regard to the recent internal audit on mandatory training and staff development the final outcome report had not yet been received. It was noted that the auditors were likely to suggest a number of recommendations, however, it was confirmed that it was not the role of the auditor to dictate which of these are put into practice. It was noted that it is not clear at this stage what the concluding audit opinion will be. Once received the final report will be submitted to Audit and Risk Committee for consideration at the meeting on the 27th June.
- ii) that with regard to the appointment of the Director of Marketing and Communications initial selection activities had taken place on Monday 10th June. Further candidates were due to be seen week commencing 24th June when it was then hoped we would be in a position to proceed.

18/38 Pay and Negotiation – 2019 / 20 Pay Round

Noted: the details of the full and final offer made in the JNCHES negotiating meeting held on 30th April 2019 were noted by the Committee.

18/39 Policies and Procedures

Approved:

- i) the revised and updated version of the University's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure was approved. This included strengthened guidance around informal note of concern and potential outcomes of a disciplinary hearing, an added appendix to give further information and guidance around suspension and an amendment to the appeals procedure in order to ensure that lower level penalties could be heard by a more Senior Manager, rather than all appeals going to the Head of Institution.

Mr Simcock raised a query in respect of the 3 days' notice to attend a disciplinary hearing. It was confirmed that advice and guidance would be in line with recommendations made in the Acas Code of Practice on Discipline and Grievance at Work. *Post-meeting note – the code states "the meeting should be held without unreasonable delay whilst allowing the employee reasonable time to prepare their case" and therefore a notice period of 3 days is in line with the code.*

Mr Simcock raised a query in respect of representation in a disciplinary hearing being a trade union representative or work colleague only. It was confirmed that the right to be accompanied was a statutory one and referred to a fellow worker, a trade union representative or an official employed by a trade union only. It was noted that any request to be accompanied by a companion who did not fall within the above categories, would be considered on a case-by-case basis, as employers are not obliged to agree to this request.

Mrs Haycox raised a query with regard to the ordering of the process, in respect of the last paragraph of section 5.2 and the right to make representation to the Vice-Chancellor. It was confirmed that the ordering of events was firstly, hearing held and recommendation for dismissal made to the Vice-Chancellor, secondly, member of staff advised of recommendation and given the right to make representations to the Vice-Chancellor before any decision to dismiss made and thirdly, where appropriate appeal heard by the Appeal Committee, comprising of a current Governor acting as Chair and two members who may

be Serving Governors (not staff or students), former Governors or independent persons with relevant experience.

Approved: ii) the updated Adoption Leave policy.

Approved: iii) the updated DBS Policy merged with the new Policy on the Recruitment of Ex-Offenders.

Approved: iv) the new Fixed Term Contract Policy and Procedure formulated from the existing guidance document.

Mr Simcock suggested that further clarity around the month column on appendices 1 and 2 of the policy would be useful. It was agreed that this would help to ensure that the timescales around the process were clearer.

DC

Mrs Haycox suggested that references to a notice period of 4 weeks in section 2 of the policy and 1 month in appendix 2 of the policy be made consistent.

DC

18/40 **Staff Consultative Group**

Received: the Committee received a copy of the minutes of the SCG meeting held on 8th May 2019 and noted the contents.

Noted: i) that the new format for the Weekly Diary had been shared with members.

ii) that updates had been given on the work around the Gender Pay Gap and policy developments.

iii) that queries had been raised in respect of timetabling processes, sharing of Outlook diaries with students, printing, car parking fines, general usage of Outlook calendars and out of office, cycling kit facilities and proposal to change the annual leave year. All queries had been answered or redirected to the appropriate staff for consideration.

iv) that the SCG were next due to meet on Wednesday 9th October 2019.

18/41 **Joint Consultative and Negotiating Committee (JCNC)**

Received: the Committee received a copy of the minutes of the JCNC meeting held on 21st May 2019 and noted the contents.

Noted: i) that the new format for the Weekly Diary had been shared with members.

ii) that updates had been given on the work around the Gender Pay Gap and policy developments.

iii) that an oral update had been given in respect of progress with the second round of the Mutually Agreed Resignation Scheme.

iv) that queries had been raised in respect of recent organisational change processes and cashless transactions on campus. Both queries had been answered and resolved.

v) that a breakdown had been given to UCU on the numbers of substantive staff at the University who were employed on the basis of a fixed term contract.

vi) that Professor Mills had given an oral update on REF 2021 and the preparations that were taking place.

vii) that Dr Llewellyn had given an oral update on financial considerations for the University.

viii) that UCU colleagues had kindly agreed to help chase individuals they were aware of, who were yet to complete the mandatory Cyber Security online training.

ix) that the JCNC were next due to meet on Tuesday 5th November 2019.

