

John Wheatley College
Board of Management
Personnel and Staffing Committee

Minutes of the meeting of the Personnel and Staffing Committee held on Tuesday, 30 January 2007 at 12.30pm in the Conference Room of Strathclyde European Partnership, 94 Elmbank Street, Glasgow.

1. Sederunt

The meeting commenced at 12.30pm and was attended by:

H Ostrycharz (Chair);
A Woolley;
R Venditozzi;
D O'Brien; and
M Axford.

Also in attendance:

A Kirk (Depute Principal);
A Sherry (Assistant Principal);
J Wilson (Associate Principal [Quality]);
D Sneddon (HR Manager); and
S Vaughan (for recording purposes only).

2. Apologies

M Forsyth
A McFarlane
I Graham

3. Terms of Reference

Members noted the terms of reference for the Personnel and Staffing Committee. It was confirmed that the meeting was quorate with 4 members in attendance.

4. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5. Minutes of the previous meeting of the Personnel and Staffing Committee on 3 October 2006

The minutes were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting held on 3 October 2006.

6. Matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

7. Approved Committee Minutes for information:

a) Joint Consultative Committee – 18 August 2006

Item 9 – Lecturer Salary Placement Rules

The Human Resources (HR) Manager reported that a short-life working group had been established to review the current salary placement rules.

Item 11 - Notification of Potential Redundancy

The Depute Principal reported that there was no longer a potential redundancy situation as the relevant individual had subsequently resigned.

b) Equalities Committee – 31 October 2006

The Depute Principal reported that the Equalities Committee was now operational and was working effectively.

c) Health and Safety Committee – 1 June 2006

Item 5 - Health and Safety Update May 2006

In response to questions, A Kirk informed members that reportable incidents were periodically considered at Personnel and Staffing Committee meetings. He also reported that the *Health and Safety Update* would be considered at the next scheduled meeting of the Committee under the 'risk management' section of the agenda.

8. Correspondence

a) Scottish Funding Council

i) Circular 66/06 Review of Procedures at Central College of Commerce: Independent Review Panel's Report

The Depute Principal spoke to the contents of the correspondence, which detailed the principles of good practice in relation to disciplinary and grievance procedures. He reported that the College had responded to the recommendations within this report by forming a working group consisting of College managers and trades union representatives to consider the College's current disciplinary and grievance procedures. He further reported that the College's solicitors had since confirmed that its current procedures represented best practice and therefore required no revision. A Kirk reminded members that the College's procedures followed the guidance which had been issued by the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS). The HR Manager informed members that it was anticipated that the working group would produce a report for consideration at the next meeting of the Personnel and Staffing Committee.

Members noted the contents of the correspondence and the College response to the recommendations contained within the report.

ii) Intention to Consult Colleges on a Proposal to Discontinue Collection of Aggregate Data

A Kirk spoke to the contents of the correspondence from the Funding Council, which provided notice of its intention to consult Colleges on a proposal to discontinue the current collection of aggregate College staff data and to replace it with a collection of individualised staff data. He reported that the College would respond to the consultation document which had been issued in the near future. Members were assured that there were no data protection issues, since this information was within the existing notification as required by the relevant data protection legislation.

Members subsequently noted the contents of the correspondence.

9. Staff Attendance Report 1st August 2006 to 31st October 2006

The HR Manager spoke to the contents of the report which apprised members of attendance statistics for the period 1 August to 31 October 2006. She reported that the statistics for November and December 2006 had also been included for information. She informed members that in the first quarter of 2006/07 there was a slight decrease in the College absence rate for permanent staff (from 5.77% to 5.6%) which was mainly due to a reduction in short-term intermittent absence. This was followed by further reductions to 5% in November and 4.82% in December 2006.

In response to questions, A Kirk informed members that there was no common absence rate recording system which would enable the College to accurately compare its absence statistics with those of other Colleges.

D Sneddon highlighted that the 7% absence rate for support staff in the first quarter of 2006/07 was mainly attributable to an increase in long-term absence. The absence percentage rate decreased in November 2006 to 3.67% and increased to 5.63% in December 2006. The absence rate for permanent academic staff decreased from 4.91% in the fourth quarter of 2005/06, to 4.41% in the first quarter of 2006/07. This was mainly attributable to a decrease in short-term intermittent absence. However, there was an increase in long-term absence. There was an increase in the absence rate in November 2006, which was due to an increase in short-term and long-term absence. However, the absence rate in December 2006 decreased as a result of a reduction in long-term absence.

