# **logo_colourBOARD OF MANAGEMENT**

**People, Culture and Wellbeing Committee**

Thursday 22 May 2025 at 5.00pm **Room K-TO-624, Kingsway Campus** (MS Teams option available)

## Minute of the People, Culture and Wellbeing Committee meeting held on Thursday 22 May 2025 at 5.00pm, in Room K-TO-624, Kingsway Campus.

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| **PRESENT:** | Donald Mackenzie | Richard Gordon |
|  | Brian Lawrie | Matthew Beattie |
|  | Carri Cusick |  |

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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 Human Resources & Development Committee meeting. |
|  | **APOLOGIES**  Apologies received from Simon Hewitt, Billy Grace, Jackie Buchanan, Robert Young, Steven Oakley and Neil Lowden. |
|  | **DECLARATIONS OF CONNECTION & INTEREST**  There were no declarations of connection & interests. |
|  | **MINUTE OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**  The minutes of the meeting held on 20 February 2025 were approved as an accurate record. |
|  | **MATTERS ARISING**  There are no matters arising. |
|  | **PEOPLE, OD & COMMUNICATIONS REPORT**  S Taylor presented the report, highlighting significant updates including the most recent equalities mainstreaming which reflects a substantial amount of underpinning equalities work.  The recent Supreme Court judgement was noted for its potential impact on students and staff. Work is ongoing in terms of the practical outcomes from this judgement and also in terms of support for students and staff feeling vulnerable due to the changes.  Communication to staff has acknowledged the impact of the ruling, especially on transgender students and staff, while reaffirming the College’s commitment to creating a safe and supportive environment.  B Lawrie suggested that the judgement may lead to clearer guidance in the future, which could be beneficial for the College.  S Taylor also provided an update on a recent Rapid Improvement Event (RIE) which focused on behind-the-scenes processes, particularly around temporary staff contracts. The event highlighted the value of Rapid Improvement Events (RIEs) as an effective methodology and the desire to use these further in the future. In response to a question from D Mackenzie about facilitation, it was confirmed that an external facilitator was used, but that skills and experience were being developed inhouse to support similar exercises. Feedback has been positive, with the process described as intense but ultimately highly beneficial.  R Gordon acknowledged that while change can be challenging, it can also lead to clarity and positive outcomes. C Cusick enquired about the role of the Service Design Academy in such processes. S Taylor clarified that different tools are applied depending on the purpose, noting that the recent Rapid Improvement Event (RIE) specifically focused on the underpinning administrative process. This included the processes for identifying such contracts, allocating hours, issuing contracts, and ensuring alignment with the payroll system, rather than addressing broader service design considerations.  B Lawrie commented on the benefits of the RIE process, including the reduction of duplication and overall efficiency gains. J Grace added that any measures which alleviate workload pressure have been positively received. A Mawhirt emphasised the importance of recognition for the work being undertaken and the shared sense of ownership it fosters.  C Cusick asked whether efficiency gains could be measured. S Taylor confirmed that while formal measurement is possible, the benefits would be clearly evident in the revised process.  A Mawhirt discussed the interconnected nature of internal and external communications, highlighting recent improvements in recruitment platforms which have contributed to increased application numbers. These efforts are closely linked with both recruitment campaigns and internal staff engagement. Future plans include a refresh of staff portal content and targeted messaging for various audiences.  S Taylor mentioned upcoming staff awards and extended a welcome to Board members who may wish to participate.  S Taylor highlighted the TUC *Dying to Work* Charter, noting widespread interest among staff and the importance of the associated resources. By adopting the Charter, the College formally commits to upholding its principles, thereby ensuring a supportive and compassionate environment for staff facing terminal illness. The initiative was welcomed by the Committee.  B Lawrie noted that the gender pay-gap figure had not been finalised within the paper, S Taylor apologies for this and noted that the figure was included in the HR metrics.  D Mackenzie thanked S Taylor for the paper. |
|  | **FINANCIAL SECURITY & SAVINGS PLANNING**  S Taylor provided an update on the College’s current financial position, noting the ongoing challenges faced by the wider public sector. He emphasised that financial pressures have persisted over a number of years, with the College having previously implemented very major savings plans merely to maintain its position.  Over recent months, attention has been focused on reviewing non-core College activities to ensure that scarce resources are directed towards student-facing priorities.  As part of this strategic review, operational arrangements concerning the Gardyne Theatre, the Gardyne Sports Centre, and the Pool have been under consideration. Financial reviews of both the Service Design Academy and the sports facilities have shown that the College is currently making a significant financial contribution to maintain these services. This was an unsustainable position in the long term.  