# **logo_colourBOARD OF MANAGEMENT**

**Human Resources and Development Committee**

Thursday 20 February 2025 at 5.00pm **Room K-TO-624, Kingsway Campus** (MS Teams option available)

## Minute of the Human Resources and Development Committee meeting held on Thursday 20 February 2025 at 5.00pm, in Room K-TO-624, Kingsway Campus.

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| **PRESENT:** | Donald Mackenzie | Stephen Oakley |
|  | Laurie O’Donnell (Observer) | Simon Hewitt |
|  | Richard Gordon | Matthew Beattie |
|  | Brian Lawrie | Neil Lowden |
|  | Robert Young |  |

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| **IN ATTENDANCE:** | Steven Taylor (Vice Principal Support Services and Operations) |
|  | Julie Grace (Vice Principal Curriculum and Partnerships) |
|  | Penny Muir (Board Administrator) |
|  | Abi Mawhirt (Head of People and Organisation Development) |

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|  | **WELCOME**  D Mackenzie welcomed everyone to the HRDC meeting and welcomed Robert Young and Richard Gordon to their first meeting. |
|  | **APOLOGIES**  Apologies received from Jackie Buchanan, Carri Cusick, Donna Fordyce, and Billy Grace. |
|  | **DECLARATIONS OF CONNECTION & INTEREST**  There were no declarations of connection & interests. |
|  | **MINUTE OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**  The minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2024 were approved as an accurate record. |
|  | **MATTERS ARISING**  There are no matters arising. |
|  | **PEOPLE, OD & COMMUNICATIONS REPORT**  S Taylor provided an update on the Voluntary Severance (VS) scheme, which is being implemented on an enabling basis, with a small number of applications already been received.  L O'Donnell enquired whether fewer individuals are applying over time due to changing circumstances and B Lawrie asked whether redeployment options are considered in such schemes.  S Taylor confirmed that redeployment is explored, with an emphasis when approving VS on ensuring sufficient cost savings over a 12-month period before final decisions are made. He noted that whilst overall numbers were small there did remain interest in the scheme.  R Gordon noted that, from a union perspective, redeployment and skills matching often provide a more effective alternative to redundancies.  S Taylor shared the success of the organisation in recent awards, including an overall achievement award. Special recognition was given to Christine Calder for winning the prestigious Green Gown Award, which is a significant UK-wide accomplishment.  L O'Donnell commended the achievement and noted the congratulations of the Board to all staff involved.  S Taylor reported that a review of college practice in relation to new sexual harassment legislation has been completed. No gaps were identified, and all necessary measures are in place to ensure compliance. Work is ongoing to incorporate this into the college’s risk assessment processes.  D Mackenzie enquired whether additional training would be required, however, S Taylor confirmed that all aspects are already covered, and no further training is needed at this stage. He reassured that equality, diversity, and safeguarding remain high priorities on the college’s agenda.  R Young asked if there were any timelines for the risk assessment, whilst S Taylor confirmed that there are no specific timeframes and that all necessary documentation is in place.  D Mackenzie thanked S Taylor for the report. |
|  | **STAFF DEVELOPMENT DAY ACTIVITY & FEEDBACK**  A Mawhirt provided a review of the recent Staff Development Day. Over 400 staff members participated in more than 80 sessions covering 35-40 different topics across all three campuses. Despite some staff being unavailable, there was high attendance, with over 1,800 hours of learning accumulated. Feedback from the event was overwhelmingly positive, with high engagement levels reported.  The evaluation showed that 90% of staff attended the topics they had chosen. The event received an overall rating of 8/10, with many attendees expressing that the feedback sessions were beneficial and that specific skills were learned. The topics were created based on a range of feedback from staff groups  A notable impact on staff roles was reported, with many expressing that they could now perform tasks more efficiently and with greater confidence. Staff members have also indicated that since hybrid working has been introduced, they enjoyed the opportunity to come together as a College in person. The overall culture felt positive, and staff valued the networking opportunities provided by the event.  A Mawhirt highlighted suggestions for improvement which included structured breaks and more detailed explanations of some topics. There was also a desire to explore deeper levels of training on various subjects.  81% of staff expressed interest in future events, with feedback suggesting that interactive workshops and a continued focus on mental health and wellbeing would be welcomed.  