UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

PARTNERSHIP NEGOTIATING AND CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

MINUTE OF MEETING HELD ON 26 FEBRUARY 2015

Present: Professor M Greaves (Convenor), Mrs D Dyker, Mrs P Williams, Mrs P Burnett, Mr B Paterson, Mrs D Massie, Ms F Stewart, Dr R Shanks, Professor P McGeorge, Professor M Ross, Professor B MacGregor, Ms C Cook and Mrs F Smith (Clerk),

Apologies: Mrs E Argo, Mrs C Inglis

1. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 19 NOVEMBER 2014

   Item 2.1 was amended to read

   Review of IAMS Pilot Scheme

   The Committee was advised that 3 additional areas had been identified to participate in the extended IAMS pilot scheme, School of Engineering, School of Education and the CASS College Office. HR Partners were working with the Heads of these areas to ensure that the staff in their areas were fully aware of the pilot and the purpose of it.

   Item 8.1 was amended to read

   UCU members raised concerns about the lack of suitable facilities for staff to socialise in an environment away from students.

   The Minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2014 were approved.

2. MATTERS ARISING

2.1 Internationalisation

   The Committee was advised that UCU had provided comments on the draft policy which had been incorporated prior to the policy being approved by Court.

2.2 Smoking Policy

   Professor Greaves confirmed that due to the Scottish Government directive there would be no designated smoking areas on NHS premises

2.3 Crombie Hall

   The Clerk advised that she had spoken to the Director of Estates who had confirmed that whilst Crombie Hall was subject to some building restrictions there were no issues with the work being undertaken in that regard.

   The Convenor advised that social space forms part of the ongoing discussions around the Capital Plan and the broader strategic plan discussions. It was confirmed that there was a proposal for the crush hall to be made a social area.
2.4 Promotion Exercise

The Clerk advised 17 applications had been received for the trial of new Academic-Related paperwork which was not ideal for carrying out a trial. The Clerk undertook to work with the other applicants to try to get a more material for the trial.

3. POLICY ON SHARED PARENTAL LEAVE

The Committee noted the draft policy on Shared Parental Leave and that it had still to be considered by UMG where there would be discussion around the level of payment for Shared Parental Pay particularly whether this would be enhanced in line with maternity pay. The Committee discussed the complexity of the legislation and how this would work in practice.

Comment was passed that if only statutory ShPP was paid this would not attract new staff and having a new nursery which was going to be the best in the country it would be a shame if this was the case. Concerns were also raised regarding ensuring equality of treatment of both parents where both were employees of the University. Dr Shanks of UCU made several detailed point relating to parity between maternity pay and shared parental pay.

It was requested that maternity pay should be further enhanced as an article in THE supplement had shown that the offering in Aberdeen was lower than comparator Universities.

Further comments were made regarding the need to ensure that staff could take their Union Representative with them to any discussion about discontinuous leave and that these changes in legislation should also apply in surrogacy situations.

It was agreed that the discussion would be reflected in the UMG paper for further consideration.

4. REVIEW OF PROBATION

The Committee noted the report on the Review of Probation which had been undertaken. Professor Ross summarised that all unions had been represented on the working group and that they had considered the proposal in detail, looked at practices at other universities and also considered a change to the title but been unable to find a better one.

Professor Ross outlined the main changes and outcomes put forward by the Working Group. The probation period would be 6 months for Support Staff, 12 months for Academic related, Research only and Teaching only staff, Academic probation would remain for 3 years although there had been substantial changes to the paperwork involved.

UCU advised that their representative had been unable to attend the final meeting of the Working Group but had fed in their comments to Professor Ross. UCU requested a further meeting to feed in further comments which they not believe had been incorporated.

Disappointment was expressed that the Working Group had been ongoing for 8 months and that agreement had not been reached. UCU were asked to provide a list of their substantive points by the Convenor and that a decision would then be taken as to whether a further meeting of the Working Group was required.

ACTION: UCU Reps/HR

5. CHANGES TO CHILDCARE VOUCHER PROVISION

The Committee noted the paper presented on the changes to legislation and childcare voucher provider. It was acknowledged that this paper was to be considered by UMG on 9th March and therefore welcomed any comments from the Committee prior to this.
Clarity was requested on how staff would be affected where they had built up funds in the Sodexo scheme and to ensure that individuals would have the option to be a member of both funds to allow them to use up any remaining funds. It was discussed that lots of communication with staff would be required prior to any transfer.

6. WORKLOAD MODELLING

Professor McGeorge advised that a joint working group with the Trade Unions was being set up and a demonstration with a provider had been arranged. It was noted that there were some good workload models already in place in some areas for example in Engineering, Medicine and Anthropology. Mrs Dyker confirmed that it would be useful to have Union representatives as part of the working group to build in their comments.

