

John Wheatley College

Joint Consultative Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Friday 4 May 2007, in Room S/09, Easterhouse Campus

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The meeting commenced at 2.30pm and was attended by:

I Graham (Chair);
A Kirk (Depute Principal);
D Sneddon (HR Manager);
A Sherry (Assistant Principal);
P Currie (EIS/FELA);
P Gallagher (EIS/FELA); and
B McQuillan (Unison).

In Attendance:
M Lang (for recording purposes only).

2. Apologies

R Boyd (ACM); and
G Thomson (Unison)

3. Minutes of Meeting held on 23 February 2007

The minutes of the meeting were taken as read. They were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting held on 23 February 2007.

4. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Item 8: CHASTE – Health and Safety Survey Report to SFC

I Graham informed members that Donald Blue from CHASTE would make a presentation to the Board Development Event on 14th May 2007 and that this event was open to staff. P Gallacher welcomed the opportunity for staff to attend this event.

Item 13: Gender Comparison of Salaries

D Sneddon reported that the Gender Comparison Report would be revised and considered at the next scheduled Board meeting.

Item 21: Meet the Board Event 2006/7

I Graham commented on the success of the Meet the Board event held on 29 March 2007 at the East End Campus which had been well attended by both staff and their families. He thanked both A Macdougall and C White, staff Board members, for their efforts in planning the format of the event which had contributed to its success.

Tabled Item

P Gallagher spoke to a tabled response from the EIS/FELA branch informing members it was the view of the branch that there was no need to establish a short-life working group to consider the implications of the Central College of Commerce Independent Review Panel Report in relation to Disciplinary and Appeals Procedures as the College had demonstrated best practice in this area. The Principal welcomed this statement.

5. a) UNISON: Election of Representatives

Members noted the election of Unison officials following the Branch AGM.

b) GTC Scotland: Framework for Professional Recognition/Registration

I Graham reminded members that the framework does not current apply to the College.

c) Scottish Statutory Instruments – Gender Equality

D Sneddon reported that work on the gender equalities scheme was underway and that it would be completed for consideration at the June Board meeting and prior to the Statutory deadline for this document.

d) Review of Scotland's College – eBulletin March 2007

Members noted the contents of the eBulletin.

6. a) Health & Safety Committee – 24 October 2006

A Kirk informed members that the Health and Safety Policy was scheduled for the commencement of academic year 2007/08 and as a consequence the College was currently seeking the views of staff on proposed revisions. He reminded members that the revised policy statement would be considered at the Health and Safety Committee prior to it being considered at the June Board meeting.

I Graham informed members that all managers will undertake an IOSH course in Health and Safety Management during session 2007/08 as part of their Continuous Professional Development programme.

b) Risk Management – 29 January 2007

I Graham reminded members that there are two risk registers currently operating for the College, one which dealt specifically with the new east End campus which would be discharged following the formal completion of that building, and the general Risk Register which was routinely reviewed by the Board and its Standing Committees. He further reminded members that the College's Corporate Risk register was considered as part of the planning day events at which trades union representatives had attended.

7. Scottish Funding Council (SFC) – Grant-in-Aid Letter Session 2007/8

The Principal provided members with an overview of the main grants which will be made available to the College by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) for academic/financial year 2007/08.

He reported that the award of grant re-states the 'overarching strategic priorities' set-out in recent Ministerial Guidance to the SFC, which included:

- the provision of opportunities for learners;
- the improvement of the employability and skills of learners;
- the delivery of skills for Scotland;
- the maintenance of relevant learning provision;
- the development of responsive future approaches to funding;
- enhancing the quality of learning experiences of students;
- the support of research and innovation;
- the promotion of further and higher education internationally;
- supporting effective, well-led and well managed Colleges and universities; and
- the establishment of an effective, well-led and well managed Council (the SFC).