The event was deemed a success, and the next steps include a planned event in August, with a focus on the start-of-term planning and development. Additionally, a staff development day is scheduled for February 2026, which will include peer-to-peer training and a focus on how good practice can be shared across the organisation.  A Mawhirt mentioned that the staff development audit had been positive, with no recommendations for improvement, as cross-referencing with staff feedback showed that the event was well received.  B Lawrie emphasised that the increased focus on staff wellbeing was a significant achievement, noting that organising an event for over 400 staff members and keeping them engaged was a challenge. He praised the positive engagement and the willingness to learn from the experience.  S Hewitt shared that the feedback from the past two years has played a key role in shaping the new strategy, particularly regarding wellbeing. He highlighted that the feedback is vital, and it was encouraging to see such positive statistics.  N Lowden asked about the sample size of feedback with A Mawhirt confirming that over half of the total staff headcount participated, with 50% providing feedback.  N Lowden also raised the issue of integrating the college's behaviour strategy into staff development. A Mawhirt explained that external speakers, including one who focused on supporting and challenging behaviour on campus, had been part of the development sessions.  J Grace mentioned that the CPD planning group, which includes a cross-college mix of staff, had contributed to the development of the event. The representation from support services, learning and teaching helped ensure the event reflected the diverse approaches being taken across the college.  M Beattie commented on the behaviour management sessions, noting how different teaching experiences have become and how these changes were reflected in the delivery, bridging the gap with academic and support staff.  S Oakley highlighted the importance of providing the right support at the right time, ensuring that feedback is used effectively to shape future programmes. He emphasised that organising such a complex event required careful planning. S Oakley concluded by stating that focusing on staff wellbeing is essential for nurturing a positive college environment and that by developing this approach, the college can create a more supportive and productive atmosphere for all.  D Mackenzie congratulated A Mawhirt on the successful event. |
|  | **FAIR WORK PRINCIPLES**  S Taylor presented the paper discussing the importance of Fair Work Principles (FWP) for the college and the broader sector. The paper highlighted that as an employer, the college must align with these practices, which are also necessary to secure funding and meet the conditions of public contracts. Public sector bodies require adherence to these practices, and it is essential for the college to demonstrate its commitment to Fair Work.  The approach outlined in the paper included a review of Fair Work Principles documents from various organisations, many of which appeared static. S Taylor proposed making this information available on the college’s website in a more dynamic and engaging format would better reflect the college’s commitment to Fair Work requirements.  S Taylor highlighted that the aim is to establish a ‘living’ document that evolves over time, with an annual review ensuring its continued relevance, alignment with actions, and demonstration through established practices.  The committee was asked for feedback and assurance regarding the content on the website and the approach to Fair Work. R Young raised a question about whether there are champions for each of the five components of Fair Work, however, S Taylor confirmed that these principles are embedded in the college's values and operations as part of its organisational culture.  S Oakley raised concerns about the language used in the section on ‘Security and Stable Employment’ noting that it seemed vague and could potentially be contentious. S Taylor acknowledged the challenge, explaining that while it would be ideal to guarantee every individual hour, some roles, such as project-funded positions and absence cover, do not offer such certainty. The wording is carefully chosen to reflect this reality and to bridge the gap around the inevitable flexibility required in some areas.  D Mackenzie asked how to introduce the information in a more dynamic way and how this can tie into the comments made by S Hewitt. S Taylor explained that the statement and the college's behaviour and culture should align with what is being communicated. D Mackenzie suggested that this approach might provide more reassurance and certainty to individuals.  S Hewitt stated that the website's statements are clear and will evolve to accommodate changes, including flexibility for various reasons. S Oakley expressed understanding of the statement but emphasised the balance between ‘Security and Flexibility.’ S Taylor confirmed that he would meet with S Oakley to further discuss this point.  D Mackenzie welcomed the clarity around the principles and thanked S Taylor for the report. |
