

## Human Resources Committee

TIME /DATE / VENUE	14:00, 20 May 2020, via videoconferencing
PRESENT	Claudia Iton (Chair) Professor Graham Galbraith Jane Hoskins David Wilding Christopher Williams
IN ATTENDANCE	Steve Cosgrove, Programme Lead (HR Transformation) (Min 24) 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 James Ross, Equality and Diversity Information Co-ordinator (Mins 20 and 21) Alison Thorne-Henderson, Executive Director of HR Bernie Topham, Chief Operating Officer and Deputy Vice Chancellor Professor David Sanders, Staff Governor Dave Small, Equality and Diversity Manager (Mins 20 and 21) Lyuda Wade, Staff Governor
SECRETARIAT	Adrian Parry, Executive Director of Corporate Governance Jemma Keys, Senior Governance Officer

### 24 Welcome, Quoracy, Conflict of Interest and Apologies

- 24.1 The Chair welcomed members to the meeting. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this meeting was conducted remotely via videoconferencing. Members were reminded of the protocols for virtual governor meetings.
- 24.2 There were no apologies for absence.
- 24.3 There were no conflicts of interest declared.
- 24.4 The Executive Director of Corporate Governance confirmed that the meeting was quorate and could proceed to business.

## 25 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2020 were confirmed and signed as an accurate record.

## 26 Matters Actioned and Matters Arising

26.1 Action was reported within the agenda papers on one item which would be covered later in the agenda.

26.2 There were no other matters arising.

## 27 Special Meeting Summary Report – confidential item

## 28 Equality and Diversity: Strategic Priorities and Plans

Committee received a presentation from Dave Small, Equality and Diversity Manager and James Ross, Equality and Diversity Information Co-ordinator that provided an overview of key Equality and Diversity strategic priorities and plans. The following points were noted:

28.1 The University's Access and Participation Plan (APP) 2020 to 2025 outlined a number of key performance indicators (KPIs) that assessed its performance in relation to access, attainment, progression and continuation of all under-represented groups. These KPIs were also linked to the University's Equality Objectives and to its wider strategic ambitions.

28.2 There were clear targets that focused upon the attainment of 'good' degree outcomes:

(i) A key aim of the APP was to reduce the University's attainment gap between white and black and minority ethnic (BAME) students. The APP placed a particular focus on black students as this group had the most significant attainment gap at Portsmouth. It was noted that in 2017/2018 the attainment gap between white and black students at the University was 25.6%. The target was to reduce this attainment gap to 10% by 2025.

(ii) The attainment gap between male students from the most deprived areas in 2017/2018 was 13.3% when compared to males from the least deprived areas.



The target outlined in the APP was to reduce this gap at Portsmouth to 6% by 2025.

- (iii) The participation of local areas quartiles (POLAR4) was a key measure used by the Office for Students (OfS) to classify local areas according to participation rates in higher education. Quintile 1 indicated areas with the lowest higher education (HE) participation rates. A key target outlined within the APP was to reduce the attainment gap for the University's POLAR4 Quintile 1 students. At 2017/2018, the attainment gap for Portsmouth students from local areas of highest and lowest HE participation was 3.5%. The target aimed to reduce this gap to 1% by 2025.
- (iv) The attainment gap at Portsmouth for disabled students in 2017/2018 was 5.1% when compared to students with no known disability. The target outlined in the APP was to reduce this gap to 2% by 2025.

28.3 Increased recruitment of BAME staff was a key target outlined in the APP. It was noted that the staff data report for 2018/2019 outlined an increase in the recruitment of BAME staff at the University and that the University was considering further measures to increase recruitment for subsequent years. This would include more targeted advertising of jobs to encourage BAME applications and an analysis of the recruitment application process. Consideration was also being given to how the University could develop and support its BAME students to apply for roles at the University. This included consideration of apprenticeship opportunities and other schemes.

28.4 A number of targeted actions had been implemented to support the targets outlined in the APP. These included inclusive language on recruitment advertisements; undertaking reviews of interview questions to ensure inclusivity; and ensuring that all interviewers had successfully undertaken unconscious bias training. It was noted that the action plan that would be developed as part of the University's Race Equality Charter would outline further actions to be taken in relation to supporting BAME staff and students.