7. COUNTER TERRORISM AND SECURITY BILL

Professor Greaves advised that the Principal had been lobbying on this. Professor Ross informed that there had been discussions at the last CASS College Council on this and comments had been fed into the Principal and PPG to inform their ongoing discussions with the Scottish Government. Academic freedom of speech was at the forefront of the concerns raise. Professor Greaves thanked UCU for raising their concerns.

8. CHANGES TO RULES FOR PROGRESSION TO HONOURS

The Committee noted the paper presented on the change to the rules around progression to honours. Professor McGeorge advised that this had long been in discussion and the consensus was to remove the hurdle to honours which would bring the University in line with the broader Scottish framework, Post Graduate Taught courses and the higher quality of the student intake. Consensus of opinion at Senate was to proceed. Concerns were raised around additional workload that may result from this and the extra support that some students might require. Professor McGeorge confirmed that if we recruit students we should be committing to supporting them throughout their studies and that currently students are not prevented from progressing instead they just graduate with a designated degree.

9. STRATEGIC PLAN

Mrs Dyker advised the Committee that there was a draft white paper being developed which would go to Court in March taking account of all the information gathered at the workshops and focus groups. There were also proposals for further consultation with staff and unions as the paper was not going to Court as the final plan, which would go the June Court meeting. Mrs Dyker said dates for further consultation would be arranged soon.

10. ADVERTISING MATERIALS

There was discussion around the UCU poster which had been presented and the negative message that it implied about terms and conditions at the University. The UCU Representative explained that the posters had been designed by another branch administrator and then used by others, and that to maintain good working relationships they would be taken down. UCU said that if they saw the posters they would be taken down. Professor Greaves said he was grateful for the union response.

11. CARPARKING FOR PREGNANT STAFF AND OTHER MATERNITY ISSUES

There was discussion around the provision of reserved parking spaces for pregnant women in their third trimester so that they did not need to walk so far, as the process was not perceived to be working well. The Clerk undertook to ensure that this option was better publicised.
UCU also raised concerns around people going on maternity leave and their role not being covered. It was felt that staff may take shorter leave because other staff were covering from them. Professor Greaves confirmed that maternity cover was looked at on a case by case basis and that funding was an issue. Professor Greaves confirmed that it was not possible to commit to all maternity leave being covered. It was noted that it was the Line Manager’s responsibility to make arrangements when an employee went on maternity leave and not the employee’s.

12. PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

The Committee noted the paper presented on Terms and Conditions of employment. Mrs Dyker suggested that a working group be established to look at these. The University’s solicitors had prepared drafts and there would be a change to the look and feel of contracts also. Contracts would be shorter with more information being included in an online staff handbook to make things clearer for staff. The rest of the contract changes were just bringing them in line with legislation or semantics. There was positive reaction to including a number of working hours in a contract but clarification was also asked for the reason for this. Mrs Dyker said that it tied into everything that had been discussed around workloads. There was comment that it was difficult to argue against a 40 hour week but it was important not to lose flexibility and not to expect staff to be on campus 9 – 5. Mrs Dyker said that it was not about being present but rather line managers knowing where staff were as we did not have a home working policy. It was also confirmed that it did not have anything to do with One-Source.

13. INFORMATION SECURITY POLICY

Concerns were raised about whether we were as robust at picking up scam emails. Mrs Dyker said she would raise this with Brian Henderson in IT.

A separate unrelated issue was also raised that the IT helpdesk were no longer allowed to take over your computer out of hours and the frustration this might cause in the resolution of IT problems.

ACTION: HR with IT

14. USS CONSULTATION

Mrs Dyker advised that the statutory consultation on the proposed changes to the USS Scheme would take place from 16 March to 22 May 2015. The packs to be issued to all staff in the scheme would arrive between 2 and 9 March to be issued to staff before Friday 13 March. Arrangements were in place for this. There were also a series of pensions workshops planned and David Watts from UCU would be attending these. There would be a website for feedback on consultation.

15. UPDATED WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

The committee noted the amended policy. Jennifer Sewell had updated this following a recent audit and changes in legislation. There was discussion around the Policy Review Group’s role in this. Mrs Dyker clarified that the PRG reviewed policies that were under the control of HR, but would look at ways to incorporate other policies into this process.

16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was discussion around whether staff had to take Public Holidays in areas that did not close on these days. It was suggested that this was an historical issue around payment for
Public Holidays, but that staff could choose to work if they wished. It was felt that the policy was not clear. Mrs Dyker said she and the Clerk would look at this issue.

**ACTION: HR**

It was noted that the Trade Union facilities agreement was an annual one and clarity was sought on the arrangements for looking at this. Mrs Dyker commented that she thought that it was last reviewed in June 2014 but she would clarify this.

**ACTION: HR**

UCU requested that the next meeting in May start at 10.30 am so that the National Officer could attend and bring Louise McGurk, the new Officer with her as part of her induction training.

The Convenor thanked everyone for their input to this his final meeting as Convenor.

17. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting of the Partnership Negotiating and Consultative Committee will be Thursday 14 May 2015 at 10.30 am.