1 MINUTES OF THE MEETING

1.1 The Committee was invited to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 29th January 2019. Mr Donaldson highlighted that point 2.6 should state accessible route and not safe route.

1.2 Dr Pugh highlighted that point 5.2 (bullet 3) was not correct in that she considers that the wording in the 2014 and current surveys were comparable. It was agreed that the original meeting notes would be referred to for clarification.

1.3 No further comments were raised, and the minutes were approved.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

2.1 STRESS-RELATED ABSENCE (Minute 2.5 refers)

This would be considered at today’s meeting (see Minute 3 below).

2.2 LIGHTING AND SAFE ROUTES AT OLD ABERDEEN CAMPUS (Minute 2.6 refers)

Mr Donaldson requested that ‘safe’ be replaced with ‘accessible’ and provided an updated on the current status of the lighting and accessible. It was identified that there was a mix of different land owners, both known and unknown. The Council have been approached re the required crossings which pass over Council owned land. These discussions are expected to be protracted and it is unlikely that the work will begin in September. The Council have several sub-groups that will need engaging with prior to any works beginning. It was identified that University Policies would only be valid on University owned land.

2.3 STAFF STRESS SURVEY (Minute 5.3 refers)

This would be considered at today’s meeting (see Minute 3 below).

2.4 TOILET FACILITIES AT WILLIAM GUILD (Minute 7.1 refers)

Mr Malcolm provided an update on the toilet facilities at the William Guild Building. Mr Urquhart thanked the Estates Department for the work conducted regarding the vacuum toilet seals but did raise concerns re the noise of the hand driers. Mr Donaldson requested that this be discussed at a local committee.
3 STRESS SURVEY UPDATE

3.1 Mrs White provided an overview of the most recent stress related absence consisting of the last 2 years data. It was noted that there had been an increase in long-term depression, long-term stress/anxiety and short-term stress/anxiety. Mrs White highlighted that the data was relatively high level and more detailed data could be provided but care had to be taken to prevent the identification of individuals.

3.2 Dr Pugh observed that more detailed information would assist in identifying areas of concern with regards to specific Schools or Departments and any particular job category. Mr Urquhart also queried whether there could be temporal variations in the results. It was identified that the data consisted of both self-declared and Occupational Health referred information. It was agreed that further analysis of the data by job category and School / Department would be conducted.

   Action: T White

3.3 Dr Allan identified that this was the first time that the staff survey had investigated stress. The data illustrated that there was a poor response rate to the survey. The responses identifying the highest level of stress chose not to disclose their location in the University however the overall level of stress identified at the University is consistent with other large organisations. Dr Allan stated that the results illustrated a reasonable amount of moderate levels of stress and not a lot of high stress levels. Dr Allan’s interpretation of the main survey results identified that people are working hard, feel workloads are high and increasing, perceive resources/reward for effort to be suboptimal and find that management (at all levels) are not effective in managing or communicating. Overall, people are happy to work at the University but do feel an imbalance in effort and reward. Dr Allan highlighted that his imbalance between effort and perceived reward/recognition is a key determinant of workplace stress and dissatisfaction.

3.4 Dr Petrie provided information on the summary of the free text responses prepared by Mr Cresswell. The responses highlighted that the top 3 concerns from staff were complaints about all levels of management performance, increased workload with too much to do and employment terms & conditions, predominantly pay and grading related.

3.5 Dr Pugh queried as to what the actual scores mean in relation to stress levels and whether any of the recorded scores could be considered as of concern. Dr Allan responded that as there were only 12 questions asked, the results could be considered crude. Dr Allan stated that for the GHQ12 score is for individuals and a score if 2 identifies some distress, but the individual is coping and a score of above 4 identifies an individual who is stressed and not coping. With the Likert 0123 score, a score of 11-12 is indicative of a population at moderate stress, but there is no agreed cut off for when the stress levels are severe. Dr Allan identified that due to the small sample size and low response rate, the data should be treated with caution.

3.6 Professor Anderson queried what are the normal levels of stress for the University sector. Dr Allan stated that the majorities of Universities have not measured stress in this manner. However, sectors such as health service and government have similar scoring to that recorded at the University. Dr Allan identified that effort / reward balance is a key factor as if this is not correct, this can lead to employee disengagement. Dr Allan offered to review if there is data available for other Universities.

