

## Human Resources Committee

TIME /DATE / VENUE	1400, 4 December 2019 , Room 0.32, St Andrew's Court
PRESENT	Claudia Iton (Chair) Professor Graham Galbraith David Wilding Christopher Williams
IN ATTENDANCE	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 Alison Thorne-Henderson, Executive Director of HR. Bernie Topham, Chief Operating Office and Deputy Vice Chancellor. Professor David Sanders, Staff Governor Lyuda Wade, Staff Governor
SECRETARIAT	Adrian Parry, Executive Director of Corporate Governance Jemma Keys, Senior Governance Officer

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### 1 Welcome, Quoracy, Declaration of Interests and Apologies

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed External Governors: David Wilding, Christopher Williams, and Executive Director of Human Resources: Alison Thorne-Henderson to their first meeting of the Committee.
- 1.2 Apologies were received from External Governor: Jane Hoskins.
- 1.3 There were no conflicts of interests declared. It was confirmed that the meeting was quorate and could proceed to business.

### 2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2019 were confirmed and signed as an accurate record.

### 3 Matters Actioned and Matters Arising

- 3.1 Action was reported within the agenda papers on four matters; three items were for note and one item would be covered later in the agenda.



3.2 The following matters arising were noted:

- (i) Pay Award 2019/2020: Following conclusion of national pay negotiations for 2019/2020, the University and College Union (UCU) had balloted for strike action over disputes relating to pay. The turnout of the UCU ballot at the University of Portsmouth had not met the required threshold for industrial action. Industrial action had taken place at a number of other universities during November and December 2019.
- (ii) Race Equality Charter: At its meeting on 21 May 2019, the Committee noted that an action plan would be developed as part of the Race Equality Charter submission. It was noted that a Race Equality Charter self-assessment team had been formed which was led by Chris Chang, Pro-Vice Chancellor (Global Engagement and Partnerships). A Race Equality Charter Survey that sought the views and experiences of staff and students from all backgrounds and nationalities had been circulated in November 2019. The results from the survey would be analysed and would feed into the action plan for the submission.

#### **4 Special Meeting Summary Reports – confidential item**

### **5 Annual Review of the Committee’s Terms of Reference, Indicative Committee Business, and HR Performance Review**

- 5.1 Committee noted the paper which provided a mapping of the Terms of Reference of the Committee against the Committee business conducted in 2018/2019.
- 5.2 Committee considered its Terms of Reference. It was agreed that the following amendments should be made:
  - (i) Point 2 should be updated to highlight the Committee’s role which was to oversee and review the University’s approach to ensuring a positive and supportive working environment for all staff.
  - (ii) Point 3 should be updated to highlight that the Committee’s role was to oversee the overall approach undertaken in relation to the national bargaining process for the settlement of pay for staff other than Senior Postholders. It was noted that the national pay negotiations were subject to an approved national bargaining process and therefore the Committee was unable to approve or make amendments to the nationally agreed final pay award. It was important, however, that the Committee remained sighted on the national bargaining process and considered whether the process continued to be the best approach



to setting pay for the University. It was agreed that, each year once the negotiating process had concluded, the Committee should undertake a review to ensure that this process continued to meet the University's needs. This should be added to the Committee's indicative business for September 2020.

- (iii) Point 5 of the Committees responsibilities should be updated to advise and oversee the University's approach to Equality and Diversity.
- (iv) Point 6 should be updated to advise and oversee the University's development and deployment of strategies and approaches for talent management and succession planning.
- (v) Point 8 should be updated once the new HR policies had been finalised.

**Action: Senior Governance Officer**

5.3 Committee noted the indicative business of the Human Resources Committee for the 2019/2020 session. The following points were noted in discussion:

- (i) The paper was an aide memoire which would be updated as necessary throughout the year.
- (ii) It was agreed that the Committee should receive regular updates on the Staff Engagement Plan. A substantive item on the progress of the Plan should be added to the Committee business under the February 2020 meeting.

**Action: Senior Governance Officer**

- (iii) Committee should receive a full update on the provisional Gender Pay Gap figures at its meeting in February 2020. A web link of the published figures should be subsequently circulated to Committee members once the data had been published on the University website.
- (iv) It was agreed that the Committee should continue to meet four times a year, and that a meeting should be scheduled for September 2020.

**Action: Senior Governance Officer**

- (v) The amended indicative business should be circulated to the next meeting of the Committee.

**Action: Senior Governance Officer**

5.4 Committee noted the draft self-assessment questionnaire for 2018/2019. The following points were noted in discussion:

- (i) Committee welcomed the draft Human Resources Committee self-assessment questionnaire.
- (ii) It was agreed that the scores should be reversed so that 4 was most satisfied and 1 was least satisfied.
- (iii) The draft questionnaire should be submitted to the May 2020 meeting of the Committee for comment. Each Committee member should then be asked to complete the questionnaire independently outside of the meeting. The results of the survey should be reported at the meeting in September 2020.