The Principal also highlighted the additional resources had been provided to maintain the real value of grant with the Council making an assumption that inflation will run at 2.7% during the forthcoming year (in line with forecasts made by HM Treasury). However, it was asked that the general price index appeared, at present, to be likely to exceed these projections. Furthermore the Council had provided for growth in schools related programmes of 1.2% in line with the Scottish Executive's *Lifelong Partners Strategy*. As a consequence the College activity target for session 2007/07 would be 34,697 Weighted Student Units of Measurement (Wsums) an increase of 411 Wsums over the previous session. Furthermore the Council required the College to achieve the following:

- a headcount enrolment of 4938 students a reduction of 421 from the current session;
- a full-time Further Education enrolment of 456 a reduction of 89 from the current session; and
- a full-time Higher Education enrolment of 83 an increase of 6 from session 2006/07.

He then spoke of a further £7 million which remained to be allocated to the college sector in June 2007. He informed members that these funds relate to provision for the NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) Group (in line with the Scottish Executive's Strategy). He reported that a total of £3 million had been established for this purpose, with the expectation, that these funds will be geographically 'targeted' on the Scottish Executive's 'NEET Hotspots'. However, he requested that members appreciate that the delay in the Council's decision about how such resources will be deployed is likely to be 'problematic' for the College's planning process for session 2007/08. He was unable, at this stage, to indicate how the College might use any additional funds. However, discussions with partners had commenced.

The Principal further requested that members also note that a tranche of £2m had been set aside towards 'building the capacity to meet employer and employee demand for skills development'. Furthermore, an additional £2m had also been set aside to promote 'knowledge transfer'. He indicated that no guidance on the priorities for the use of these funds had been received from SFC.

The Principal then brought to the attention of members the increase in the employer's contributions to the Scottish Teachers' Superannuation Scheme (STSS) and highlighted that the specific grant for this purpose had been reduced by circa £30,000 from the previous grant settlement.

In response to questions from the EIS/FELA branch how the College outlined these funds, he reminded colleagues that the College's annual accounts contained details of the College's contribution to staff pension schemes. That document was externally audited and available to staff. However, it was agreed that Mr Gallagher should meet both Mr Gow and Ms Sneddon for a further explanation of the College's current position in this respect.

The Principal opined that it was difficult to conclude that the 2007/08 grant-in-settlement has not been yet another poor one for the College and others in urban areas. He highlighted that a number of factors are at work in this respect including:

- a) the Funding Council focussing its social inclusion funding on the 20% poorest data zones in Scotland rather than the 15% figure routinely used by the Scottish Executive;
- b) the failure of the College to substantiate its full fee waiver grant allocation leading to a downward re-basing in this element of funding;
- c) the trend for part-time students to enrolment for 'chunkier programmes of learning';
- d) the unwillingness of the Council to re-base student support funds for non-advanced students in the initial grant-in-aid settlement; and
- e) the assumed inflation rate used by the Council to up rate the unit price of the Wsum being below that currently accepted by the Bank of England.

The Principal proceeded to remind members of the conditions of grant which the Council requires colleges to accept. These include that colleges:

- i) ensure that the purposes for which the grant is used is consistent with Section 5 in the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2005;
- ii) ensure that the Board and its officers comply with the terms of the Financial Memorandum between the College and SFC;
- iii) continue to 'modernise' their approaches to human resource management (in compliance with Ministerial Guidance provided by the former Scottish Further Education Funding Council in January 2005) The College has overtaken these objectives in earlier years; and
- iv) take full account of the Public Sector Pay Policy as set out by HM Treasury.

The Principal further informed members that the College is able to request additional activity (if other colleges decline to accept their revised activity targets) and the associated budgets. The College has proposed that it request an additional 3000 Weighted Student Unit of Measurement (WSUM's) which represents 9% growth. In response to questions the Principal informed members that if the College was to be allocated additional student activity it would not receive an automatic proportionate re-allocation of student support funds

A Kirk informed members that there was no capital funding for session 2007/08 as this funding had been allocated to the College in the current the previous session in order to assist with the construction of the new East End Campus.