|  | **WORKFORCE PLAN**  A Mawhirt provided an overview of the various initiatives happening across the college, linking them to the Workforce Plan. The discussion covered several areas central to the college’s future infrastructure, aligned with the 2030 strategy, and focusing on leadership, wellbeing, retention, and turnover. While turnover remains low, there is an ongoing effort to attract new skills and retain staff effectively. As the college moves forward from the pandemic, the focus is on flexible working arrangements and advanced strategies such as incorporating AI into the college's operations.  The new campus development, set for 2030, is a key part of this plan, ensuring staff have ample opportunities. Administrative activities were also changing, with a focus on data analysis and enhancing communication across campuses. This includes undertaking a review of communication methods, specifically around team collaboration on platforms like Teams. These efforts are aimed at improving both the baseline perspective and the overall communication strategy within the college.  D Mackenzie requested more commentary on flexible working arrangements. A Mawhirt explained that flexible practices differ across teams, with discussions ongoing about the possibility of a four-day working week, which is becoming more common nationally. A Mawhirt stated there is data analysis being conducted to understand who is on flexible working arrangements, and there are ongoing discussions with the Senior Leadership Team on this matter. Managers are having conversations with their teams, with some staff finding that flexible working has positively impacted their personal lives.  S Hewitt emphasised that, as a face-to-face college, the default position is that staff are available to support students daily.  S Taylor noted that while flexible working is important, it is essential to reset parameters where necessary. The hybrid working model has settled into a rhythm, with many managers encouraging staff to return to the office as part of service changes and improvements.  S Oakley highlighted the need for understanding in educator roles and the flexibility required by staff where possible. He expressed concern that flexibility is sometimes limited, but S Taylor acknowledged that balancing flexibility and organisational needs remains crucial.  R Gordon mentioned that UNISON is advocating for a four-day working week, with one college fully engaging with the idea. However, academic work presents a challenge in this context. The potential impact on culture and identity was discussed.  L O'Donnell pointed out the challenges of making assumptions about work-from-home arrangements, emphasising that face-to-face opportunities remain important for learners.  S Oakley asked about national staff turnover data. S Taylor responded that the national average for staff loss due to retirement is around 16-18%, but at the college, the figure is much lower, around 5-6%. This low turnover rate is reflected in the progression planning for talented staff, though there is room for improvement in ensuring that staff progress within the organisation.  A Mawhirt confirmed that actions are in place to formalise the development process, including offering training and development opportunities to all staff. The college is working on engaging all levels of staff and formalising the management induction process for new line managers.  S Hewitt emphasised that delivering leadership programmes is a key action in the new strategy and that CPD will play a significant role in supporting this.  R Gordon discussed future leadership development, noting that leadership opportunities do not always require line management responsibilities. A Mawhirt agreed, emphasising that anyone interested in leadership should be given the opportunity, whether leading themselves or a team.  S Taylor concluded the discussion by noting the importance of balancing these efforts with the current financial situation. While the overall Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) count was unlikely to grow, career development remains a priority, even if some opportunities may not be immediately available within the college.  L O'Donnell mentioned the need to manage the number of structural promotions, noting that fewer opportunities are available, which requires careful management.  S Hewitt reflected on TQFE discussions, noting that every promotion he had received was during a period of crisis, advising that individuals should not wait for opportunities but instead prepare for them, seeing every situation as an opportunity for growth.  S Oakley praised the continued development of managers, recognising that good management is crucial to organisational success.  The report was welcomed. |
