THE SIXTH FORM COLLEGE - COLCHESTER

Minutes of the Personnel Committee Meeting No 65
8th October 2014

Chair: David Morran
Present: Andy Beatty, Moira Collett, Ian MacNaughton, John Stenhouse, Chris Graves
In Attendance: Jan Harker, Sarah Williams
Clerk: Tina Johnson

Agenda Item

65.1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Shirley Wells, Syd Kent, Elizabeth Blundell, Veronica Morris and observer, Mark Griffin-Sherwood.

The Chair of the Committee, David Morran, welcomed new committee member Chris Graves, to his first Personnel Committee meeting.

65.2 Declarations of Interest

No personal or financial interests were declared.

65.3 Any Other Business

65.3.1 The Chairman asked for consideration be given to the name used to identify the committee.

65.3.2 The Principal advised the meeting that he wished to discuss two additional matters relating to the Child Protection/Safeguarding and SEN Policies. It was agreed to discuss these matters at this point.

The Principal advised the meeting that there is a statutory duty for the College to have in place an SEN policy. The College is currently drafting the policy for implementation in consultation with the safeguarding governor.

65.3.3 The Principal informed the meeting that revisions to the Child Protection policy are being undertaken following recent legislative changes. The safeguarding governor will be consulted on the draft which will be presented to the Curriculum & Standards committee for approval. The policy is subject to annual review and approval.

65.3.4 The HR Manager requested that an item relating to the College’s Learning Support staffing structure be added to the agenda. It was agreed to discuss this matter as a Part B agenda item [65.16].

65.4 Determination of Confidential Items
There were no confidential items that appeared on the Part A agenda.

65.5 Minutes of the Previous Meeting No 64

65.5.1 Minutes of Part One of Meeting No. 64 held on 9th June 2014
Approved
The minutes were agreed and signed as a true record of the meeting.

65.5.2 Minutes of Part Two of Meeting No. 64 held on 9th June 2014
Approved
The minutes were agreed and signed as a true record of the meeting.

65.6 Matters Arising

65.6.1 Item 64.8 – Examination Results Release Dates
The announcement of the 'draw forward' of the examination results release dates for summer 2015 by JCQ/OIQUAL had occurred in July 2014, after the Personnel Committee's meeting with the Unions had taken place. Having considered all the implications of revising the provisional 2015/16 term dates the Governing Body had resolved, at the meeting held on September 22nd 2014, to confirm the provisional term dates which follow the traditional pattern rather than the draw forward dates.

65.6.2 No firm communication has been received from JCQ regarding the 2016/17 draft dates for examination results release or any indication as to whether the 'draw forward' of results release dates is to be permanent. The Principal informed the meeting that he has spoken to union representatives regarding the 2016/17 term dates advising them that in the event that the anticipated ‘draw forward’ again transpires he would be proposing an academic year commencement date of August 22nd 2016.

65.6.3 64.16.1 – Bi-Annual Staff Survey
The third staff survey, steered by the Staff Development Committee, has been completed and the outcomes circulated to governors and all staff. Overall the College is very pleased with the positive outcomes especially as the survey was completed in light of low pay awards and the recent difficult strategic decisions that have been taken in order to ensure the College is prepared to manage future funding cuts, cost increases and avoid the need for redundancies.

65.6.4 It was noted that the mix of respondents from amongst the teaching and support staff varies with each survey and therefore it is very difficult to benchmark the results. The percentage of ‘agree’ responses for each of the questions are very similar to the previous survey, carried out in 2012. Those results showing a greater reduction than 3% and lower overall than the 2010 survey and those showing an improving trend over the three surveys have been identified. The outcomes of the survey will be discussed at section heads meetings and placed on departmental agendas.

65.6.5 Analysis of the results and written feedback by the Staff Development Committee has suggested that ‘effectiveness of communication’ is one of the themes that should be investigated further with a view to identifying why the percentage remains stubbornly low, in comparison to other responses, and what can be done to secure improvements. It was noted that the analysis had also shown that concerns raised regarding ‘effectiveness of communication’ were proportionally higher from support staff members than teaching staff.
A very positive ‘open’ staff meeting had been held to explore the concerns raised regarding ‘effectiveness of communication’. Representatives from both teaching and support staff were in attendance. In addition the HR Manager will be working in parallel with support staff teams to undertake further fact finding and analysis.

Consideration will be given to how to empower support staff to ensure that the channels of communication that currently exist are fully utilised. Governors were informed of the new initiative to provide immediate feedback to staff via a ‘you said this … we did this’ staff room notice board.