28.5 The University was a member of the Athena SWAN Charter which aimed to advance gender equality across the HE sector. At an institutional level, the University held an Athena SWAN bronze award and planned to submit its application for a silver award in November 2021. A number of departments across the University had also been awarded bronze awards for their commitment to gender equality. In the past week, the University had received notice that the Dental Academy and the Faculty of Business and Law had also been awarded Bronze awards, which was an excellent achievement.

Importantly, it was evident from the data that the Athena SWAN action plans had delivered notable change across the institution.

- 28.6 The University had recently joined Advance HE's Race Equality Charter. There were 62 institutions partaking in the scheme, of which 14 institutions have received an award. The University would submit its application for an award in February 2021. It was noted that the University had conducted a survey of staff and students earlier in the year which would feed into the action plan for the submission. The response rate to the survey had been very high, particularly from BAME staff and students.
- 28.7 A number of equality and diversity focussed audits had been undertaken to support and strengthen work in key areas:
- (i) This year, the University would be participating in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index which assessed the University's achievements and progress on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) equality. The University would conduct a targeted LGBT staff survey from July to November 2020. There was a strong LGBT community network at the University.
  - (ii) The University was also working with Working Families, which was a national campaign organisation for family friendly and inclusive workplaces. Working Families would undertake an audit of the University in November 2020. The organisation would also share examples of best practice to support the University to best assist working families.
  - (iii) The University had signed up to Disability Confident which is a government scheme that aims to support employers to positively change staff attitudes, behaviour and culture around disability and inclusivity. The University was also a member of AccessABLE, which regularly undertook audits of the University's estate to ensure that it was accessible and wheelchair friendly.
- 28.8 The University had a number of staff networks including Multicultural, Neurodiverse and Parent and Carer staff networks. The support provided by these networks to staff during the COVID-19 pandemic had been valuable.
- 28.9 The University offered a comprehensive Equality and Diversity training programme to staff. There had been a marked increase in the take-up of e-learning packages by staff. This increase was linked to the strengthened Performance and Development Review



(PDR) process and the upcoming Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021 submission which required staff to undertake training in particular areas.

- 28.10 Committee noted the actions that would be undertaken to support future Equality and Diversity initiatives. The Equality and Diversity Manager was working closely with the Executive Director of HR to effectively incorporate all equality related actions into the People Delivery Plan. It was also noted that a significant future project was a review of recruitment processes at the University.
- 28.11 Further analysis was required to explore the interrelationship between the attainment gap and factors such as staff composition and the impact of equality and diversity initiatives at the University. It would be helpful to understand how the shape and composition of the staff and student population impacted upon the attainment gap.
- 28.12 The key objective of unconscious bias training was to increase awareness of this issue across the University and to provide a platform for open discussion and challenge on the subject. All staff who were members of staff recruitment interview panels were required to have undertaken unconscious bias training. The point was made that unconscious bias training on its own often had no effect, or at times even a negative effect of strengthening biased behaviour. It was noted that there was no data to show that BAME throughput from application to shortlist to offer had changed following unconscious bias training. The Equality and Diversity Manager mentioned that some work had begun to look at “de-biasing” processes – ‘anonymised’ applications were being considered among other changes.
- 28.13 It was agreed that it would be helpful to receive a summary of the key points of the Race Equality Charter submission at a future meeting of the Committee. It was also agreed that Chris Chang, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Global Engagement and Partnerships) who was leading the Race Equality Charter submission, should attend a future meeting of the Committee to report upon progress.

**Action: Senior Governance Officer**

- 28.14 The staff data report on staff leavers for 2018/2019 highlighted that a large proportion of BAME staff who had left the University had done so because their employment contract had ended. It was questioned whether this was an implication of the types of employment contracts that some BAME staff were offered. It was responded that there were a high proportion of staff from overseas who were employed on research contract activity and these tended to be short-term or funding limited. The University also employed a high proportion of international students on research projects that were

time limited due to the nature of the projects. A key activity of the Race Equality Charter was to analyse the data on recruitment, which would feed into the recommendations outlined within the action plan. It was also noted that BAME staff represented 14% of academic and research staff but only 5% of professional and support staff, even though the BAME community was 12% in Portsmouth and 9% in Hampshire (as at the 2011 national census).