8. Staff Attendance Report – 1 November 2006 – 31 January 2007

D Sneddon informed members that absence rates were continuing to fall and that the number of long-term absences was reducing during the period covered by the report. The decrease in absence rates was as a consequence of a decline in long-term absence however there had been an increase in short-term absence over the same period. As a consequence the absence rate for the second quarter of session 2006/07 was 4.57% a decrease of 1.1% compared to the previous year.

She informed members that the direct cost of absence during the second quarter was £49,234 an increase of circa £2k when compared to the first quarter of the year.

The HR manager informed members that a review of the Attendance Management Handbook was scheduled to take place later in session 2006/07 in order to take account of recent legislative changes. In addition the Well-being policy was currently under review and would be amended to take account of recently published the HSE Stress Management Standards of related guidance.

In response to questions she informed members that the number of staff on long-term absence had declined from 133 to 7 in the second quarter.

I Graham stated that significant progress has been made with absence rates but vigilance is still required to maintain this level. He also noted the requirement from public bodies to continually monitor the staff absence rates, with both Audit Scotland and the Association of Scottish Colleges asking for information.

The Principal reminded staff that though improvements had been made in reducing absence levels it was necessary to ensure that procedures were adhered to ensure that that these improvements were maintained.

Consequently all managers and supervisors would, in 2007/08, be reminded of their role in the management of absence.

Following discussion members noted the contents of the report.

9. Annual Report & Financial Statements for Year Ended 31 July 2006

A Kirk informed members that, following a direction from the Auditor general for Scotland, the College's Accounts had now been placed in the public domain. He reminded members that they had previously considered a draft of the Annual report and Financial Statements and that the final version had not been substantially altered with only minor adjustments to the notes as a consequence of the normal audit process.

Members were being presented with the document to fulfil obligation established by current Recognition and Procedures Arrangements.

The Depute Principal informed members that the College reported an operating surplus of £22k for academic/financial year 2005/06 (against a planned surplus of £50k) and that it had met its contractual obligation with the Funding Council to deliver 34,063 Weighted Student Units of Measurement. In addition he informed members that the Annual Report and Financial Statements reflected the change in accounting policy for the treatment of Pension Disclosures as previously agreed by the Board of Management.

Members noted the contents of the Annual Report and Financial Statements for academic/financial year 2005/06.

10. Disability Equality Scheme – Scottish Parliament's Equal Opportunities Committee

D Sneddon reminded members that the Scottish Parliament's Equal Opportunities Committee had recently written to colleges informing them of a number of recommendations which they were required to respond to in order to discharge their statutory duty with regard to both learners and staff with disabilities.

She informed members that appendix 1 detailed the College response to each of these recommendations and that the Board had considered a report by the Principal on this matter at the meeting held on 22 February 2007. She updated that the recommendations made by the Committee have now been addressed by the College and a paper will be presented to the Board in this respect. The HR Manager informed members that the College was able to demonstrate that it had overtaken the relevant recommendations contained within the report.

Following discussion members welcomed the College's continuing commitment to supporting both learners and staff with disabilities.

11. Gender Equality Scheme – Overview

D Sneddon reminded members that under the terms of the Equality Act 2006 the College was required to produce a Gender Equality Scheme (GES) along with other public sector bodies by June 2007. She informed members that this paper sought to apprise members of progress to date and to invite comment from members on the contents of this Scheme.

The HR Manager informed members that specific duties were placed on the College under this legislation including a requirement to:

- to gather information on how its work affects men and women;
- assess the impact of policies and practice on both sexes and use this information to inform its work; and
- publish an equal pay policy statement and report on progress every three years.

As a consequence the GES would be required to take account of these duties. In response to questions the HR Manager reported that the College had in place existing systems which covered a number of these duties, however, the GES require to include both these systems and outline additional approach in order to ensure that the College is fully compliant with the legislation.

D Sneddon informed members that the GES would follow the format used in developing the Disability Equalities Scheme which would include gender equality objectives and an associated action plan. To support the development of the GES the College would consult with learners, staff, external partners and organisations using a variety of approaches including questionnaires and focus groups. She further informed members that it was anticipated that a draft of the GES would be presented to staff during the June Quality days prior to its consideration at the Board of management meeting scheduled for 21 June 2007.