**Action: Senior Governance Officer**

## 6 Developing an Employee Engagement Strategy

6.1 Helen Dunn, Deputy Director of HR (Organisational Development) presented on the University's early thoughts on the development of a Staff Engagement Plan. The following points were noted in discussion:

- (i) Following approval of the new University Strategy, it was timely to consider the best approach to staff engagement. Staff engagement had previously focused on the biennial Staff Survey, with other surveys scattered throughout the year. The measurement of staff engagement was important to develop a planned and long-term view of staff engagement at the University.
- (ii) A Staff Engagement Advisory Group had been formed to support the development of the staff engagement plan. A staff engagement plan model had been created which aimed to support and encourage conversations around the meaning of engagement at Portsmouth.
- (iii) The Staff Engagement Advisory Group had identified four key themes that underpinned engagement at the University. These were:
  - (a) Relationships (trust, respect, collaboration);
  - (b) Roles (meaning, purpose and empowerment);
  - (c) Valued (recognition and reward); and
  - (d) Voice (influence).
- (iv) A communication plan would be developed which would ensure that a unified approach was taken to communications to staff. The communication plan would also ensure that messaging to staff was clear and dynamic and would aim to establish linkages between the different components of engagement. It was important to demonstrate any activity undertaken in relation to engagement

had a wider-purpose and that necessary actions had taken place as a result of any feedback received.

- (v) It was noted that cultures, behaviour and the values of the University would play a key role in influencing the activity that takes place around the four key themes and the University's overall approach to engagement.
- (vi) It was noted that a pulse survey themed around dignity and respect would be circulated to staff next year. This would enable a programme of delivery to be subsequently measured by later pulse surveys.
- (vii) The University Executive Board would be a key driver of the staff engagement plan. It was important that engagement activities undertaken on a University-wide basis were linked to local survey plans and the delivery plans that underpinned the new University Strategy.
- (viii) Pulse surveys were short surveys that focused upon a particular theme. These surveys could therefore be undertaken more regularly and could focus predominately on areas that required further investigation. It was noted that pulse surveys provided an opportunity to identify any changes in the University's culture. This was compared to the biennial staff survey that only provided a snapshot of the views of staff. The questions in the pulse survey would be linked to questions outlined within the staff survey to enable comparisons to be made on responses.
- (ix) Staff wellbeing and resilience was a key theme of the new University Strategy. It was noted that a separate plan would be developed that would focus upon wellbeing and resilience. This plan would feed into the wider engagement plan.
- (x) It was important that engagement activities were incorporated into leadership and management activities. The PDR was an important tool which should be utilised to add value to the engagement activities and to enable these to be linked to staff roles. It was important to build a positive energy around engagement.
- (xi) The formal title of the plan would be considered once the initial planning of the document had concluded. The University was moving away from having a number of 'strategies' to prevent any confusion with the University Strategy.
- (xii) To explore the delivery of the new University Strategy, the Vice-Chancellor would hold a number of open meetings with staff across the year. It was anticipated that this would create a more informal setting for staff to engage and share their feedback.

- (xiii) The engagement plan would be linked to the new University Strategy delivery plan for supporting people. The purpose of the plan should be linked to the ambitions outlined in this delivery plan.
- (xiv) The engagement plan should clearly set out the purpose of the activities and what the University wished to achieve as a result of those activities. It was important to create the right level of focus around activities and to be clear of the priority areas that the University wished to improve.

6.2 Following discussions, the Committee agreed that an update on the development of the engagement plan should be provided at the next meeting. This update should clarify the focus and priorities for employee engagement and the proposed actions to deliver on those areas.

## 7 Policy Update

7.1 Committee received and noted a report from Rebecca Hopkins, Deputy Director of HR (People Services) that provided an update on the HR policies currently under development. The following points were noted in discussion:

- (i) Policies that would be updated as part of the first phase of the HR policy review were:
  - (i) Fixed Term Contracts
  - (ii) Probation
  - (iii) Disciplinary
  - (iv) Managing Under Performance
  - (v) Management of Sickness Absence
  - (vi) Grievance
  - (vii) Anti-bullying and harassment
- (ii) The scope of the review of HR policies had been expanded. It was important to ensure that core HR policies continued to be fit-for-purpose and that the University was appropriately supported as it deployed its new Strategy.
- (iii) It was noted that the University Executive Board (UEB) had expressed the view that 'anti-bullying and harassment' should be titled 'Dignity and Respect' as this was felt to be a more positive and all-encompassing title for the policy.
- (iv) These core policies were critical to ensuring that managers were appropriately supported at work. It was noted that the HR Department would undertake a review of management development and training. This would include a wider



review of key manager competencies and core training for managers. A toolkit would also be developed which would draw upon the key components outlined within these core policies.

