UNIVERSITY OF PORTSMOUTH

Human Resources Committee

TIME /DATE / VENUE	13:00, 23 September 2020, via videoconferencing (Google Meet)
PRESENT	Claudia Iton (Chair)
	Jane Hoskins
	David Wilding (up to Min 7)
	Christopher Williams (up to Min 9)
IN ATTENDANCE	Chris Chang, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Global Engagement) (for Min 7)
	Helen Dunn, Deputy Director of HR (Organisational Development)
	Professor Paul Hayes, Deputy Vice-Chancellor
	Rebecca Hopkins, Deputy Director of HR (People Services)
	Dr Mike Rayner, Staff Representative (up to Min 9)
	Alison Thorne-Henderson, Executive Director of HR
	Bernie Topham, Chief Operating Officer and Deputy Vice Chancellor
	Professor David Sanders, Staff Governor
SECRETARIAT	Adrian Parry, Executive Director of Corporate Governance
	Jemma Keys, Senior Governance Officer

1 Election of Chair

1.1 Committee agreed that Claudia Iton should be invited to serve as Chair of the Human Resources Committee for a three year term, in line with the Standing Orders of the Board of Governors.

2 Welcome, Quoracy, Conflict of Interest and Apologies

2.1 The Chair welcomed members to the meeting. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this meeting was conducted virtually via videoconferencing. Members were reminded of the protocols for virtual governor meetings.

2.2 Apologies were received from the Vice-Chancellor: Graham Galbraith and Staff Governor: Lyuda Wade. Apologies for early departure were received from External Governors: David Wilding and Chris Williams; and Staff Representative: Mike Rayner.

2.3 The Executive Director of Corporate Governance confirmed that the meeting was quorate and could proceed to business.

2.4 There were no conflicts of interest declared.

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3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 20 May 2020 were confirmed as an accurate record.

4 Matters Actioned and Matters Arising

4.1 Action was reported within the agenda papers on two items which would be covered later in the agenda.

4.2 There were no other matters arising.

5 Annual Review of the Committee's Terms of Reference

5.1 Committee noted the paper which provided a mapping of the Terms of Reference of the Committee against the Committee business conducted in 2019/2020.

5.2 Committee agreed that its Terms of Reference remained appropriate for the 2020/2021 academic year and that no amendments were required at this time. The Committee agreed that a revised form of wording should be prepared to enable paragraph 8 of the Terms of Reference to be amended to reflect the new arrangements for appeals that would accompany the implementation of revised HR policies. The timescales for the amendment to the Terms of Reference would need to align with the implementation of the new policies.

Action: Executive Director of Corporate Governance

5.3 Committee noted the indicative business of the Human Resources Committee for the 2020/2021 session. The following points were noted in discussion:

(i) Talent and Succession Planning: Committee discussed its responsibility to advise and oversee the University's development and deployment of strategies and approaches for talent management and succession planning. The following points were noted:

(a) It was anticipated that the Committee would receive a preliminary update on the University's early thinking of talent and succession planning during the 2021/2022 academic year.

Action: Executive Director of HR

(b) A number of discrete activities were underway across the University to support leadership and management development and momentum continued in this area, albeit on a smaller scale due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on priorities. The HR Department was working on a paper that discussed the establishment of a framework for leadership/management development. This would be considered by the University Executive Board in the near future. Committee agreed that an update would be provided in February 2021 which would provide an outline of the discussions that were underway around the leadership/management framework.

Action: Deputy Director of HR (Organisational Development)

(ii) <u>Performance Development Review (PDR)</u>: It was suggested that the PDR could be a useful tool for identifying future talent. It was noted that it remained the University's expectation that all staff would complete the PDR process this year and that these would not be held in abeyance as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was also important that line-managers and staff continued to hold informal discussions, especially during this period of uncertainty. The University recognised and had reassured staff that it was to be expected that objectives would need to be changed or modified at a later date due to the uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

(iii) <u>People Delivery Plan Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)</u>: Committee agreed that an update on the People Delivery Plan KPI's should be received at its meeting in May 2021.

Action: Executive Director of HR

(iv) <u>HR and Finance System Update:</u> The University had recently welcomed its new Chief Information Officer, Jon Ward. This appointment created an opportunity for the HR and Finance System project programme to be reviewed to ensure that it continued to be fit-for-purpose. It was noted that the implementation of the Student Records System was a priority that needed to be balanced with the additional workload that was being placed upon the Information Systems team by the move to increased use of online learning. It was noted that the Infrastructure and Finance Committee was responsible for monitoring IS projects. Committee agreed that it should receive, via correspondence for information purposes, any relevant project updates submitted to the Infrastructure and Finance Committee and that important project updates should be received at future Committee meetings as necessary.