Following discussion P Gallagher welcomed the opportunity for staff to contribute to the development of the GES and informed members that the EIS/FELA branch officials would encourage members to participate in the consultation exercise.

Members agreed to :

- a) note the contents of the report;
- b) note the actions put in place to identify and prioritise gender equality objectives for the College;
- c) comment on the gender equality objectives to be addressed by the College;
- d) note that the Gender equality Scheme and Action plan would be presented by the next scheduled meeting of the Board of Management ; and
- e) request the HR Manager to bring the agreed Gender Equality Scheme and Action Plan to the first scheduled meeting of the JCC in session 2007/08.

12. Update on Review Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan

D Sneddon informed members that the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 placed a duty on all public bodies to have a due regard to promoting disability equality. She reminded members that the College had published a Disability Equality Scheme (DES) and that it had been agreed by the Board of Management that this would be reviewed by June 2007.

The HR Manager reported that to date a number of actions had been taken to encourage learners, staff, external organisations and partners to contribute to the review of the Scheme including :

- the documents being placed on the College's website with an invitation to contribute to the review and future development in the DES;
- all teams considered the DES at the relevant meetings;
- review the DES and its action plan is included with the self-evaluation process for all project and programme teams;and
- staff with a disability have been invited to participate in focus groups due to held during May 2007.

In response to questions D Sneddon reported that to date that of the 14 staff who have declared that they have a disability only 4 have agreed to participate in the focus group. In these circumstances she requested that Trade Union colleagues encourage their members to become involved in this element of the review process. B McQuillan and P Gallagher agreed to do so.

Following discussion members agreed to:

- a) note the contents of the report and its apendix;
- b) comment on the process put in place to review the DES and Action Plan and the process for the review;and
- c) request the HR Manager to bring the revised DES and Action Plan back to a future meeting of the JCC.

13. Avian Flu – Contingency Plan

I Graham informed members of the current position of the College's contingency plan for Avian Flu reminding members that they had previously been consulted on the contents of this plan. He further informed members of that as part of the plan the College would seek to have in place a range of preventative measures which would be designed to lessen the impact of any pandemic however he cautioned that it would not be possible to prevent an outbreak. He reminded members that official predictions of morality rates were considered to be as between 1.5% to 4%. As a consequence the College may expect to 'lose' around between 1-3 members of staff and up to 100 students.

As a consequence the College would seek to provide staff members with access to influenza vaccine which was considered to have some impact in negating the effects of the virus and a strict hand washing regime which would assist in reducing the spread of infection. The principal informed members that while the influenza vaccine would be available on a voluntary basis the hand washing regime would be mandatory within the College. In response to questions the Depute Principal informed members that the College would seek to use 'dry' anti-viral hand washing gels routinely deployed within the National Health Service to reduce infection rates. A demonstration of the use and importance of this product would be given to staff in due course.

The Principal informed members that following the official notification and confirmation of an outbreak of an Avian Flu epedemic within the local community the College would close in order to reduce the spread of infection. Therefore in order to maintain contact with staff the College was seeking the

agreement of the trades unions to established a contact system which use electronic networks other than that supported by First Class email. He reminded members that it would not be possible to ensure the maintenance of the First Class system therefore access to other providers would be required to enable contact to be made. In response to questions the Principal informed members that it was anticipated that the provision of this personal contact information would be confidential and would only be accessed with formal agreement of the branch officials. He further informed members that a 'dual' key approach would be put in place to ensure that authorisation would be required from both branch officials and College managers prior to this information being accessed.

In response to further questions the Principal reported that steps had already been taken to ensure that senior staff contact details were available as part of the contingency planning process.

The Principal also informed members that it was anticipated that the Funding Council would adopt an approach similar to that used to support rural colleges during the 'Foot and Mouth' outbreak to ensure that colleges would not be financially penalised as a consequence of an Avian Flu pandemic due the failure to meet the agreed student activity targets.