- (v) It was noted that, from a legal perspective, it was best practice to maintain separate policies for each of the policy areas, rather than a collective policy.
- (vi) Concern was expressed that the timings outlined in the agenda paper were ambitious. It was noted that, while it was important that these policies were implemented within a timely manner, it was also important to ensure that all parties were appropriately consulted on the new policies. The Deputy Director of HR was invited to re-submit a schedule that would fully accommodate the policy review, approval, training and roll-out, taking into account the potential bottleneck of seven major policies to be reviewed by UEB.

**Action: Rebecca Hopkins, Deputy Director of HR (People Services)**

- (vii) The University's Instrument and Articles of Government had been amended. It was noted that specific detail that related to the content of policies and processes had been removed and these could now be decanted to the policies themselves.

## 8 PDR Update

8.1 Committee received a verbal update from Helen Dunn, Deputy Director of HR (Organisational Development) on the launch of the new online Performance Development Review (PDR) system on 1 April 2019. The following points were noted in discussion:

- (i) Members of staff had been required to complete the new PDR process by the end of October 2019.
- (ii) This was the first time that the new system and process had been released to all staff at the University. Some departments had been selected to partake in a pilot of the system during 2018.
- (iii) Overall the system had been well received by staff. A number of focus groups had been formed which enabled staff to provide feedback on the new system. It was noted that, as a result of feedback received, some updates would be made to the system. The sequencing of the PDR form would be amended to prevent any duplication. Some members of staff had encountered issues with the finalisation process for the PDR form and this process would be simplified.
- (iv) It was important to prevent access to the system once the deadline for completion of the PDR forms had been passed as this encouraged staff to

complete the forms within the required time period. However, staff had indicated that it would be beneficial to have the option to access the system once the forms had been completed to provide updates on the progress of objectives. This was an area under consideration.

- (v) Between April 2019 and October 2019, 77% of staff had completed the PDR process which was a very positive response rate. It was noted that staff who were on probation or long-term absence would not have been required to complete a PDR.
- (vi) UEB would receive a report which would provide an analysis of data captured as part of the PDR process and key areas for consideration as the PDR process developed.

## 9 HR and Finance System Review

9.1 Alison Thorne-Henderson, Executive Director of Human Resources and Rebecca Hopkins, Deputy Director of Human Resources (People Services) delivered a presentation on the HR and Finance System Review. The following key points were noted:

- (i) A fit-for-purpose review of the finance system, e5 and the HR system, iTrent, had been undertaken. This review concluded that a full re-implementation of the two systems should be undertaken to ensure that the University could take advantage of the full functionality of both systems.
- (ii) Committee noted the indicative programme of implementation for the project. It was noted that full implementation of the systems would take approximately two years. It was noted that this was an ambitious project which would be essential to the continued operations of the HR and Finance Departments.
- (iii) Committee noted the high-level risks that were associated with the re-implementation of the systems. These included the scale of the transformation and pace for change; the technical interdependencies of the HR and Finance systems; and time and budget contingency.
- (iv) The new systems would enable accurate management information to be accessed within a timelier manner which would support more evidence-based decision-making. The systems would also provide an opportunity to redeploy effort downstream.



## 10 Review of HR Risks

10.1 Committee received a report from Adrian Parry, Executive Director of Corporate Governance that outlined proposed HR strategic risks for the new iteration of the corporate risk register. The following points were noted in discussion:

- (i) The creation of the new University Strategy provided an opportunity to revisit the University's risk register. This also provided an opportunity for the HR Committee to identify potential areas of strategic coverage within the risk register.
- (ii) Previous activity around the corporate risk register had focused upon establishing a robust process, template and scoring system. It was timely to consider in detail the risks themselves and to ensure that they provide appropriate linkages to the new University Strategy.
- (iii) Delivery plans would be developed under the leadership of the relevant UEB member who would support and deliver each strategic ambition, priority and enabling activity. It was likely that these plans will enable further identification of key strategic risks for inclusion in the corporate risk register.
- (iv) Committee noted the risks that pertained to HR activities within the existing corporate risk register.
- (v) Committee considered the proposed strategic HR risks outlined within the paper. Committee agreed that the proposed risks were important areas that should be covered within the corporate risk register. The following comments were provided:
  - (a) Failure to identify suitable development activities to enable every staff member to reach their potential should be added.
  - (b) An inability to improve and increase staff engagement which results in an inability to deliver the new University strategy should also be added.
  - (c) It was important that staff understood and bought into the new University Strategy.
  - (d) Reference should be made to the Gender Pay Gap.
  - (e) Reference should be made to the importance of leadership skills.

- (vi) Committee noted that they were welcome to email the Executive Director of Corporate Governance if they had any further suggestions.

## **11 Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting would take place at 1400 on Wednesday 26 February 2020.

## **12 Delegated Authority**

Committee agreed to delegate to the Chair authority to take any required Chair's action before the next meeting.