|  | **NATIONAL BARGAINING UPDATE**  S Taylor reported that the information covered in this report is more positive than recently. The settlement for academic staff has facilitated discussions and contributed to progress in this area. Lessons learned are being reviewed, and work has been planned to clarify expectations and behaviours regarding national bargaining.  Discussions are ongoing regarding the national COVID circular, which remains a contentious issue. There are still debates about whether COVID-related absences should be classified as sickness absences, but this matter is expected to be resolved soon.  S Taylor also highlighted progress in national bargaining, stating the support staff pay demand has been submitted.  He further noted the ongoing challenges at a national level, particularly regarding changes within the Union FE branch. Despite these national issues, local relationships remain positive, with a strong focus on collaboration to support both students and staff within the college.  The report was noted. |
|  | **STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER**  S Taylor noted a few changes, specifically in sections 3.4 and 3.10, which relate to adjustments in the scoring methodology rather than the risks themselves. A broader discussion regarding these methodological changes will take place at the A&R Committee.  The report was noted. |
|  | **HR METRICS**  S Taylor reported that there were no updates regarding board metrics. However, he highlighted staff absence rates, noting that recent data circulated within the HR group indicated that the college has the second-lowest absence rate of those reported. While some colleges are experiencing rates exceeding 6%, the average across the sector is approximately 3.5%. The sample size for this data was relatively small.  Regarding mandatory training, S Taylor confirmed that it operates on a three-year rolling basis and includes Cyber Security and GDPR training.  D Mackenzie enquired about improving data collection on equalities. Whilst S Taylor acknowledged that the percentage of staff who prefer not to disclose their sexual orientation remains high despite repeated efforts to encourage participation, the lack of data does not impact the gender action plan, though it presents difficulties in producing more detailed reports.  B Lawrie questioned whether the level of established posts compared to the budget was slightly over, and whether figures were higher than the annual establishment. S Taylor explained that this had been discussed at the Senior Leadership Team, noting that a significant amount of work is being undertaken to align staffing levels with the budget. S Taylor highlighted that with recent work progressed to underpin the budget, there is now greater oversight, and the current position is more stable compared to previous periods.  The HR metrics report was noted. |
|  | **MEETING MINUTES/UPDATES**  The Joint Consultative Committee (JCF) and Health, Safety and Wellbeing (HS&W) minutes were noted.  S Taylor provided an update on Martyn’s Law, upcoming legislation addressing the impact of terrorism and potential security concerns on campus. Ongoing discussions are taking place to assess expectations and requirements in this area in line with the likely implementation date for the new legislation.  L O’Donnell raised the possibility of renaming committees to better reflect their scope. Suggestions included reconsidering the Finance & Property Committee (FPC) name and incorporating "students and partnerships" into the Learning, Teaching & Quality Committee (LTQC) Adding "assurance" to the Audit & Risk (A&R) Committee and updating the Human Resources & Development Committee (HRDC) to emphasise culture and wellbeing.  He stated research into other colleges showed that many have moved away from using "HR" in committee names, with the proposal aiming to ensure committee names align with their evolving focus.  R Young noted that culture is important to both staff and students.  N Lowden noted that a name change would not materially affect the committee's function and it is important to ensure the focus remains on both students and staff. Attention should also be given to the terms of reference, which are available on the website.  B Lawrie suggested that “HR” might be an outdated term and that renaming the committee could shift the focus of discussions. Consideration should also be given to the sequencing of committee meetings to ensure a logical flow.  S Taylor highlighted the governance aspect, noting that reviewing committee remits would also be important to ensuring alignment with the Board’s expectations, emphasising the importance of understanding the needs of the Board and its members in this process. |
|  | **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**  Thursday 22 May 2025 at 5.00pm in K-TO-624, Kingsway Campus |

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| **Action Point Summary** |  |  |
| **Action** | **Responsibility** | **Date** |
| No actions noted |  |  |