Governors agreed that most organisations would be very pleased to receive such positive results especially when it is acknowledged that staff are working under increasingly difficult, externally imposed, conditions such as curriculum reforms and changing Ofsted criteria.

The Principal led thanks to Assistant Principal, Jan Harker and the Staff Development Committee for their work in driving forward and analysing the outcomes of the survey.

**Item 64.16.3 – PSP**

The Principal and HR Manager gave governors an update on the Government’s proposals to replace the current PSP scheme and the SFCA pay framework with a Performance Related Pay (PRP) system. It was noted that the unions have agreed to the scheme. A vote on whether to adopt the proposed PRP framework will be taken at the November SFCA Conference (one vote per college). If the vote is in favour of adoption it will then be the choice of individual employers to consider whether or not to instigate the PRP system and, where relevant, define the parameters surrounding implementation. Although the scheme is being sold to Colleges as ‘cost neutral’ the College believes that there will be significant transitional costs both financial and administrative.

Governors acknowledged that a move to PRP would significantly change the culture and ethos of the College’s current CPD process, which is highly valued by staff, as reflected in the staff survey. Governors were advised that it is difficult to quantify what advantages, if any, a move to a PRP system would bring to the College. Given the size of the College and the number of individual departments there would also be complexities associated with consistency of implementation, setting of ‘standards’, development of assessment criteria, protected salaries and potential appeals. Senior Managers are very keen to ensure that, if adopted, any new process does not damage the good practice that currently exists within the College. In response to governor’s questions, the committee were informed that the Government’s 2012 Teaching Standards are used as an evaluation tool as part of the current appraisal and pay systems.

The Principal advised the meeting that as the College has always been committed to national collective pay bargaining and adopting SFCA structures it is likely, should the vote at the conference be in favour of adopting the PRP framework, that the College will also adopt the process. However; the timeline for full implementation and the relevant parameters would need very careful consideration.

It was noted that the Committee Chairman, HR Manager and the Assistant
Principal responsible for Staff Development will be attending a PRP workshop scheduled to take place on October 16\textsuperscript{th} 2014. Further updates will be provided for governors as information becomes available.

**Annual Review of Terms of Reference and Committee Performance for 2013/14 Year**

**65.7**

65.7.1 The revised draft Terms of Reference were reviewed and it was agreed that these accurately reflected the Personnel Committee’s purpose at the present time\(^1\). It was also agreed that the Committee had fulfilled its' delegated functions during 2013/14. Committee membership was also reviewed and the numbers and skills considered adequate. The frequency and timing of the Committee’s meetings was also considered to be adequate and appropriate.

Agreed The revised Terms of Reference for the Personnel Committee were agreed and will be recommended to the Governing Body for approval. *Action: Clerk*

65.7.2 Meeting attendance in 2013/14 was reviewed. The committee welcomed the suggestion that, if adopted by the SFCA basic training on the Performance Related Pay proposals would be given to the Governing Body with more in-depth training subsequently offered to personnel committee members. It was agreed that any other training will be provided if requested.

**65.8 Staffing Issues including Staffing, Retirements and Staffing Updates**

65.8.1 The Principal reported that there had been, as previously reported, a significant number of staff leavers during the 2013/14 year. Most of the leavers had been retirements. Therefore there had been a significant number of new staff recruited for the beginning of the 2014/15 year. Although this has meant a fair degree of change, it also gave the College the scope to plan for implementing funding cuts by considering and utilising ‘natural wastage’ and some long serving staff have been replaced with younger, less expensive staff. The calibre of the recruited teaching staff is proving to be very high. Governors were interested to note that the majority of the recent clerical vacancies had been filled by graduate appointments.

65.8.2 Despite an increase in student numbers, the government funding cuts have resulted in the College having to reduce the number of teaching staff for this year. In real terms this now equates to a total of 20 teachers ‘\textit{down}’ over the past three years. The reductions have been achieved by ‘natural’ rather than forced redundancy measures; staff flexibility has been important in achieving the reductions without the need for redundancies.

65.8.3 Due to the changing pattern of student uptake in certain subjects and the strategic decision to move to a seven block timetable from 2015/16, which also involves teachers teaching a little more, as a mechanism to be able to continue to avoid redundancies and preventing an increase in class sizes. The College may need to employ additional staff in some subject areas and also possibly to support independent learning.