S Taylor highlighted the key financial concerns which include flat cash settlements, rising operational costs, and particularly high employer on-costs, which accounted for an additional 41% over and above the salary costs for academic staff. Reducing costs would require reductions in staffing, which would in turn affect income; however, the financial contributions currently required to sustain these non-core services are substantial and the proposals to reduce activities would result in a net financial benefit for the College.  S Taylor confirmed that initial consultation processes have begun with the affected staff, with clear and open dialogue also maintained with trade unions. He stressed that the proposals at this stage relate only to consultation and restructuring options. Staff in the affected areas have been informed that voluntary severance remains available, and redeployment opportunities will be actively explored. The College is committed to ongoing engagement with staff and unions throughout the process.  In regard to the Gardyne Theatre, Sports Centre, and swimming pool-the external use is being considered within the context of existing College policies. Discussions are ongoing with two local authorities, particularly in the areas of leisure and culture, to explore options such as continuation of gym memberships and fitness classes. These discussions have been positive and supportive, with efforts being made to mitigate any potential loss of provision.  S Taylor acknowledged the emotional and professional impact on staff affected by the proposals and confirmed that information outlining the rationale and the proposed changes had been shared with those staff members and that an open consultation route was in place for all staff.  B Lawrie welcomed the engagement with trade unions and expressed support for the proposed creation of 1.5 FTE vacancies for Sports Technicians. He commended the College’s approach to involving staff in shaping proposals and seeking their input.  J Grace noted that affected staff would be given the first opportunity to apply for any new roles arising from the changes.  D Mackenzie asked about the infrastructure concerns regarding the pool and asked if this had been assessed. S Taylor confirmed that infrastructure concerns have been discussed through the Finance and Property Committee. He acknowledged that current funding levels for capital maintenance are low, with ongoing issues relating to maintenance needs, including the Clova Building in Arbroath and the Kingsway Campus. The pool requires substantial investment but is currently used for only two hours per week in the curriculum, making such investment difficult to justify. J Grace echoed this concern, noting the challenge of justifying capital investment in a non-core facility.  D Mackenzie asked whether staff on a wider basis across the College should view the changes as a threat. S Taylor responded that while these decisions are difficult, they are part of a broader effort to prioritise resources towards the core role of the College in enhancing the student experience. He acknowledged a sense of uncertainty across the public sector, and that despite best efforts, the College remains on a financial “treadmill,” with limited scope for this to change given the on-going flat cash nature of funding and increasing costs. He reiterated that staff deserve pay awards, and that the College continues to push forward despite these financial constraints.  R Gordon raised concerns about the potential for further cuts in the future and the need to manage communications carefully to avoid unnecessary worry while maintaining transparency. S Taylor agreed, noting the importance of open communication and reaffirming the College’s commitment to engaging proactively with staff and unions. He added that all consultation queries are being addressed within a five-day turnaround to ensure effective responses are received.  D Mackenzie commented on the importance of maintaining momentum and collaboration throughout the process, observing that the College’s approach had helped mitigate the impact of difficult steps like this in the past.  S Taylor confirmed that the College is navigating the situation as transparently as possible and continuing open conversations with all stakeholders.  B Lawrie raised a final point regarding Dundee Football Club’s use of gym facilities, querying if such arrangements could continue in light of the proposed changes. S Taylor responded that future access to these facilities were being planned and would be based around current hire arrangements, with responsibilities for oversight and staffing falling under external arrangements rather than College staff.  D Mackenzie thanked S Taylor for the comprehensive report. |
|  | **NATIONAL BARGAINING UPDATE**  S Taylor provided a positive update, confirming that progress continues across several key areas. This included resolution of a number of longstanding national issues and disputes with EIS/FELA.  Discussions on salaries with support staff are also progressing well, albeit without a final outcome at this stage. S Taylor noted that these negotiations have had a notably different tone, and there is potential for agreement on a three-year deal. Such a settlement would contribute to a more stable period, which in turn it was hoped would support the implementation of the national job evaluation project and provide greater clarity for financial planning. Conversations are ongoing regarding potential Scottish Government funding to support this, which, while not yet finalised, appear more positive.  R Gordon remarked that the absence of industrial action has helped to make negotiations more straightforward.  B Lawrie enquired whether the Scottish Government was considering longer-term funding arrangements. S Taylor stated that this was not clear but confirmed that there is recognition at government level of the importance of equity in arrangements between academic and support staff.  