UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
PARTNERSHIP NEGOTIATING AND CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

MINUTE OF MEETING HELD ON 14 MAY 2015

Present: Professor J Kilburn (Convenor), Professor M Greaves, Mrs D Dyker, Mrs T White, Ms J Asher, Mrs P Burnett, Mr O Cox, Mr B Paterson, Mrs D Massie, Ms F Stewart, Professor M Ross, Mrs C Inglis, Dr R Shanks, Ms F Stewart, Ms C Cook (Clerk), Ms L McGurk, UCU, Mr F Nicol

Apologies: Mrs E Argo, Professor B MacGregor, Professor P McGeorge

1. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 26 FEBRUARY 2015

The Minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2015 were approved.

2. MATTERS ARISING

2.1 Promotion Exercise

Mrs Dyker said that despite having an extended timeframe for people to return the trial paper work, more data was needed and perhaps a different process was required. Dr Shanks commented that the timing of promotions was difficult now that the exam timetable had changed. Mrs Inglis suggested that perhaps a rolling process would be better.

2.2 Counter Terrorism and Security Bill

Mrs White presented an update provided by Jennifer Sewel. (See paper attached)

The Bill was passed on 12 February and is now the Counter-Terrorism & Security Act 2015. The Act introduces a duty on universities (and many other institutions) to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.

A late amendment in the House of Lords makes it explicit that in performing the Prevent duty, those institutions covered by the Education (No 2) Act 1986 will be required to have particular regard to the duty in that Act to secure Free Speech. Scottish HEIs are not covered by that Act but separate provision is being put in place to ensure the same obligation on Scottish HEIs. In Scotland the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) will be responsible for monitoring compliance with the Act.

Alongside the Act – Statutory Guidance for organisations covered by the Act has been issued - this includes a section for Higher Education. There are separate implementation Guidance documents for i) Scotland and ii) for England & Wales. The Scottish Guidance is available at www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/417941/Prevent_Duty_Guidance_for_Scotland.pdf

A section removed from both the Scottish and E & W versions of the Statutory Guidance and for which a separate Statutory Guidance Document will be issued in due course is on Speaker & Events - as this proved to be controversial area.

It was agreed that it was appropriate to establish a small working group, convened by Professor Kilburn and to include trade union and AUSA representatives, to take forward matters arising from the legislation and statutory guidance.

ACTION: CLE

2.3 Information Security Policy
Mrs White said that Mr Brian Henderson had given an update regarding the concerns expressed. The spam software was robust, but however filters were set, spam emails would still get through. If the filters were too strict then genuine mail would be sent to junk mail. If people had specific concerns then these should be highlighted to IT.

ACTION: ALL

With regard to IT having remote access out of hours, this had been implemented in reaction to concerns from some academic staff regarding confidentiality of research data, however this could be revisited. Dr Shanks said she had had an issue teaching online out of hours as had some of her colleagues. Mr Paterson expressed concern that a lot of spam emails were now disguised as ‘invoices’. It was agreed that both would issues would be raised directly with Mr Henderson. Mrs Dyker commented that IT would feedback issues to Microsoft and that scammers were always looking for new ways.

2.4 Shared Parental Leave

Mrs Dyker said that a paper and draft policy had been presented at the last PNCC meeting outlining different options for paying Shared Parental Leave. The paper had subsequently gone to UMG and Court and she was pleased to confirm that payment for Shared Parental Pay had been approved akin to maternity pay. Dr Shanks thanked the University for this.

2.5 IAMS Pilot

Mrs Dyker reported that, despite the roll out of the pilot to three additional areas, the positive impact of this additional support mechanism was not as hoped and involvement would therefore be revisited.

2.6 Car Parking

Dr Shanks thanked the University for the E-zine article re parking.

2.7 Minute 14 USS

Mrs Inglis expressed thanks to David Watts of UCU for his input at the consultation workshops that had taken place and said that the University and UCU had worked closely together on this. The consultation period would end on 22 May 2015 and over the summer USS would take account of the responses. Mrs Inglis also confirmed that consideration was being given to a University/Trade Union Joint Statement concerning the basis of the valuation of USS being submitted as part of consultation responses.

3. VOLUNTARY SEVERANCE

Mrs Dyker said that she had met with the unions the previous day to update them that to date 41 requests for Voluntary Severance had been approved with a recurrent saving of £1.6 M. Professor Kilburn said that there was also a process in place to review all requests for Voluntary Severance that had previously been declined. There was also a freeze on recruitment apart from a few exceptions. The University would only incur new staff costs where it had to. Dr Shanks referred to the previous request submitted asking the University to rule out compulsory redundancies and requested again that the University do so. Professor Kilburn said the University would continue discussions with all unions through the JCCRA, however the University was not in position to rule these out. Ms McGurk said that UCU would be encouraging members to take part in a ballot and that the union was obtaining non-member information from the University website which was in the public domain. Dr Shanks said they would be emailing staff but would make it explicit where they got the contact details from.
4. POLICIES – ADOPTION, MATERNITY, PATERNITY/CO-MATERNITY, PARENTAL LEAVE

Mrs Dyker said the policies had been approved by Policy Review Group and would now go to Court. Ms Stewart said there was a real opportunity to promote Shared Parental leave and would like section 5 to be at the start of the maternity policy. This was agreed.

ACTION: HR

5. PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

Mrs Dyker referred to the paper on changes to Terms and Conditions that had been discussed at the February PNCC meeting and the establishment of the Terms and Conditions Working Group. Mrs Dyker confirmed that the University wanted to include reviewing the reward strategy and consideration of introducing performance related pay (PRP) as part of remit of the Group.