The Principal requested that B McQuillan and P Gallagher to collate feedback from union members in regards to the contingency plan in order that their comments could be considered before the final draft was considered by the Board of Management early in session 2007/08.

There followed considerable discussion of the steps which would require to be taken in the event of any pandemic breaking out. The Principal highlighted the importance of maintaining obtaining the agreement of trades unions to ensure that a number of tasks, including payment of staff, continued in the event of a pandemic. In response to questions the Principal outlined the approach proposed by the College to ensure that staff were paid during any pandemic this would be to run the previous month's payroll and account for any differences after the event has passed. This approach was welcomed by trades union members.

I Graham reinforced that the College was not taking the possibility of a pandemic lightly and that the contingency plan would be put in place as soon as possible. It was producing the Policy and Procedures in response to advice from the Cabinet Office's civil contingencies.

Members endorsed the approach proposed in the draft contingency and plan and welcomed the College's pro-active response to a possible Avian Flu pandemic.

14. Analysis of Sickness Absence in the Civil Service 2005

D Sneddon informed members that this report had been placed on the agenda for information purposes. She informed members that although the at the College's absence rates are better than that of the Civil Service they consistently remain higher than those recorded in the private sector.

Members noted the contents of the report.

15. Telephonist/Receptionist Post

A Sherry spoke to his report informing members that the College had been reviewing the operation of the Customer Service role and had concluded that it had not been as successful as had been anticipated. As a consequence the College was now proposing to transfer these posts from the Advice team to the Administration team from August 2007 and that the posts re-titled Telephonist/Receptionist. He informed members that this change would more appropriately meet the needs of the College and provide appropriate support for the post holders.

In response to questions he informed members that the revised job description had been designed to more appropriately reflect the duties currently carried out by the Customer Services Advisers and the operational requirements of the College.

The Assistant Principal further informed members that the current substantive post holder would transfer to the Administration Team from 1 August 2007 with the vacancy going to external advert during June 2007.

In response to questions A Kirk informed members that the job description would be subject to the current job evaluation procedure and that this would identify the salary grade. However he noted that as the revised job description was closely aligned to the existing Customer Service Advisor post it was anticipated that the grading would be broadly similar.

Members agreed:

- a) note the proposed replacement of the Customer Service Advisers posts with that of Telephonist/Receptionist;
- b) note the transfer of the current Customer Services Advisor post to the Administration team with effect from 1 August 2007; and
- c) note that the vacant post will be advertised as that of telephonist/Receptionist in due course.

16. Review of the Impact of New Management Structure

The Principal reminded members that it had been agreed that the College would review the implementation and impact of the new management structure following one year of operation. Therefore he proposed that this would be discussed at the first scheduled meeting of the JCC in session 2007/08. To inform this discussion he invited trades union representatives to seek the views of their members and to provide a summary of these views to A Sherry to be placed on the agenda of the August meeting of the JCC.

He confirmed that he would write formally to trades union / professional associations to confirm this invitation.

B McQuillan and P Gallagher welcomed this opportunity and agreed to seek the views of their members on the revised structure.

17. Risk Management: College Risk Register

A Kirk informed members that the Risk Register was currently being updated to take account of the changes which been proposed at the April Planning Day event. He highlighted that a number of risks had been down-graded following discussion at the Planning Day Event.

The Depute Principal then proceeded to invite further comment from members on the Risk Register.

Following discussion it was agreed that no further amendments were required to the Register at this juncture.

18. HM Treasury

a) Inflation Evidence for Pay Review Body Recommendations

A Kirk informed members that this paper set HM Treasury guidance for public sector pay settlements for academic/financial year 2007/08. He reminded members that the College was required to adhere to this guidance as a condition of grant and urged trade union colleagues to consider this document carefully when formulation salary claims for academic/financial year 2006/07.

Members noted the contents of this document.

b) Civil Service Pay Guidance

Members noted the contents of the report.

19. Closure

With all items on the agenda discussed the Chair thanked members for their attendance and closed the meeting 4.10pm.