D Sneddon reported that the absence rate for temporary academic staff had reduced from 4.28% in the fourth quarter of session 2005/06 to 0.89% in the first quarter of 2006/07. This was attributable to a decrease in short-term and long-term absence. The absence rate for this category of staff increased in November 2006 due to short-term intermittent absence. The HR Manager indicated that the absence rate for December 2006 was not available at this point.

The HR Manager reported that instances of short-term intermittent absence had decreased from 41 in the fourth quarter of 2005/06 to 39 in the first quarter of 2006/07 and the total number of days lost during this period had decreased from 109.5 to 89. Within the same time frame, the instances of long-term intermittent absences had increased from 18 to 25, with an increase in the number of days lost from 295 to 378.

A total of 124 days had been lost in the first quarter of session 2006/07 due to stress-related conditions. These cases involved six employees, three of whom had experienced personal difficulties and one of which related to bereavement. In response to questions from members, D Sneddon reported that the cases involved both academic and support staff.

She proceeded to report that three staff members had identified that their condition was related to work issues. One staff member was absent for one day and their absence was dealt with by their line manager. She confirmed that the College had managed the absence of the other two staff in accordance with its Attendance at Work Policy by making use of the Occupational Health Service and the Individual Stress Risk Assessment process. One employee had since returned to work and the Individual Stress Risk Assessment had been sent to the Occupational Health Service for assessment. D Sneddon opined that the issues raised by the employee had been managed appropriately. She reported that one employee had declined to take part in the Individual Stress Risk Assessment process and had taken the decision to resign from their position with the College. The HR Manager commented that she was currently working with J Wilson to investigate an appropriate staff development programme which would assist managers to support staff who experienced stress-related issues.

A Woolley opined that there had been an improvement in staff absence statistics overall as a consequence of the way in which the College was managing staff absence. A Woolley reminded members that the College's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analyses in previous years had identified staff absence as a problem and opined that it was heartening that a downward trend was now emerging as a result of the Attendance at Work Policy and its associated procedures.

The HR Manager reported that the College had experienced an increase in incidents of long-term absence, with 13 employees on the long-term absence list in the first quarter of 2005/06. Of the four permanent academic staff in this category, three had since returned to duty and one had resigned. Of the nine support staff in this category, six had subsequently returned to duty, one employee had been released from the College's employment on the grounds of capability and one had retired early on the grounds of ill health. In the latter case, this individual had been redeployed to other posts, but could not undertake the associated tasks and had acknowledged the considerable effort made by the College to sustain them in its employment.

D Sneddon informed members that a review of the College Attendance Management Handbook for Managers would be undertaken during session 2006/07, in order to produce a revised version for session 2007/08. This review would take into consideration legislative changes such as the *Disability Discrimination Act 2005* and various documents including those produced by the CIPD, such as *Working with Cancer Survey Report, November 2006*. She assured members that the College would continue to monitor attendance levels and consider management approaches which would assist in the reduction of the absence rate. She reported that absence management training was currently being undertaken by Curriculum Leaders.

In response to questions, the Depute Principal informed members that the recognised Trades Unions and professional associations were supportive of strategies being taken to effectively manage attendance.

Members agreed to:

- (i) note the contents of the report and its appendices; and
- (ii) request the HR Manager to bring forward a further report at a future meeting of the Committee.

10. Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan

The HR Manager spoke to the contents of the report, which provided an update on the actions taken to date to promote and implement the College's Disability Equality Scheme (DES) and Action Plan, which was approved by the Board of Management on 7 December 2006. She proceeded to summarise recent actions in relation to the DES and Action Plan, which included:

- the documents being placed on the College's website, with an invitation to contribute to the review and future development of the DES;
- a copy being sent to managers and staff, with managers having the responsibility of bringing the documents to the attention of their teams;
- the Action Plan featuring as a standing item on management reports to the Strategic Management Team detailing progress against targets;
- the DES and Action Plan featuring as an item in self evaluation Project and Curriculum Team reports detailing progress against targets and their team/function towards disability equality;
- the documents featuring as a standing item on the College's planning events;
- a copy being sent to external organisations for comment such as the Disability Rights Commission and Equality Forward;
- a copy being sent to the College's Solicitor;
- a meeting with representatives of Equality Forward, following which comments received will be incorporated into the revised document; and
- the DES will be included routinely as an annex to the College's Plan.

