University of Portsmouth

People, Culture and Engagement Committee

TIME /DATE / VENUE	1400, Wednesday 27 September 2023 in Room 0.32, Unit 1, St Andrew's Court
PRESENT	Claudia Iton (Chair)
	David Wilding
	Chris Williams (via video conference)
	Professor Graham Galbraith (from Minute 8)
IN ATTENDANCE	Fiona Hnatow, Chief People Officer
	Becky Miles, Professional Services Staff Governor
	Professor Richard Thelwell, Academic Staff Governor
	Nikki Sowerby, Staff Representative
	Sue Davies, Faculty Manager, BAL (Minute 4 only)
	Chris Chang, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Global Engagement and Student Life) (Minute 10 only)
	Yvonne Howard, Director of Race and Equality (Minute 10 only)
	Ebi Sosseh, Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (Minute 10 only)
	James Ross, Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Information Officer (Minute 10 only)
SECRETARIAT	Claire Dunning, Executive Director of Corporate Governance
	Jacqui Bryden, Senior Governance Officer

To facilitate the attendance of staff for specific items, some items were taken out of the order designated in the agenda.

1 Welcome, Quoracy, Conflict of Interest and Apologies

1.1   The Chair welcomed members to the meeting.

1.2   Apologies were received from: David Willan, Chair of the Board; Professor Paul Hayes, Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor; and Wayne Bowen, Head of HR Strategic Planning.

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

1.4   There were no conflicts of interest declared.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 May 2023 were confirmed as an accurate record.

3 Matters Actioned and Matters Arising

3.1 Action was reported within the agenda papers on five items; one action for note, two actions to be received on the agenda and two items to be received at a future meeting.

3.2 There were no other matters arising.

4 People, Culture and Engagement: BAL Faculty Office

Sue Davies, Faculty Manager provided a presentation on the work of the Faculty Office in the Faculty of Business and Law and how it contributes to the delivery of the University Strategy.

4.1 The key points noted were:

i. The new Executive Dean had been appointed recently and the interim Executive Dean would remain as the Deputy in the new Faculty leadership team.

ii. The professional services team consisted of nine specialisms within a flat structure all of whom contributed to the delivery of the four strategic imperatives.

iii. The Faculty offered the highest number of degree apprenticeships in the University and approximately 120 students were on programmes that facilitated study abroad, predominantly Europe and Australia.

iv. Placements consisted of one year of paid work within a four-year degree and the ability to undertake them had been affected by the pandemic. The Placements team maintained very close links with the Global team. It was important to provide support during the placement because undertaking one broke up the cohort and the support provided by the cohort.

v. The Faculty consisted of approximately 200 academic staff and 50 support staff. There were no technical support staff.

vi. Student recruitment was carried out via a central service who had close working relationships with Faculty staff and also linked to marketing and outreach in a matrix structure.

vii. The Faculty had organised a Big Networking Event recently and it had been pleasing that a large number of students had wanted to share their positive stories.

4.2 In discussion, the Committee noted:

i. Faculty office customers were both internal and external, for example, grant and funding providers, and there was skill within the team to add value in creating excellent working relationships.

ii. The Faculty office had a team based inclusive culture with regular team meetings and awaydays, offered opportunities for hybrid working and development. There were more female to male staff.

iii. The main challenge was student numbers and as a Faculty had been affected more than other faculties due to the higher number of international students. International students had been affected by the pandemic, changes to visas, currency rates, travel and the opening of new markets. More effective data management would help to improve market analysis.

iv.   The new academic structure in each school reflected the Faculty structure which provided for better links and improved working relationships.

v.   The Faculty plan incorporated the four strategic imperatives and cascaded to individual PDRs. The Faculty plan mapped to the work of the professional staff to be able to identify where the most impact could be made. Outcomes were measured both qualitatively and quantitively.

vi.   The outcomes of the recent National Student Survey had provided information to make improvements and would be incorporated into the Faculty plan.

vii. The Faculty aimed to apply for the Athena SWAN silver award in 2024 and the Faculty office would apply the University strategy to increase diversity and become more reflective of the student demographic.

4.3   The Committee noted the presentation and thanked the Faculty office staff for their contribution to the University Strategy.

5   People, Culture and Engagement: People Strategy Update

Fiona Hnatow, Chief People Officer presented an update on the People Strategy and the progress of the HR Operating Plan.

