

**Minutes of the Human Resources Committee**  
**Date: 10 November 2009**

**Present:** Mr P Brown  
Dr R Dugdale  
Mr J Egan  
Mr N Chohan

**In attendance:** J Stott  
S Butler

**Apologies:** Mrs M Hopwood

**Meeting commenced:** 18:30

**Meeting closed:** 20:00

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**14 /09 Disclosure of financial and/or personal interest**

There was no disclosure of financial and/or personal interest.

**15/09 To agree agenda and order of business as circulated**

It was agreed to deal with item 5 before item 4 to enable the Health & Safety Officer to commence his presentation.

**16/09 To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 9 June 2009**

The minutes were approved.

**17/09 Training: On the College's approach to Managing Workplace Stress**

The Health & Safety Officer gave a PowerPoint presentation on Managing Workplace Stress. Some of the main facts were highlighted as follows:

In 08/09 - 334 days were lost to stress  
In 07/08 - 262 days were lost to stress  
In 06/08 - 430 days were lost to stress  
In 05/06 - 331 days were lost to stress

It has been found, from a CIPD survey, that three of the main reasons for stress are reported as:

- a. Excessive workload
- b. Management style
- c. Relationships

In order to manage workplace stress, the College has assembled a workforce group. Research will be based on HSE guidance which also includes an employee survey. This survey is short, consisting of around 35 questions, easy to understand and is anonymous, except for a diversity monitoring tick box and the Sector/Service the employee works in. All staff will receive the questionnaire in January 2010, the results of which will be publicised by Easter. The HSE tool also includes an analysis module to highlight particular items and 'hotspot' areas.

The College has the following systems currently in place:

- a. Referral to an External Occupational Health Service
- b. Referral to an External Counselling Service
- c. Confidential Counselling telephone line
- d. Management training
- e. Staff training - which is planned for 4 December 09

It was reported that the average number of absences through stress is quite alarming. It is hoped that the survey will help identify the main areas ie whether absence is due to, say, management style for example. It has been found that people are surprisingly honest in these surveys and the results should enable the College to provide good data and feedback to the Committee.

Members thanked the Health & Safety Officer for his informative presentation.

## **18/09 Matters arising**

The Chair took members through the minutes of 9 June 2009 and found no matters arising.

The Clerk notified members that from Item 6 onwards, the Deputy Clerk would be clerking the meeting, to enable him to present Items 6 onwards in his role as College Administrator.

## **19/09**

### **a) Safeguarding: Confirming arrangements for CRB checks on Work Placement Supervisors**

The College Administrator presented a paper confirming arrangements for CRB checks on Work Placement Supervisors, for who no previous CRB checks have been taken. Ofsted are now looking closely at safeguarding in Colleges so guidance has been sought from the DfES which brought 'Safeguarding Children & Safer Recruitment in Education' into force in January 2007. This says that any person whose normal duties include regularly caring for, training, looking after or supervising the student in the workplace, should be vetted and subject to a CRB check. These requirements do not apply to short-term extended work experience lasting one term or less.

There is a suggestion that for long term placements we must undertake a CRB check. We have not yet approached employers to ask their views on this and it is possible some will not want their criminal background checked but our commitment is to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

In answer to a question the College Administrator explained that a judgement, on convictions that are revealed through a check, are based on CRB guidance that takes into account, for example, the age when the crime was committed, the seriousness of the crime, is there any pattern or repeat crimes etc. Our obligation is to demonstrate due care and diligence, but these checks could potentially lead to a cut back in educational placements.

CRB checks would affect around 100 employers (not including those in Care). We will research other organisation's approaches on employers checks as well as obtaining feedback from employers themselves on this issue. We do know that Aspire I have recently been graded by Ofsted as being 'Good' for safeguarding without having CRB checks in place for all employer based supervisors.

In the meantime it is vital that current risk assessments of placements are thorough and include discussion on child safeguarding with the employer.

The Report was received.

**b) Briefing: Update on the introduction of the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA)**

The College Administrator took members through this paper which was to brief them on latest developments.

The ISA has been set up to vet anyone wanting to work or volunteer with children or vulnerable adults in a 'regulated' or 'controlled' activity. It is thought 12 million could be on this list by 2015/2016. Regulated activity is defined as being of a specified nature, frequently, intensively and/or overnight or involving contact with children/vulnerable adults in a specified place frequently, intensively and/or overnight. Most FE institutions will not fall into the category of a 'specified place', but we need to check which of our staff do undertake regulated activity.