D Sneddon reported that the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) had requested a copy of the DES and the Action Plan. She further reported that a review of the DES would be undertaken by June 2007 and the revised document would be brought back to a future meeting of the Personnel and Staffing Committee, prior to consideration at a future Board meeting. R Venditozzi congratulated the HR Manager on the DES and Action Plan and suggested that the documents should more explicitly acknowledge the College's use of assistive technology. The HR Manager agreed that this would be considered as part of the review of the DES

D Sneddon also reported that the College intended to develop its Gender Equalities Scheme in April 2007.

A Sherry reminded members that a number of the activities which were referred to in the DES and Action Plan were activities which the College had embedded in its approaches prior to the implementation of the legislation and that this had been acknowledged in HMLE reports. He further reminded members that the College had met with Equalities Forward staff and that they had proposed no substantive changes to the DES and its associated Action Plan.

Members subsequently agreed to:

- i) note the contents of the report and its appendix; and
- ii) request the HR Manager to bring the revised DES and Action Plan back to a future meeting of the Personnel and Staffing Committee.

11. Profiling the Workforce in Scotland's Colleges

The Depute Principal spoke to the contents of the report, which sought to apprise members of the findings of a joint Association of Scotland's Colleges (ASC) and Scottish Trade Union Congress (STUC) exercise to 'profile' the workforce currently deployed in Scotland's Colleges. He reminded members that the draft report was considered at the previous meeting and that there were no substantive changes from that to the final report, with both concluding that the majority of staff were satisfied, motivated and unwilling to leave the sector. He highlighted that the report identified the ageing demographic composition of the workforce as an issue for the sector and opined that the College would also require to consider this as this was the case in terms of its own workforce.

H Ostrycharz opined that it would be beneficial to improve the ethnic minority representation within the staffing cohort, but acknowledged that this was a sector-wide problem for which there was no 'quick-fix' solution. A Woolley noted that the report had found that one of the main difficulties faced by Colleges was recruiting teaching staff. Seven Colleges had cited difficulties in recruiting staff to teach construction, joinery, carpentry, plumbing and electrical installation and two Colleges had problems recruiting for English and IT.

In response to questions, A Kirk confirmed that this reflected the College's experience in terms of recruiting staff for construction trades. A Woolley noted that two Colleges were concerned about the

low turnover rate and were interested in bringing new staff into the College. A Kirk reported that this was not currently the case at John Wheatley College.

Following discussion, members agreed to:

- i) note the contents of the Principal's report;
- ii) note the contents and conclusions of the Workforce Profile of Scotland's Colleges (attached as an annex to the report);
and
- iii) note that the Profile will be used to inform the Review of Scotland's Colleges (RoSCo).

12. Evaluation of Higher Education Role Analysis (HERA) Pilot

The HR Manager apprised members of the progress with regards to the HERA pilot which was being conducted by John Wheatley College, Motherwell College and James Watt College. She reported that following the pilot it had been concluded that with adaptations the HERA system would be suitable for use in the Further Education (FE) sector and reported that she had made this recommendation to the College's management team. D Sneddon informed members that the College intended to progress the HERA initiative and that an appropriate representative would deliver a presentation at a future Board of Management Development Event in session 2007/08. A Kirk reminded members that the College would require a system that would provide a robust job evaluation scheme, particularly in light of current and proposed equalities legislation.

In response to questions, D Sneddon reported that HERA had recruited a consultant to develop a system specifically for the FE sector.

The HR Manager reported that the feedback from the College managers and staff who had participated in the pilot had been positive. Nevertheless, they had viewed the system as time consuming and this was an issue which the College would wish to see addressed in the new model devised for the FE sector. The HR Manager further reported that the College intended to adapt the guidance notes which were issued by HERA, in line with the other organisations who participated in the pilot project, in order that this document was more appropriate to the role played by line managers in colleges.

In response to questions, D Sneddon reported that the system would apply to all of the College's staff.

There followed considerable discussion on the likely financial impact of any job evaluation scheme, with A Kirk informing members that the College anticipated that overall this would be a cost neutral exercise. The Chair commented that she had never encountered a cost neutral job evaluation system and therefore it would be necessary for the College to consider the risk that the introduction of such a scheme may have a budgetary consequence and therefore the Risk Register should be amended to take account of this. Members endorsed this recommendation.

Following discussion, members agreed to:

- i) note the contents of the HR Manager's report and its appendix;
- ii) request that the HR Manager provide future reports on the progress of the Steering Group and Educational Competences Consortium Ltd; and
- iii) request the Depute Principal to amend the College Risk Register to take account of the introduction of a job evaluation scheme for consideration at the next scheduled Board meeting.