28.15 The University had assigned University Executive Board (UEB) champions for Gender and now Race for Equality and Diversity. This helped to ensure that a strategic approach was taken to decision-making whilst also ensuring that staff from across the University were provided with the opportunity to provide input to the initiatives. UEB was also regularly consulted on progress to meet the targets outlined in the APP. It was important that equality and diversity issues were not considered in isolation and that the initiatives, as a collective, formed part of the mainstream activity of the University.

28.16 Committee thanked Dave Small and James Ross for their insightful presentation.

## **29 Equality and Diversity Staff and Student Data Reports 2018/2019**

Committee received the Staff and Student Data Reports for 2018/2019 from Dave Small, Equality and Diversity Manager and James Ross, Equality and Diversity Information Co-ordinator. Committee approved the Staff Data Report for publication on the University website and noted the Student Data Report for 2018/2019, which had been previously approved by UEB

## **30 People Delivery Plan Update**

Alison Thorne-Henderson, Executive Director of Human Resources, delivered a presentation that provided an update on the development of the People Delivery Plan and the implications and considerations arising as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The following points were noted in discussion:

30.1 The People Delivery Plan was driven by the ambitions outlined in the new University Strategy. COVID-19 had accelerated a number of the ambitions outlined within the University Strategy, such as plans for digital learning. It would be necessary to review the People Delivery Plan in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the changes that had been created in working practices and approaches.



- 30.2 Committee received an overview of the actions taken by the University in the lead up to the COVID-19 lockdown. These included moving to online teaching, the closure of the campus and supporting staff to work from home. There had been limited time to plan for the lockdown, which had been further complicated by rapidly changing government guidance.
- 30.3 The higher education (HE) sector was anticipating significant financial challenges as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic. In particular, there were uncertainties around international and EU recruitment for 2020/2021 academic year and beyond. There was also uncertainty around the potential impact upon UK applicants and whether students may decide to defer their studies for this upcoming academic year.
- 30.4 The University was operating through its normal business processes. It was starting to plan how its staff may safely return to campus once it was allowed and appropriate to do so. It was noted that some staff were anxious about the return to campus and how this would affect them. It was important to ensure that staff continued to be reassured and kept abreast of the University's plans as they developed.
- 30.5 Confidential minute
- 30.6 The University was considering when the next academic year would start and how it might operate. It was developing a blended learning approach to student teaching next year, which would incorporate both online and face-to-face components where possible. The acceleration of digital learning and the greater dependency upon technology would require some staff to adapt and develop new skills. Staff had already demonstrated their adaptability and willingness to learn new ways of working and would be further supported to develop their skills.
- 30.7 Guidelines on supporting staff with small children to work from home had been provided within the frequently asked questions (FAQs) on the University website. Staff within the HR Department were available to answer any queries that line-managers might have around supporting working families. Providing absolute guidelines on this matter was particularly complex due to differences in personal circumstances.
- 30.8 It was recognised that due to the rapid nature of the lockdown, staff may not have all the equipment they need to work from home for a longer period. Processes to enable staff to collect equipment were being developed. Currently staff with occupational health referrals were able to book appointments to collect equipment and plans were being developed to extend this option to all staff.

- 30.9 The University was experimenting with a range of mechanisms to communicate with all staff and students. The Vice-Chancellor had provided regular updates to staff and students through pre-recorded videos. The Vice-Chancellor and members of the senior team would conduct a live interactive question and answers event later in the week, which was open to all staff. If successful, these sessions would become regular events to provide staff with a forum to have their questions answered by the senior team.
- 30.10 It was important to capture any learning points arising from the actions taken as a result of the lock-down and to incorporate these within the wider change management projects that were underway.
- 30.11 Committee commended the work of the University at this extraordinary time.

## 31 Staff Engagement Plan Update

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

- 31.1 Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the staff survey that was due to take place in May 2020 had been postponed to later in the year. The University would conduct an interim staff survey in June 2020, which would focus upon staff wellbeing and the key challenges for staff working remotely. The survey would also seek views from staff on positive elements for future working practices that could be derived from the current situation.
- 31.2 There continued to be a significant amount of engagement with staff during the COVID-19 lockdown. Staff had received regular updates on actions and decisions in the lead-up to the lockdown. Team meetings and Faculty Committees continued to operate remotely and provided opportunities for feedback to be received from staff. The Vice-Chancellor continued to communicate regularly through the VC Bulletin. Additionally, the staff networks continued to provide an important channel of communication and feedback.
- 31.3 The staff survey that was due to have taken place in May 2020 would have focused upon the University Strategy, roles and the alignment of activity with the Strategy. It would be important to revisit the intended survey questions to ensure that they continued to be appropriate. The University had also previously identified a number of

key areas for future surveys which would also be reassessed.