5.1   The key points noted were:

i.   The People Strategy had been implemented a year ago in October 2022 following a period of consultation with many stakeholders. As issues had emerged, for example the University Reset, the Strategy had been refreshed accordingly.

ii.   The recent Voluntary Severance Scheme had ended on 30 September 2023.

iii. The key enabler to delivering the Strategy was the HR Operating Plan, the progress of which the senior members of the HR leadership team reviewed every four weeks. Each item in the Operating Plan was owned by one of the senior HR leadership team to ensure completion.

iv.   The Payroll department had recently joined Human Resources and the Continuous Improvement had been implemented to review processes and improvements.

v.   The Strategy focused on nine key themes with a particular emphasis on leadership development, equality, diversity and inclusivity (EDI), and wellbeing. The EDI theme would have a name change to Inclusion and Wellbeing and would in future include health, welfare, safeguarding and Prevent.

vi.   Continuous Improvement were analysing the use of Artificial Intelligence within HR processes.

vii. There had been significant progress since July as projects had been implemented as part of HR and Finance Digital Plan. Applications for vacancies had increased in number and improved in quality.

viii. Changes to HR processes had been implemented following full consultation with HR staff who had the opportunity to provide feedback and make suggestions.

ix.   The University had made its submission to Athena Swan for a silver award and planned to achieve a Race Equality Charter silver award.

x. Management assessment would be introduced into the Performance Development Reviews from 2024. The move of performance assessment to the ITrent platform would be put back due to cost and would have the ability to provide data on performance and talent management.

xi. The date of the next Staff Survey would be confirmed at the next meeting in November.

Action: Chief People Officer

5.2 In discussion, the Committee noted:

i. The combination of EDI with Wellbeing would provide a holistic approach to improving diversity.

ii. Since Occupational Health had been outsourced to Cordell Health, data usage reports and reasons for referral had improved and provided valuable management information. The recent call for Mental Health First Aiders and the launch of the Mental Wellness Hub were integral to facilitating fast help and support for staff and students.

iii. It was important to protect essential HR initiatives and to use budgets for learning and development most effectively.

5.3 The Committee noted the update.

6 Annual Review of the Terms of Reference

Claire Dunning, Executive Director of Corporate Governance provided a report on the assessment of the work undertaken by the Committee in 2022/23 when mapped against its terms of reference, the current terms of reference for the Committee, and an indicative work programme for the academic year 2023/24.

6.1 The Committee:

i. Noted the assessment for the year 2022/2023 and agreed its assurance to the Board that it had discharged its terms of reference.

ii. Agreed that there were no changes would be required to the terms of reference at this time.

7 Draft Protocol for the Approval of HR Policies

Claire Dunning, Executive Director of Corporate Governance provided a report on the proposed revision of the Protocol for the Approval of HR policies. The protocol had been updated to ensure that there is an efficient use of the time and work of the Committee aligned to the People Strategy, the Instrument and Articles of Government and the Committee Terms of Reference.

7.1 Key points noted were:

i. The protocol had been developed to set out which HR policies should be approved by the Committee.

ii. At its last meeting, the Committee had received a report setting out a schedule of HR policies and guidance to be reviewed. It was suggested that the policies for Committee approval should be those policies where the outcome of a decision could potentially lead to the termination of an employee's contract of employment. Five policies would therefore require Committee approval when they were reviewed and updated. The policies are identified as:

a) Disciplinary;
b) Managing Sickness Absence;
c) Management of Underperformance (Capability);
d) Organisational Change & Redundancy; and
e) Grievance

7.2 In discussion, it was noted that:

i. The policies that were formerly approved by the Committee had been allocated a strategy for review and approval elsewhere, as appropriate.

ii. The policies for approval would be scheduled for Committee review as they were updated.

iii. The new protocol would prevent duplication of business heard by the Board and its committees.

7.3 The Committee agreed the following:

i. An annual report of extant policies and guidance with a date of review would be received by the Committee. The report would include the dates of review and Committee approval for the five policies that had contractual implications.

ii. To approve the employment policies that have contractual implications for employees and/or for compliance with the University's legal and regulatory duties.

iii. To receive and note an annual report on equal pay and reward.

iv. To receive and note an annual report on staff mental health training.

v. To receive and note an annual summary report detailing the salient points arising from staff appeals and employment.

8 Update on the Annual Vice-Chancellor's Awards

Fiona Hnatow, Chief People Officer provided an oral report on the annual Vice-Chancellor's Awards. The Award categories had been updated in 2023 to improve student involvement and inclusion and also recognised voluntary activities.

8.1 Key points noted were:

i. The ten new categories were:

a) Internationalisation

b) Outstanding Contribution to Environmental Sustainability

c) Outstanding Contribution to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

d) Outstanding Contribution to the Local Community

e) Partnerships and Collaboration

f) Professional Services Excellence

g) Research Impact

h) Student Experience and Outcomes

i) Teaching Excellence

j) Technological or Digital Innovation

ii. The Board had been invited to attend the award ceremony on 28 November 2023.