18/42 **Gender Pay Gap**

Received: a copy of the Gender Pay Gap report for 2019, the summary report of Dr Alison Parken, the University Gender Pay Gap Action Plan and an Executive Summary of a UCEA document entitled "Tackling the Gender Pay Gap in Higher Education Institutions".

Noted: i) that some confusion between equal pay and gender pay had been apparent in the survey feedback and that this had been addressed in the summary document that had been sent to all staff to communicate the outcomes.

ii) that it had been agreed that progress against the Action Plan would be fed back to the University Executive on a monthly basis.

iii) that work on the actions would include examining whether citizenship should be a standalone promotion criteria.

iv) that all staff meetings had included updates on the University's Gender Pay Gap and the work that was being carried out to try to address it.

v) that actions to address the GPG needed to focus on all staff groups, not just academic staff groups.

vi) that conversations had been taking place via Advance HE at a national level in order to try and ensure that Aurora had a similar level of understanding and national profile as Athena Swan.

vii) that there was a potential mismatch between the action to embed career discussions at PDR and the 40% completion rate. It was noted that discussions at PDR were extremely important in relation to career progression and that further work would be done to encourage discussions to take place.

viii) that there had been a positive response from female applicants to the advertisement for Director of Marketing and Communications with 4 females as opposed to 2 males being shortlisted, though the outcome of the process was still pending. It was also noted that despite 46% of potential applicants for the Head of the Joint Veterinary School being female, only 1 had applied and had unfortunately not met the shortlist criteria.

18/43 **TPS and LGPS Revised Salary Bands for Employee Contribution Rates**

Received: the Committee received a report on the revised TPS and LGPS salary bandings from 1st April 2019 that determine pension contribution rates and the contents were noted.

18/44 **Armed Forces Covenant**

Received: the University's draft pledge to the Armed Services Covenant, to demonstrate our support for the Armed Services community.

Noted: i) that consideration had been given to signing up to the Covenant previously, however, there had been concerns at the time that the expectations would be high and potentially unachievable. Following guidance from the OfS and communication around the expectations in respect of the Covenant, further research had taken place. In a conversation with the Ministry of Defence it had become apparent that there was a difference between signing up to the Statement of Intent, as opposed to the separate part of the scheme that looked at awarding Bronze, Silver and Gold status. The MoD had also provided helpful reassurance that as an institution we were already doing enough to demonstrate a commitment to the Statement of Intent. It was also noted that the ability to advertise vacancies via the Career Transition Partnership would be particularly helpful.

ii) that Mrs Haycox had raised a query in respect of Armistice Day arrangements now that the Alumni Officer had left the University. *Post meeting note - David White has confirmed that he fully intends to continue to arrange the annual Armistice Day event and that he is more than happy to work with colleagues in marketing who are now leading on alumni matters to make the arrangements. The University Secretary and her PA have also offered to assist as needed.*

Approved: the draft pledge was approved and further work to now be carried out with Marketing and Communications on communication in respect of local events and advertising.

CEB

18/45 **Organisational Development**

Received: a copy of the Annual Report on the University's Organisational Development activities was received by the Committee and the contents were noted.

Noted: i) that the annual opportunity for staff to sign up to Aurora was proving helpful for the Gender Pay Gap Action Plan work.

ii) that a lot had been learnt from the experience of making the Cyber Security training mandatory, however, completion levels were up to 98.8% with a plan in place to address the minimal numbers of staff who were yet to complete the online module.

iii) that 71 people had signed up to complete the voluntary email etiquette programme, which had been put into place as part of the work to address the feedback from the 2017 staff survey.

iv) that 9 current members of staff were undertaking an apprenticeship utilising funds from the levy, with a further 6 potential staff in the pipeline for future study.

v) that representatives from the University would be attending an event at Jaguar Land Rover on Monday 24th June, in order to receive an award as acknowledgement for the work that had been undertaken in respect of the Technician Commitment.

vi) that Mrs Snell asked whether there were any plans to extend the number of staff who had been trained in Mental Health First Aid and it was confirmed that analysis of the initiative had yet been able to provide a

demonstrable link between the use of trained MHFA's and a positive effect in the workplace. This being said, consideration was being given to providing a repeat of the half-day Mental Health Awareness course, which had been delivered previously and received positively.

18/46 **Any Other Business**

Noted: that Mr Nixon asked that thanks be passed onto the Grounds and Maintenance Team for the excellent work they were carrying out on the external presentation of the campus.

CEB

18/47 **Date of Next Meeting** – Thursday 7th November 2019.