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\(^1\) It is possible that the terms of reference will be further revised following the Strategy Working groups recommendations to the Governing Body in the spring term.
Seven Support Staff are currently undertaking teacher training supported by the College. Only one of these is external to the College. In addition the College has continued with its initiative to employ untrained teachers. Two ex-students have been employed direct from University as untrained teachers. These teachers, who commenced their training with the College in June 2014, are on a 75% timetable and are working very well. It was noted that the College receives no funding for these trainees however; the College pays their PGCE fees. In response to governor’s questions regarding the calibre of trainee teachers the Principal informed the meeting that there is significantly more emphasis placed on ‘on the job training’. The Government’s Teach First and Schools Direct initiatives have had a direct, negative impact on the number of graduates applying to train in those Schools and Colleges that are not eligible to be part of the Governments initiatives.

The College is aware of three potential retirements for 2015. There is currently no indication of whether all of these retirements will formally transpire in the 2014/15 academic year. On the advice of the Principal it was agreed, in the overall context of budgetary cuts, that these posts should be ring fenced to internal candidates in order to ensure that the necessary staffing structure savings can be made.

The Principal reiterated his advice to governors to be proactive in ensuring the message that appears to be actively communicated to prospective students, from certain areas of the local community, regarding increased class sizes at the College is corrected where ever possible. The strategic approaches that the College has instigated have meant that class sizes have not increased (see also 65.8.3).

The Principal advised the meeting that next year the College will be looking to pragmatically reduce the staffing structure by a further 5 or 6 teaching staff and 1 or 2 support staff through natural wastage.

Pay Awards Update

As reported to the Governing Body, discussions on the Sixth Form College award have been being concluded and ratified by teacher and support staff union members. The outcome is a 1% pay award in line with expectations. Staff have been informed that the award will be backdated to 1st September 2014. The College had budgeted for a 1% pay award for 2014/15. It is anticipated that a public sector cap of 1% will be instigated for the 2015/16 year which will act as a framework for school sector pay awards subsequently filtering down as a framework for Sixth form Colleges.

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2 Teach First is an education charity with a vision that no child’s educational success should be limited by their socio-economic background. Teach First offers a two-year Leadership Development Programme for those interested in an employment-based route into teaching. Trainees join Teach First and their university partners for six weeks of intensive training before teaching in a school in a low-income community for two years, where they achieve a postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE) a full-time salary and real responsibility in the classroom from day one – DfE ‘Get into Teaching’ 2014

3 The School Direct Training Programme (salaried) is an employment-based route for high-quality experienced graduates with at least three years’ work experience. The School Direct Training Programme is for high-quality graduates who want to feel part of a school team whilst training. They pay fees but may be eligible for a bursary of up to £20,000 or a scholarship of £25,000 - DfE ‘Get into Teaching’ 2014
65.10 Future Strategic Personnel Matters

65.10.1 The Chairman reported that he had held discussions with the HR Manager regarding the production of a People Management Plan / HR Plan for governors. It was agreed that the production of such a plan should not be administratively intensive but would provide a useful platform for the committee to discuss future strategic HR developments.

65.11 Annual Review of Salary Structure Policy for Support Staff

65.11.1 The Committee were advised that there were no proposed changes to the Salary Structure Policy for Support Staff. A discussion was held regarding salary review requests and salary appeals in particular, governor involvement in the appeals process and the procedures by which any such involvement is actioned. It was agreed that the HR Manager would scrutinise the current procedures and, if the process is not deemed to be robust enough, a revised procedure will be brought to the next committee meeting for consideration. Consideration will also be given to the level at which the function of policy approval should be delegated. It was agreed to recommend the amended policy to the Governing Body for approval. Action: Clerk/SWi

65.12 Equality and Diversity Policy & Monitoring reports

65.12.1 Due to the meeting being held earlier in the academic year than the historical norm it was agreed to defer receipt of these reports until the next meeting. Action: Clerk/MGr

65.13 Performance Management Policy and Procedures Support Staff

65.13.1 It was noted that the policy is not a statutory requirement and is not listed on the DfE schedule of policies for Sixth Form Colleges. Governors agreed that as the policy is not statutory approval should be considered to be the remit of the Principal. However, an annual report on appraisal and pay processes will be requested by the committee. Any changes to the current policy or procedures will be notified to the committee as soon as practical.

The Principal counselled that governors need to be clear about the division between strategic governance and day to day management.

65.14 Scheduled of Personnel Committee Business

65.14.1 The content of the Schedule of Committee Business, amended to take account of policies and procedures delegated to the Principal, was noted; the schedule will be updated following the meeting. Action: Clerk

65.15 Date of the Next Meeting

65.15.1 - February 11th 2015 (if needed)

65.16 Learning Support Staffing Structure (Tabled appendix A)
See Confidential Minute 65.16
There being no other business the chairman called the meeting to a close at 7.40pm

Signed: ...........................................

Dated: ...........................................

Chairman