8.2 The Committee noted the update.

9 Annual Report on the Trends in Staff Appeals and Grievances - confidential

10 EDI Data Reports for Students and Staff

Chris Chang, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Global Engagement and Student Life), Yvonne Howard, Director of Race and Equality, Ebi Sosseh, Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and James Ross, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Information Officer presented data reports of equality, diversity and inclusion for both staff and students for the academic year 2021/2022.

10.1 Key points noted were:

i. The reports would have been available in June but the University's submission for a silver Athena SWAN award had been prioritised.

ii. Student data referred to People of the Global Majority (PGM) and the staff data referred to Black, Asian and Minoritised Ethnic (BAME) which aligned with the preference of each group. It was important to be nuanced and specific where necessary.

Staff Data Report

iii. The percentage of BAME women in academic roles had increased since the last report by a headcount of four but remained at 6 percentage points below the national benchmark of 29%. The recent review of the process of Promotion to Professor and Reader would facilitate more positive outcomes and enable the University to develop female staff internally.

iv. Overall ethnicity in academic roles had increased from 13% to 17%. In professional services, 8% of staff were BAME which was 5% below the national average. Census data indicated that 15% of residents in Portsmouth identified as BAME.

v. Further analysis of the data would facilitate more positive actions and there would be evidence of tangible results in three to five years.

vi. Turnover rates had increased overall for both academic and professional staff in the last year to 2021/2022. Turnover for academic BAME staff was nearly double that of white staff. It was important to develop the use of exit interviews to find specific patterns and trends to address them and to promote the staff networks.

vii. When applying for an academic role, BAME men are less likely to be invited for interview and this has remained the case for the last two years. Of the BAME men who were interviewed, 49% received an offer of employment and it was identified that the main issue was being shortlisted.

viii. Actions to improve diversity in recruitment was to provide the interview questions in advance specifically for neuro-diverse candidates and also for those with English as a second language.

ix. There were few black female academics especially at senior grades across the HE sector and it was important to address this.

Student Data Report

x. Drop-out rates for international students was high and could be attributed to greater debt, fees and government changes to UK visa rules to tighten migration controls.

xi. The awarding gap had widened from 10% to 17%, which may be attributable to the removal of the 'no detriment' policy that had been introduced in response to the pandemic and would be reviewed over the next year to identify the specific reasons for the increase, including the assessment process.

10.2 In discussion, it was noted that:

i. Diversity in recruitment improved when recruiting at entry levels and from placements.

ii. The awarding gap for Black men was of concern. The greater gap was attributed to commuting distances and the tendency to not ask for help and support. It was important for students to start and settle well, transition to University life and for the University to manage student expectations. Actions would also be identified through work in progress to achieve the Race Equality Charter.

iii. It was important to identify the priorities that had been identified in the data and to review progress annually. Areas to address for staff should include recruitment, progression and retention, and types of employment contracts. Areas to address for students was retention, engagement and wellbeing, and the awarding gap.

iv. The reports were very detailed. Future reports should be presented as a summary of key themes and issues for discussion, attention and prioritised for action with the greater details presented as an appendix.

Action: Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Global Engagement and Student Life)

10.3 The Committee noted the reports, approved them for internal publication and supported the promotion of EDI values.

11 Committee Evaluation and Self-Assessment

Claire Dunning, Executive Director of Corporate Governance provided a report on the proposed self-assessment questionnaire for the Committee to critically reflect on its effectiveness and the value-added contribution that it makes to the delivery of the University's strategic objectives.

11.1 The key points noted were:

    i.   Each committee should carry out a regular self-assessment to evaluate the effectiveness of the work of the committee. The last self-assessment had been carried out in 2020.

    ii.   The questions should be tailored to each committee and its focus.

11.2 The Committee:

    i.   Agreed that a self-assessment exercise be conducted during October 2023.

Action: Senior Governance Officer

    ii.   Amended the draft self-assessment questionnaire at question B6 to:

- How satisfied are you that people, culture and engagement issues are given sufficient prominence in Board business?

Action: Senior Governance Officer

    iii.   Noted that anonymised results will be discussed at a future meeting.

Action: Executive Director of Corporate Governance

12 Indicative Committee Business

Committee discussed and noted the indicative programme of work for 2023/2024.

13 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee would take place on Thursday 30 November 2023.

Confirmed committee dates for 2024:

- Thursday 29 February 2024 – 13:00 to 16:00
- Thursday 16 May 2024 – 14:00 to 17:00
- Thursday 19 September 2024 – 13:30 to 16:30
- Thursday 5 December 2024 – 13:30 to 16:30.