## 32 HR and Finance System Update

Alison Thorne-Henderson, Executive Director of HR and Steve Cosgrove, Programme Lead (HR Transformation), delivered a presentation that provided an update on the HR and Finance System Transformation project. The following key points were noted:

- 32.1 The transformation project was a joint project between the HR and Finance systems. The presentation focused upon the HR element of the project.
- 32.2 The HR Department had undertaken a review of its effectiveness in 2018. The findings from this review outlined a number of areas for improvement including the consolidation of transactional work to improve process efficiency and consistency. The HR systems transformation project addressed these recommendations.
- 32.3 The HR systems had not been utilised to their full technical capacity and the project aimed to increase the usage and efficiency of these systems and to release resources to further support staff and managers.
- 32.4 The iTrent system was the most widely used HR system in the higher education sector. The University had recently upgraded to the latest version of the system and it provided a stable platform. However, the iTrent system was currently underutilised and therefore some data was captured manually.
- 32.5 Phase one of the project included rationalising the systems that feed into iTrent and considering the necessary areas of investment in relation to the additional modules offered by iTrent to increase utilisation and effectiveness of the system. Phase two included an in-depth review of the data quality and the interfaces with other systems to ensure that real-time data could be accessed by the iTrent system and the systems that feed into iTrent. Phase one was expected to take approximately 14 months and phase two would be commenced in 2022 at the earliest.
- 32.6 The transformation project would review the interface options available in the iTrent system. This would consider how to best interface with the student record system.
- 32.7 The HR and Finance systems projects would initially be undertaken separately but it was anticipated that they would be taken forward in tandem from phase two.

### 33 HR Policy Update

Rebecca Hopkins, Deputy Director of Human Resources (People Services) provided an update on the HR policies that were under revision. The following points were noted in discussion:

- 33.1 There had been helpful and constructive discussions with the trade unions on the proposed new policies. The trade unions had approved the new probation and fixed-term contract policies and had welcomed the improved clarity of the new policies. These policies would be submitted to UEB for approval shortly.
- 33.2 The four HR policies were in their final stages of consultation with the trade unions and would soon be submitted to UEB and then to governors for approval. The consultations with the trade unions on the managing underperformance and managing absence policies continued to progress.
- 33.3 The University was exploring options for the delivery of training for the new revised policies, taking into consideration remote training options.
- 33.4 Depending upon approval and the provision of training, it was anticipated that the new probation and fixed-term contract policies would be published to staff before September. It was anticipated that the remaining policies under review would be published by the new academic year in October. It was agreed that a revised schedule for policy approval would be provided to the next meeting of the Committee. Committee would welcome discussions on how it could support and facilitate the approval of the policies within the quickest time-frame.

**Action: Senior Governance Officer**

### 34 HR Committee Self-Assessment Questionnaire

Committee received a report from Adrian Parry, Executive Director of Corporate Governance that provided the draft HR Committee Self-Assessment Questionnaire for comment and discussion. The following points were noted:

- 34.1 Committee had received preliminary questions for a self-assessment effectiveness questionnaire at its meeting in December 2019. The Committee agreed that the draft questionnaire should be received at this meeting for review, before members undertake the assessment individually.



- 34.2 Members would be asked to note a score against each of the questions and provide a comment to provide further insight into the scores given. A report would be provided to the September meeting to outline the key findings from the questionnaire.
- 34.3 This particular questionnaire focused upon the effectiveness of the HR Committee. However, all governor Committees should be encouraged to undertake regular reviews of their effectiveness. Additionally, in line with the CUC Code, the Board of Governors was scheduled to undertake a formal review of its effectiveness exercise later in the year.
- 34.4 Members were invited to provide comments on the draft questionnaire to the Executive Director of Corporate Governance outside of the meeting. Committee agreed to provide delegated authority to the Chair to approve any subsequent additions to the questionnaire.

## **35 Indicative Committee Business**

Committee noted the indicative committee business for the May and September 2020 meetings.

## **36 Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting would take place at 1300 on Wednesday 23 September 2020.