Action: Senior Governance Officer

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6   HR Committee Self-Assessment Questionnaire – Key Findings

Committee received a report from Adrian Parry, Executive Director of Corporate Governance, that outlined the results and key findings from the HR Committee self-assessment questionnaire for 2019/2020. The following points were noted in discussion:

6.1   The Executive Director of Corporate Governance thanked members for completing the survey and for providing detailed responses to each of the questions. Overall, the responses were very positive and members had reported that they were content that the Committee had demonstrated a greater strategic focus than previous years. Members also reported that they were satisfied that the Committee environment facilitated discussion and provided an opportunity for members to express their views, potential concerns and opinions.

6.2   Committee welcomed the recent HR Policy briefings which had provided an opportunity to consider a specific issue in-depth.

6.3   The survey identified that members would welcome an opportunity to contribute to the People Delivery Plan Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). As previously noted, an update on the KPIs had would be added to the indicative Committee Business for May 2021.

6.4   Members had commented that there was too much repetition of business between the Board and Committees. It was noted that this was a broader governance issue rather than a matter specific to the Human Resources Committee.

6.5   The survey highlighted that members would welcome the opportunity for greater interaction with the University Community. The paper highlighted current opportunities available to governors which aimed to encourage interaction with staff and students. Committee agreed that a list of potential options for improving the Committee's interaction with the University Community should be submitted to the next Committee meeting for discussion. It was noted that the benefits associated with virtual meetings could provide additional opportunities for staff and student interaction and engagement.

Action: Senior Governance Officer

6.6   Committee discussed governor appraisals and how these fitted into wider governance effectiveness mechanisms. Members discussed the possibilities of widening the responsibility for governor appraisals to Committee Chairs and the option of self-

appraisals. It was agreed that the Executive Director of Corporate Governance would discuss options with the Chair of the Board outside of the meeting.

6.7 Committee agreed that the self-assessment survey should continue to be conducted annually.

7 Race Equality Charter

Committee received a verbal report from Chris Chang, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Global Engagement and Partnerships) that provided an update on the development of the Race Equality Charter submission and action plan. The following key points were noted in discussion:

7.1 A Race Equality Survey had been conducted in November 2019. The staff and student response rates to the survey had been particularly high. It was noted that the survey questions had been largely predetermined by Advance HE who administered the Race Equality Charter. This enabled Advance HE and the University to benchmark results against other institutions who subscribed to the Charter.

7.2 There was a significant disparity in the representation of Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) within the academic and research staff and the professional service staff populations. BAME staff represented 14% of academic and research staff and 5% of professional and support staff. It was important to improve BAME representation within both the academic and research and the professional service staff populations. The University would be implementing anonymous recruitment for professional services posts. It was noted that this initiative was difficult to apply to academic recruitment due to the importance placed upon named research outputs. Further consideration would be given to removing potential bias in the recruitment of academic staff.

7.3 The survey had highlighted that there was a perception amongst BAME members of staff that they had not been provided with the same development opportunities as white members of staff.

7.4 There was a higher turnover of BAME staff when compared to the turnover of white staff. Opportunities for progression and the make-up of internal interview panels was a key consideration for addressing this area of concern.

7.5 A self-assessment team had been formed to assess the University's policies and processes around issues including staff and student recruitment, retention and student outcomes. The self-assessment team had considered the survey data in detail

and this data had provided a foundation for the development of the University's action plan for the submission.

7.6 There were a number of activities already underway across the University that aimed to address race inequalities in specific areas. The action plan was particularly important because it would draw together these activities and future initiatives into a single comprehensive action plan. This ensured that the University was taking an institution-wide and joined up approach to race equality.

7.7 A high percentage of staff and students who completed the survey indicated that they understood why the survey was important and had shown an eagerness to engage. The Black Lives Matter movement had further advanced conversations and engagement around race equality.

7.8 The action plan would cover a period of three years however, the University would incorporate this into a wider five-year strategy.

7.9 It was important to the consider the Race Equality Charter as an aid to the wider ambitions outlined in the University's Strategy which focused upon creating an inclusive culture through cultural, structural and systematic changes.

7.10 Committee would receive a summary of the Race Equality Charter submission and associated action plan at its meeting in December 2020. The deadline for submission to Advance HE was February 2021.

Action: Senior Governance Officer

8 Staff Engagement Plan

Committee received a verbal report from Helen Dunn, Deputy Director of HR (Organisational Development) that provided an update on the progress to develop a Staff Engagement Plan. The following points were noted in discussion:

8.1 A staff wellbeing and remote working survey had been conducted in July 2020. There had been a high level of participation from staff. The survey sought feedback from staff on remote and flexible working, wellbeing and communications, and support received during the COVID-19 lockdown.

8.2 Feedback from the survey highlighted that staff felt that the University had handled the lockdown well and that top-level communications had been well received. Some members of staff commented that manager level communications could have been

improved. It was noted that some managers had communicated better at a local level when compared to others. Best practice guidance had been shared with managers to encourage team engagement and communication. A key consideration for the next six months was to ensure that strong communication and engagement with staff continued.

