

People and Remuneration Committee

24/01 A hybrid meeting of the Committee was held on Thursday 1 February 2024 at 2.00 pm in Committee Room 1 and via Teams.

Present: Vice-President of the Council, Kate Owen (Chair)
The President of the Council, Helen Gordon via Teams
Lay Member of the Council, Sian Butler via Teams
Vice-President of the Council, Kevin Corrigan via Teams
Lay Member of the Council, Sue Maple via Teams
An elected member of the Council, John Jack

By invitation: Vice-Chancellor
Deputy Vice-Chancellor via Teams
University Secretary
Director of Human Resources
Head of Governance (*Secretary*)

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting. This was the first meeting of the People and Remuneration Committee, following the change in remit.

24/02 Minutes of the last meeting

The Committee approved the minutes of the last meeting, held on 13 October 2023 as a correct record.

24/03 Matters Arising

23/19 Risk Management and the Corporate Risk Register

The Committee were reminded that it had been allocated by Council the following risks:

- Risk 1 – Failure to recruit, retain and develop both Professional Services and Academic staff due to competitiveness of the recruitment market alongside the challenges of sector pay, benefits package and rising workloads.
- Risk 4 (jointly with Scrutiny and Finance Committee) – Lack of staff capacity to deliver change programme results in delay/failure to deliver change on time/within budget.

It was agreed that given the new remit of the Committee these items would be discussed outside of the meeting and would be brought forward onto the agenda in due course.

All other matters arising were covered below.

24/04 Staff Experience – what is it like to work at the University?

As this was the first meeting of the Committee in its new remit the Committee, the Committee discussed broadly how it might wish to fulfil its remit in understanding the staff experience of what it was like to work at the University.

The Committee received and noted a discussion paper on how the Committee could gather information on the staff experience to understand what it was like to work at the University. A number of suggestions were put forward for discussion, including:

- 1) Inviting individuals or representative groups to future meetings
- 2) Staff Forum
- 3) Trade Union
- 4) Staff Representatives on Council
- 5) Employee surveys – see Minute 24/05
- 6) Committee members meeting individually with staff
- 7) Reports from Staffing Committee -The terms of reference of Staffing Committee were currently being reviewed in light of the wider remit of People & Remuneration Committee.
- 8) EDI Network Chairs and Diversity & Inclusion Advisory Board (DIAB)

The following comments were made:

- There was appetite from the Council to hear more about the staff experience
- Given the breadth of remit of the Committee it would be helpful to focus attention on a smaller number of topics initially
- It was suggested that the top issues for staff were pay, workload, pace of change, and wellbeing – these were likely to be the top issues in any organisation, but they been raised formally in meetings with UCU, Staff Forum and HR, as well as informally in all-staff talks
- Engagement surveys were powerful in seeking views as they involved all staff – but it was important to get the questions right. They were also and considerable undertaking and time consuming (also see Minute 24/05)
- The executive would also need to have capacity to address any issues that were raised in the survey
- There were advantages with pulse surveys. Pulse surveys could offer more flexibility and focus, provided that the number were limited each year. They could provide more spontaneous/timely data during a period of change
- Any survey should be meaningful and targeted, to reduce survey fatigue
- Specific groups could be targeted, for e.g. the Senate, as the impact of student growth/standards in teaching and learning impact on workload

- Other measures that could be used to understand the staff experience were 'Board to floor' visits or staff stories at board meetings
- There was a danger that some visits/walkabouts could be viewed as royal visits - the creation of additional work should be avoided
- There was the need to consider any approach from the perspective of the staff member in order to get the best out
- It was important to use more than one approach in gaining the views of staff; variety was key
- Work was in hand to review the remit of the Staffing Committee for the start of 2024/25 to ensure there was no overlap with the work of People and Remuneration Committee
- It was important to use current structures better as a way into staffing issues
- The Staff Forum was an important vehicle and work was taking place to review its remit. Input from the Committee might be beneficial
- Minutes of the Joint University/UCU could be shared with Council members

The Chair thanked the Committee for the open discussion. Consideration of the matters raised would be taken offline and proposals brought forward to future meetings. Proposals in regard to engagement surveys would be taken forward to the University Executive Board.

24/05 Update on the approach for new engagement surveys

The Director of HR gave an update to the Committee on a new approach for engagement surveys. The Committee were reminded that the previous contract to deliver full engagement surveys had been interrupted by the pandemic and that the supplier had subsequently exited the market. No HR surveys had been undertaken since 2021.

HR had been giving consideration to a new way of undertaking surveys going forward and proposals would be submitted to the University Executive Board.

The proposal would be to not contract for full annual surveys and instead embed use of regular surveys through a pulse survey type approach. Such an approach would give different benchmarking data for KPI1.

It was intended to run 2/3 surveys a year which could be for the whole institution or just parts of it. Other surveys, e.g. travel survey, could be included on the platform so that the University's approach to surveys more broadly was joined up.

It was noted that HR did not currently have the capacity to run full annual surveys.

The Committee were supportive of the approach outlined.

24/06 Update on pay

The Director of HR gave a verbal update to the Committee on pay.

It was reported that the cycle of pay award negotiations had just commenced at the beginning of February. Meetings had commenced with heads of institutions and directors of HR. It was likely that the negotiations would be challenging.

24/07 Revised Severance Policy

The Committee noted that the Severance Policy had been reviewed. A schedule of amendments were submitted which principally focussed on replacing outdated references to HEFCE guidance and establishing approval levels for non-contractual payments.

The Committee approved amendments to the policy.

24/08 Severance Payments and Early Retirement Arrangements

The Committee received and noted severance payments made since the last meeting.

24/09 Out of Cycle Salary Increases

The Committee received and noted out of cycle salary increases since the last meeting. It was noted that due to the pause in reward arrangements in 2023/24 that it was likely that more retention cases would come through this session.

24/10 Report of the University Executive Board

There was no report on this occasion.

24/11 Date of next meeting

Tuesday 4 June 2024 at 10.30 am