Dr Shanks said that UCU were against PRP as this was a step away from national pay bargaining. Concern was also expressed regarding ensuring equality. Dr Shanks acknowledged that the current work being undertaken regarding a line management structure was agreed but that UCU were not in favour of PRP. Mr Paterson also expressed concern regarding application of PRP to different levels of position and equality issues associated with the existing annual review process. Professor Kilburn said that Equality and Diversity training was intend to ensure people were aware of their biases, but it was not the system at fault. Ms Stewart asked what problem PRP was designed to resolve. Professor Kilburn said that the current scheme of increments did not reflect how people performed year on year.

Mrs Massie requested that this proposal be put on hold given everything else that was going on. Mrs Dyker said that the University wished to take it forward alongside the review of Terms and Conditions to enable full discussion.

The committee discussed various pros and cons for PRP. Dr Shanks said there was evidence that it did not work for financial reward and in real terms pay had been cut by 15% in the last decade.

Mrs Inglis commented that automatic increments were also not a motivator. There was discussion about the fact that the sector was changing, performance related pay was high on UCEA’s agenda and that establishments had to get more in line with what funders would expect.

Dr Shanks said that a better line management structure was needed to motivate staff and for staff to be clearer on what they had to do and how to do it. Ms McGurk questioned whether staff were being set good objectives and encouraged to develop.

Mr Nicol commented that the Rowett previously had a PRP system in place and this had not worked well.

The trade unions confirmed that they did not want PRP to be included in the remit of the Terms and Conditions Working Group.

6. WORKLOAD MODELLING

Mrs Dyker said the paper circulated was the outcome of the Working Group and UCU had added comments which was helpful. UCU suggested that they would prefer further discussion at a JNCC. Mrs Dyker queried why this was necessary given the extent of discussion at the Working Group. Dr Shanks said that they were in broad support of the paper but would like time to discuss it further. Mrs Inglis clarified that procedurally if there were any comments they
could now be made by circulation and these should be forwarded to Mrs Dyker. The paper would then be submitted to Senate.

7. STRATEGIC PLAN

Mrs Dyker said this was part of the formal consultation process and a chance for the unions to add in anything that they had not had the chance to feed in until now.

Dr Shanks sought clarification on what indicators there would be and how that was going to be fed down to schools. Professor Kilburn said that a template was being put together for Key Performance Indicators and within this, each school would have their target.

Dr Shanks questioned whether the University was trying to be best at everything and perhaps focussing on one target would be better. Professor Kilburn said that any objectives set would be stretching.

Dr Shanks said that the unions would want to work with the university on how the South Korea campus would work and the impact on staff. Professor Ross said there was an Internationalisation policy which addressed practical issues for line managers and the unions had been consulted on that.

Mr Paterson said they were more concerned with enabling the Strategic Plan and the support staff network there to facilitate it.

Dr Shanks agreed that there had been a great deal of opportunity to input to the plan which was a positive feature.

8. PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE GROUPS

Ms Asher reported that the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) policy had been revised as a result of a visit from Disclosure Scotland. The key change proposed, was the removal of the risk assessment process. From October 2015 it would no longer be acceptable for someone to commence work prior to the PVG check, as it would be an offence to place someone in work without a PVG. There was also more detailed information and guidance on the type of work that is regulated and this was highlighted in the policy.

Mr Paterson commented that Disclosure Scotland had struggled to deal with checks in a timely manner when it was introduced. Ms Asher said that they had now lifted the cap and we could submit as many checks as we needed to meet the October deadline for retrospective checking. There was concern expressed that the PVG check might delay recruitment. Ms Asher confirmed that a new employee cannot start work prior to a PVG check if it is required for the post and it was no longer possible to do a risk assessment to enable the employee to start prior to this being received. There was concern about the impact the delay might have if an employee was coming from overseas. Ms Asher said she would incorporate in the operating procedures that the request for both visa and PVG should be made at the same time.

ACTION: HR

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

9.1 Strategic Plan

Dr Shanks stated that the comments made earlier concerning PRP should be regarded as feedback about reference made to this in the Strategic Plan.

9.2 Working on Public Holidays
Mr Nicol said there was an issue with part time staff being forced to take Public Holidays which was potentially discriminatory. Mrs Dyker said that this would be looked at outwith PNCC, as part of the Terms and Conditions working group.

**ACTION:** Unions/HR

9.3 Staff Survey results

Dr Shanks asked when the staff survey results would be available, as well as other research surveys. Mrs Dyker responded that the research surveys were still live and the staff survey was still being analysed but would be included on the agenda of the next PNCC.

9.4 Letter to Court

Mrs Inglis advised that she had been made aware of a letter that the Trade Unions were intending to submit to Court. Mrs Inglis continued that PNCC was the committee for discussing staffing matters and that the Governance Structure required that the letter should be considered by PNCC in the first instance. Should the Trade Unions be dissatisfied with the response at PNCC then there was a requirement for a communication from PNCC to Court. Mrs Inglis confirmed that PNCC would need to agree a statement and this would be recorded in the minutes and in the report to Court.

Professor Kilburn and Mr Paterson both made a declaration of interest as both were members of Court.

Dr Shanks presented the letter to PNCC. Following consideration Dr Shanks confirmed that the position had moved on. It was agreed that the original draft could be included in the minutes and a revised agreed statement from the trade unions could be appended to the PNCC report to Court.

9.5 PNCC Chair

It was confirmed that the chair would change in September. Dr Shanks flagged that the Partnership Working & Recognition Agreement made reference to a vice-chair and suggested this could be considered at that stage. This was agreed.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting of the Partnership Negotiating and Consultative Committee is to be agreed.