8.3   Some staff expressed an interest in working from home post COVID-19. However, some staff commented that they had felt socially isolated.

8.4   It was noted that some staff had found the uncertainty of the situation difficult. The University would continue to provide reassurance and support to staff to help them to cope with the changing nature of the current situation. Training opportunities were available remotely to support staff to become more resilient during periods of change.

8.5   The University was considering options to improve wellbeing provision and the associated resources available to staff. It was noted that the University had a new Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) and had procured a new service with an organisation called Togetherall, who would provide remote wellbeing support and training to staff and students.

8.6   A technology supplier that would provide the platform for staff surveys for the next two years had been appointed. This platform would also provide an opportunity to benchmark data against other institutions. A paper would be submitted to the University Executive Board in October which would consider the topics for staff surveys going forward.

9   HR Policy Review

Committee received a report and presentation from Rebecca Hopkins, Deputy Director of HR (People Services) that outlined the key changes to the four HR policies that had been submitted to the Committee for approval. The following points were noted in discussion:

9.1   The overarching aim of the new and revised policies was to support the University to meet its ambition to inspire and empower staff to deliver the overall vision of the University.

9.2   Implementation of the policies would be phased. It was important to ensure that all relevant stakeholders receive training to support them as they implemented the policies.

9.3   Fixed Term Contracts Policy:

(i)   This was a new policy. Currently, termination of fixed term contracts were managed through the Organisational Change Policy: Redeployment and Redundancy which outlined that the termination of fixed-term contracts should be approved by the Vice-Chancellor via submission of a business case. The new policy proposed that responsibility for decisions regarding the expiry of a fixed term contract should rest with the employee's line-manager.

(ii)   Appeals against termination were currently considered by a panel of governors. The new policy proposed that responsibility for the consideration of appeals should rest with a panel of two managers at grade 10 or above.

(iii)   In response to a question, it was noted that employees on fixed-term contacts would usually be asked to complete a PDR, depending on the length of the fixed-term contract.

9.4   Probation Policy:

(iv)   This was a new policy. Currently, performance issues whilst on probation were managed through the Management of Under-performance Procedure (MUPP). The new policy sought to separate this process from MUPP and to establish a separate Probation Policy.

(v)   Responsibility for the consideration of appeals would rest with a panel of two managers at grade 10 or above.

9.5   Disciplinary Policy:

(i)   Key changes to the current disciplinary policy:

(a) Responsibility for organising hearings at sanction level would remain with the HR Department and responsibility for organising termination appeals would transfer from Corporate Governance Department to the HR Department. Discussions were underway within the HR Department to determine how it would manage and resource the organisation of hearings in future.

(b) Appeals against first and final written warnings would be considered by a panel of at least two senior managers at Grade 10 or above.

(c) In cases of possible termination of employment, the new policy proposed that a hearing should be conducted by a panel of at least two senior managers at Grade 10 or above (who were more senior than the manager who had issued the final written warning).

(d) The new policy proposed that appeals against termination should be conducted by a panel of at least two UEB members who would be drawn from a different Faculty or Department and whose composition would be diverse where possible.

(ii) Committee discussed the possible sanctions outlined in the Disciplinary Policy. It was noted that suspension without pay and demotion would only be applied in special circumstances.

9.6   Grievance Policy:

(i) Currently, the University had a grievance policy and separate investigation guidelines. The new policy proposed three significant changes to the current policy:

(a) In future, a grievance meeting would be conducted upon completion of the investigation report. This aimed to encourage open discussions about the report findings and to resolve the grievance at an early stage in the process.

(b) The new policy proposes that the ACAS investigation guidelines should be used in future. This ensures that best practice continued to be followed.

(c) Currently, appeals were considered by a governor panel. The draft procedure proposed that appeals should be considered by a panel of at least two senior managers at Grade 10 or above.

(ii) The policy requested that grievances be raised within 6 months of the incident. There was flexibility in this timescale depending on the nature of the grievance.

(iii) The new policy requested members of staff to outline the remedy they wished to seek as a result of the grievance. It was noted that the scoping meeting

undertaken by the investigating manager was an important process and would support the member of staff concerned to determine remedies.

9.7 The policies outlined the allowed grounds for appeal. The training and guidance provided alongside the policies would be key to ensuring that expectations were clearly outlined and managed.

9.8 The University would closely monitor how the policies were performing following their implementation. Committee agreed that a review of the implementation of the new and revised policies should be submitted to the Committee within one year of policy implementation.

Action: Deputy Director of HR (People Services)

9.9 Following discussions, Committee approved the following policies:

(i)   Fixed-Term Contract Policy
(ii)   Probation Policy
(iii)   Disciplinary Policy
(iv)   Grievance Policy

10   Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting would take place at 1300 on Wednesday 2 December 2020.