Members asked if there is any guidance or training on spotting abuse. The College Administrator confirmed that the College has put together a portfolio of e-learning training materials and that many staff have undertaken this.

From November 2010 it will be a legal requirement for new entrants working in a regulated activity to be registered with the ISA and

institutions will have until around 2015 to ensure all current employees and volunteers working in a regulated activity have gone through the registration process.

**c) To consider a report on the options available regarding the payment of the ISA Registration Fee and CRB Disclosure check**

The College Administrator took members through the report. The main question is who will pay the ISA Registration Fee and CRB Disclosure application fee. Since the introduction of CRB checks in 2002, the College has paid the £36 CRB fee. From 2010, the cost of ISA Registration will be £64 which includes the CRB application (£36), though this will be a one off cost and will stay with the worker for life. The options available are as follows:

- a. College to pay the full cost of ISA registration - £64
- b. College to pay £36 and the member of staff to pay the remainder of £28
- c. Employees pay the full cost of £64

The UCU are backing for this additional cost to be paid for. The total cost to the College for this would be £28 x the no. of staff. Members felt it unreasonable to ask existing employees to pay this fee in order to continue to work.

It was agreed that, for now, the College will meet the costs for both existing and new employees, with the understanding that, should the financial situation change, the Management team will have the discretion to review the policy if necessary.

It was agreed to recommend this proposal to the Corporation
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The Report was received.

**20/09 To consider a Diversity/Equal Opportunities Monitoring Report for September 2009**

The College Administrator presented a summary paper highlighting the following points:

- ❖ Benchmarking - the College is now able to access National Benchmarking data which will help us to provide comparative data.
- ❖ Ethnicity - the College is above the National Benchmark for Asian staff which is to be expected, but below for Black and other minority ethnic groups.
- ❖ Disability - the College is above the National Benchmark for staff declaring a disability

A disability questionnaire was sent out to staff last year and we received a number of new responses from existing staff we were not aware of. The survey will be repeated this month.

Attention was drawn to the last bullet on page 1 of the report which highlighted that:

- a. The number of applicants declaring a disability fell from 11 (5%) to 2 (1%). Of the 2 applicants one was appointed.
- b. The number of applications declaring their ethnicity as 'White' was 72 (56%), 37 (66%) of whom were shortlisted and 22 (88%) were appointed. A difference between application and appointment of 32%. This seems excessive compared to last year's figures so we need to monitor this to see whether is it simply a blip or a cause for concern.

The College's application form has been improved in that the Equal Opportunities form is now a more integral part of the form. We emphasise why we need it and that it will remain confidential.

The Report was received.

**21/09 To consider a Sickness Absence Report for the period 01.09.08 to 31.08.09**

The report highlighted three areas:

- a. The % days lost

2008/09 - 3.72%  
2007/08 - 3.56 %  
2006/07 - 5.94 %  
2005/06 - 3.21%

- b. Quarterly absence reports

This reviews the previous 12 months and any staff with 6 or more absences will be investigated.

- c. The Bradford Factor

This is a measure which combines absence frequency and duration measures to identify an employee's irregularity of attendance. It illustrates how frequent short-term absences can cause more disruption than occasional long-term absences.

The College Administrator confirmed that he will start to monitor this. It is not a big problem at the College, though certain areas show more absences than other. Managing it correctly should help to improve things.

The Report was received.

**22/09 To consider an update to the Grievance Procedure for Employees (other than Senior Post Holders)**

The College Administrator explained that the Procedure needed updating to reflect changes in structures and the agreement between the Association of Colleges and the recognised Trade Unions, though there are no significant changes - it is based on good practice.

It was asked what class of grievance would be referred to the Governors. The College Administrator confirmed it would only be cases where there is a grievance against a senior post holder or Principal, or where there is an appeal against a dismissal.

It was agreed for the updated Grievance Procedure to go out to the Unions and staff for consultation before going to the Corporation.

The Report was received.

**23/09 To undertake a review of the Human Resources plan**

The Committee were asked to review the HR Plan on pages 2-5 of the report which covers objectives, measurable outcomes and timescales. It is not necessarily the final version and may need tweaking to fall in line with the College's Strategic Plan which has yet to be finalised.

The Report was accepted.

**24/09 Any Other Business**

**a) Dates of scheduled meetings to December 2010**

\* Tuesday 15 June 2010 at 6.30 pm

\* Tuesday 16 November 2010 at 6.30 pm