13. Continuing Professional Development Report 2005/06

The Associate Principal (Quality) spoke to the contents of the report, which apprised members of the staff development activities undertaken during session 2005/06 and evaluated the effectiveness of the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programme. She informed members that the report also formed part of the evidence base required for external quality audits, including Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE), the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and Investors in People (IIP). She proceeded to highlight the contents of the report, reminding members there was a significant amount of informal CPD that was not documented, including meetings between staff and individual support provided by colleagues and managers.

J Wilson reminded members that in June 2006 the College was successfully assessed against the new IIP Standard and the procedure included the review of a range of College documentation and interviews with 33 members of staff. She informed members that this process focussed on the effectiveness of the CPD programme and that this provided an external view of the quality of this provision. She further reported that in session 2006/07, both she and the Assistant Associate Principal (Quality) would be trained by IIP as Internal Reviewers, which would allow them to contribute to assessing the College in relation to the IIP Standard.

The Assistant Associate Principal informed members that the cost of the College's CPD programme was in the region of £250,000 annually, including the opportunity cost element, and that it was an essential investment to enable the College to meet aims established in the Board's Strategic Plan. J Wilson informed members that the CPD programme for session 2005/06 focussed on enhancing the skills of staff in delivering learning and teaching across the College. She reminded members that the College continued to support staff to undertake Teaching Qualification Further Education (TQFE) at either Stirling or Dundee Universities. Three members of staff completed the TQFE with five continuing into session 2006/07. Eight staff commenced the programme in September 2005 or March 2006. Five members of staff completed the Professional Development Award: Introduction to Teaching in FE and had progressed onto the TQFE at the University of Dundee in session 2006/07. Two members of staff achieved the Assessor Award – A1. A Sherry informed members that the College now intended to use Dundee University instead of Stirling

University for the provision of TQFE qualifications, in response to staff evaluation of the programmes at both Stirling and Dundee Universities.

J Wilson also informed members that throughout the year the College had participated in external moderation/verification activities, with the awarding bodies for the qualifications being offered in-house, including the British Computer Society. In total, 27 external moderation/verification visits took place across the majority of subject areas, which assured teams that they were assessing to the national standard and kept staff informed of good practice across the sector.

The Associate Principal (Quality) reminded members that in May 2006 an internal audit of the use of Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) was conducted across the College, which involved all lecturers. This activity proved to be a CPD activity for Senior Lecturers in internal auditing and the subsequent action plan assisted in identifying CPD activities for all staff in the use of ILPs.

She reported that there had been a range of CPD activities for staff from Project/Support Teams, including self-evaluation methodologies and specialised professional updating. In addition, support staff participated in external and in-house activities relating to their areas of work, including sustainable development and disabilities awareness.

J Wilson stated that the Principal's CPD programme had included participation in a systematic CPD programme organised by the Principals' Forum, under the auspices of the Association of Scotland's Colleges and supported by the SFC. This had included various programmes such as 'The Leadership of Strategy'.

She reminded members of the Board Development Programme organised during the session and evaluated as part of its self-evaluation processes.

The Associate Principal (Quality) reported that the College's Quality Team supported staff in the implementation of the quality procedures within the College and was responsible for discharging the Staff Development Policy, including designing, implementing and reviewing the annual CPD programme. She acknowledged that during the recent 'Evaluation of the Learner' pilot project the assessor (Denis McCartney) had concluded that there was scope for some of the College's teaching staff to exploit more fully the ICT infrastructure available to them during lessons. J Wilson reminded members that the College had received an SQA gold award for its ILP Champions' project, however it recognised that further actions required to be undertaken to develop the skills of teaching staff in this area.

H Ostrycharz commended J Wilson for her detailed report.

With no further discussion, members agreed to note the contents of the report and its annex.

14. Risk Management – Issues to be considered as a consequence of the consideration of the above agenda

A Sherry reminded members that as has been previously agreed by the Board as part of its approach to Risk Management, each standing Committee would review the items considered on the agenda with a view to identifying any additional new risks which may require to be included in the College Risk Register.

A Kirk reminded members that the risk identified under item 12 linked to the introduction of a job evaluation scheme would be added to the risk register. The Depute Principal reported that he intended to restructure the register according to the traffic light system and that it would be considered at every meeting of the College's Board of Management, in order that members would have the opportunity to make revisions if necessary.

Following discussions, no further new risks were identified.

15. Closure

The meeting closed at 1.50pm with the Chair thanking all members for their attendance.

16. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting of the Personnel and Staffing Committee is scheduled for 24 April, 2007.