   Action: J Allan

3.7 Mrs Dyker informed the committee that the information from the staff survey has been distributed to the Stress Working Group and the Group must decide what key steps are required to be taken forward to reduce the highest levels of stress. Professor Anderson questioned whether the focus groups which had been previously discussed had happened. Mrs Dyker informed the Committee that these had occurred, and a report will be produced for the Employee Engagement Committee. Dr Pugh questioned whether the reports from the focus groups could be brought to this Committee. This was agreed by the Convener.

   Action: D Dyker
4 FIRE SAFETY UPDATE

4.1 In Mr Napier’s absence, Dr Petrie presented the Fire Safety Update paper. Dr Ebel queried the evacuation of the Sir Duncan Rice Library with regards to the process of the fire test. Mr Donaldson provided clarification on the difference in the operation of the fire systems between the fire drills and a full alarm.

4.2 Mr Donaldson raised a concern that considering recent fire incidents (e.g. Grenfell, Glasgow School of Art, Notre Dame, etc.) there is likely to be changes in fire safety regulations. It is considered that there will be a move towards asset preservation in addition to life preservation. Mr Donaldson informed the Committee that there is lots of ongoing debate in the Higher Education sector concerning this. It was discussed that more consideration should be given to asset protection at the University and how any proposed regulatory changes would impact on the University and that a working group should be convened.

Action: S Napier

5 PROGRESS WITH AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Dr Petrie gave an update on progress with the audit recommendations. Neither representative from the RINH or SBS to provide a current update. Dr Petrie identified that one of the outstanding actions for the RINH requires involvement from the Estates Department. Mr Malcolm gave an update on the current situation which required a number of different contractors to be on site at the same time which was proving difficult due to the contractor’s availability.

6 WORKLOAD REVIEW GROUP

6.1 Dr Pugh gave an update on the remit and composition of the Workload Review Group and noted that the results of the Staff Survey illustrate how timely the Workload Review Group is. The Group contains representatives from management, campus unions and academics. The remit is to gather the data identified on the attached paper and to investigate what can be learned from the data to devise strategies to monitor and minimise any excessive workloads. The Group plan to meet every 2 months and will report at 6 and 12 months. Dr Pugh identified that the remit that was distributed to the Committee members had been updated and the new remit identifies that the Group will report to the University Health and Safety Committee as well as the PNCC.

7 UPDATE ON ASBESTOS AT HILLHEAD CENTRAL

7.1 Mr Malcolm provided an update on the asbestos situation at the Hillhead Boiler House. The additional air tests referred to in the submitted paper were all negative, thus out of 22 samples taken, there was only one sample that was identified as containing asbestos. As a result, the decision has been taken to re-open the boiler house. It has been agreed that the Asbestos Management Group will be re-convened. Mr Donaldson highlighted that the risk to asbestos exposure is negligible due to the University’s policies for minimising and managing intrusive works across the campus.

7.2 Mrs Dyker highlighted that one positive aspect arising from the incident was the quick collaborative approach taken by all those involved including the Unions and Estates staff.
8. UPDATE ON UNIVERSITY H&S OFFICE RESTRUCTURING

8.2 Mrs Dyker informed the Committee that proposals to put a re-structured H&S Team have been agreed by SMT. The advert for the Head of Health, Safety and Wellbeing is current and there will be 2 additional posts put in place. Mr Donaldson stated that he considered that the Central Safety Team is stretched.

8.2 Ms Walker queried as to when the additional posts will be advertised. Mrs Dyker indicated that these will be advertised imminently.

9 AOCB

9.1 There was no AOCB raised by the Committee members.

10 ACCIDENTS AND INCIDENTS UPDATE

10.1 In relation to the incident concerning the student suffering an allergic reaction, Mr Urquhart queried what signage was available to inform consumers of potential allergens. Mr Donaldson stated that signs were presenting identifying that allergens may be present. Mr Urquhart highlighted that speaking from personal experience, if there are changes in recipes then this can be problematic to those suffering allergens. Mr Malcolm stated that he will discuss the issue of allergen information with the Head of Campus Services and feedback to the Committee.

Action: D Malcolm

11 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

11.1 The Committee noted the schedule for future meetings would be held on Tuesday 12th November 2019, Tuesday 28th January 2020 and Wednesday 6th May 2020.