Further updates were provided on employment conditions, including the resolution of issues related to COVID-19. COVID-19 is no longer treated differently from other illnesses with respect to sick pay, and relevant guidance has now been updated to reflect this change.  S Taylor reported that the national discipline policy had been formally implemented, with the People Team aligning and integrating the policy with the College’s internal policy and procedure. S Taylor noted that this would not result in any significant changes.  S Taylor highlighted that developments within the Unison branch continue to progress. R Gordon summarised recent developments with regard to this.  C Cusick welcomed the prospect of a three-year settlement, noting the potential for increased stability.  The report was welcomed. |
|  | **STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER**  S Taylor confirmed that no changes were proposed to the risks currently allocated to the Human Resources & Development Committee.  B Lawrie queried whether ongoing reviews of areas such as the Gardyne Theatre, the swimming pool, and similar facilities were adequately reflected within the existing risk register.  He asked if these pressures were captured under the current risk categories or whether they should be more explicitly recognised.  In response, S Taylor noted that these issues are currently addressed under Risk 3.7, which relates to industrial relations and broader operational impacts on the College. He explained that these considerations underpin the College’s approach to mitigating such risks. The broader implications of these operational areas will continue to be monitored, and should they escalate, the associated risk rating would be reviewed and adjusted accordingly.  S Taylor added that the strategic risk register is intended to reflect core institutional activities, including Finance and HR. Effective management of these areas inherently contributes to risk mitigation. He emphasised that if the College continues to operate in accordance with good practice, risk levels are appropriately managed and adjusted as necessary. The risk framework is embedded within the College’s overall management processes.  D Mackenzie thanked S Taylor for the update. |
|  | **HR METRICS**  S Taylor confirmed that the correct figure for the gender pay gap is 6.5% and noted it should be reflected accordingly.  C Cusick raised concerns regarding low staff uptake in mandatory training areas, specifically cyber security and GDPR training. A Mawhirt explained that the training cycle resets each year, with figures reflecting completion by the end of the academic year. The training operates on a three-year cycle, during which all staff are expected to complete the required modules. A Mawhirt added that ongoing reminders to staff are in place to encourage compliance.  R Gordon elaborated on initiatives being taken to raise awareness and improve training engagement, including cyber-attack simulation training and awareness campaigns targeting students. He highlighted the importance of smaller improvements in combatting growing cyber threats. R Gordon also highlighted that the College holds Cyber Essentials accreditation and is currently undergoing re-accreditation. Mandatory external training is assigned to individuals who fall victim to simulated cyber-attacks, helping to reinforce understanding of emerging threats.  **I**n response to a question from D Mackenzie on the timeline for achieving satisfactory uptake, it was confirmed that the current cycle runs to the end of the academic year. Reports are shared with managers and the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to ensure prioritisation within staff teams, with follow-up measures in place.  C Cusick enquired whether mandatory training was extended to Board members. R Gordon confirmed that it could be but noted licensing constraints may apply. He added that attention is also being paid to smaller email addresses and address books linked to the College, particularly in cases where local users lack dedicated technical support. Efforts continue to promote general awareness across all groups.  B Lawrie referred to the data presented on the report, questioning the relevance of current positions and headcount figures, and suggesting a system tidy-up may be needed.  S Taylor explained that the recent rapid improvement event highlighted issues related to the issuing of separate contracts for different pieces of work. This meant that headcount figures may appear lower than the number of ‘open’ positions, as one staff member may hold multiple positions. For example, a staff member might deliver only a portion of a unit during one semester. Variability in staffing is also influenced by factors such as student numbers and absence cover. Consequently, while there may be multiple positions, fewer individuals may be delivering them, or vice versa. FTEs may reflect either four or five individuals delivering work, or just one, depending on the allocation.  B Lawrie also queried the reporting of non-work-related stress and questioned whether the figure in column three of item number 3 should be updated to reflect the 2023/24 academic year. S Taylor thanked B Lawrie and will update the year accordingly.  The report was welcomed. |
|  | **MEETING MINUTES/UPDATES**  The Joint Consultative Committee (JCF) and Health, Safety and Wellbeing (HS&W) minutes were noted. |
|  | **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**  Thursday 4 September 2025 at 5.00pm in Room K- TO- 624, Kingsway Campus |

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| **Action Point Summary** |  |  |
| **Action** | **Responsibility** | **Date** |
| No action points were noted |  |  |