

Preston's College

Minutes of the Human Resources and Remuneration Committee Meeting

25th February 2016

Present:

Mr J Taylor (Chair)

Cllr R Boswell
Dr A Jones

Mrs L Butler

In attendance

Mr S Fell (Clerk to the Corporation)
Mr P McMellon (Assistant to the Clerk)
Dr E H Smith (Principal and Chief Executive)
Mr S Nixon (Executive Director of Resources)
Ms G Thornton (Head of Human Resources)
Ms L Banks (HR Business Partner)

10. Welcome and Apologies

No apologies were received.

11. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

12. Minutes of the Meeting held on 5 November 2015

Resolved: That the Minutes be agreed as a true record and be signed by the Chair.

13. Workforce Profile Action Plan 2015-2020 - Update

Ms L Banks presented the annual report on the College's workforce profile. She drew attention to the points in the Progress Against the Action Plan section and suggested that these generally indicated improvements on the majority of issues covered by the Action Plan. She indicated where changes to target figures were now recommended.

The Committee then considered each point in the Action Plan. It was agreed that it was too early to judge the effectiveness of the new Vacancy Filler recruitment system. Ms Thornton provided more detail on how the system worked and specifically on how the system compelled applicants to complete the Equality & Diversity monitoring section. Finally, the Committee considered strategies to encourage staff participation in data collation.

Resolved: That the contents of the report be noted and changes to target figures set out in the Progress Against The Action Plan endorsed.

14. Modern Slavery Act 2015 Report

The Committee received a report setting out context and proposed actions relating to the Modern Slavery Act 2015. In talking through the report, Ms Thornton explained that although the College had no statutory duty to comply with the Act, the College could still respond positively to the legislation.

She drew the Committee's attention to the proposals in the report and explained in more detail how the College intended to proceed on the four identified fronts. Together with Mr Nixon she explained how the College would respond if evidence of human trafficking was identified.

Resolved: That the report be noted and that the proposal to operate within the spirit of the Modern Slavery Act 2015, including the actions set out in the report be endorsed.

15. Workforce Equality and Diversity (WED) Strategy

Ms Banks presented the draft WED Strategy, as developed since the last meeting, together with a Baseline Data report. The Committee examined each section of the Strategy, particularly the performance against the WED points in the People Strategy 2015-2020.

The breakdowns by gender and by disability were discussed and, where possible, contrasted with comparative data for the community (ie. the 2011 Census). The Committee considered how the Vacancy Filler could be used to facilitate diversity in recruitment and Ms Thornton agreed to look into this and report back. Ms Thornton confirmed that the data utilised to compile the report was considered within the College on a quarterly basis.

The Chair thanked Ms Thornton, Ms Banks and the HR team for the work that had gone into the preparation of the Strategy.

Resolved: That the draft WED Strategy be approved and consultation with key stakeholders proceed.

16. Review of the HR Department

Ms Thornton presented a report outlining a review of the HR Department and reminded the Committee of the background to the review. She confirmed that the staff consultation process had now been completed and that the recognised unions had not raised any objections. This meant that the proposed actions would be implemented.

Resolved: That the contents of the report be noted.

17. People Strategy Action Plan

The Committee received a draft People Strategy Action Plan. In presenting the Plan, Ms Thornton drew the Committee's attention to the RAG ratings and explained that the Plan would assist the Committee in monitoring performance against the strategic projects for 2015/16.

The Committee agreed upon the usefulness of the report and suggested that, in view of the considerable number of strategic projects set out in the report, an indication of priority order might be helpful. Ms Thornton confirmed that in future such performance reports would be presented to the Committee on a regular basis.

Resolved: That

- i) the contents of the report be noted; and**
- ii) the HR Strategic Projects Action Plan 2015/16 be adopted as a tool to (a) to monitor in year College performance against the People Strategy 2015-2020 and (b) to help formulate recommendations to the Board or to College Management.**

18. HR Policy Review Action Plan

The Committee received a HR Policy Review Action Plan and appended Framework.

Ms Thornton drew the Committee's attention to the table of policies scheduled for review and confirmed that four of the policies would be considered later on the agenda.

Resolved: That the report be noted and the HR policy framework for the revision of employment policies be endorsed.

The Committee noted that further reports would be presented in due course.

Following a brief explanation of the constitutional context by Ms Thornton, the Committee agreed that the Board be recommended to amend the Committee's Terms of Reference so as to provide the Committee with delegated responsibility to approve the College's Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures (noting that the former included procedures relating to suspension and dismissal). She confirmed that the current terms of reference provided the Committee with the power to approve related policies and that the proposed changes correlated with the College's Articles of Government.

Resolved: That the Board be recommended to amend the Committee's Terms of Reference to include delegated authority to approve Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures.

19. Revised Family Friendly Employment Policies

- i) Adoption Leave**
- ii) Maternity Leave**
- iii) Parental Leave**
- iv) Special Leave**

The Committee received a copy of each draft Policy and noted that the proposed amendments reflected changes in legislation and/or evolving best practice.

The Committee queried how the College sought to ensure the consistent application of the Special Leave Policy, given that the Policy provided managers with the power to implement the Policy in slightly different ways. Ms Thornton advised that the final 'signing off' of special leave at CMT level would help to ensure uniformity and that the final draft of the Policy would be re-worded to make this clear. She closed by explaining how appeals against such decisions would be accommodated.

Resolved: That the revised Adoption, Maternity Leave, Parental Leave and Special Leave Policies be approved and take effect from 1 March 2016.

20. Revised Probationary Policy and Associated Changes

The Committee received a copy of a revised Probationary Policy. Ms Thornton briefly talked through the revisions, advised on the outcomes of associated consultations with trade unions and indicated where acceptance of the proposed changes would necessitate amendments to the Disciplinary and Managing Performance Improvement Policies.

Resolved: That the revised Probationary Policy and the minor changes to the Disciplinary Policy and Managing Improved Performance Policy be approved.

21. Any Other Business

In response to a query from the Committee, Dr Smith confirmed that although sector-wide industrial action had taken place on 24 February 2016 its impact upon the College had been minimal. Mr Nixon confirmed that it would be possible for the College to utilise the small amount of money saved as a result of the action to buy materials for students. The Committee noted that picketing activity at the College on the day had been attributed to regional as opposed to local union representatives.

22. Date of Next Meeting:

The Committee noted that its next meeting would be held at 5:30pm on 5th July 2016