UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
PARTNERSHIP NEGOTIATING AND CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE
MINUTE OF MEETING HELD ON 17 MAY 2017

Present: Professor J Kilburn (Convenor), Mrs C Inglis, Mrs D Dyker, Mr B Paterson, Mrs E Argo, Mr F Nicol, Dr F Pedersen, Dr D Marie, Professor P Hannaford, Mr N Qamar (part-time), Mrs T White, Ms C Cook (Clerk) Professor B MacGregor, Professor P McGeorge, Professor M Ross, Mr O Cox

Apologies:
1. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 1 MARCH 2017

1.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 1 March 2017 were approved.

2. MATTERS ARISING

2.1 35 Hour Working Week

Mrs Dyker said that the University had been asked by Unite to investigate the possibility of moving to a 35 hour working week for all staff and the paper presented highlighted the implications in terms of costs and resources. Mr Paterson said it made interesting reading and the results were not surprising. If the costs of moving to a 35 hour week were unaffordable then there was a need to address the other issue which was those staff currently working a 35 hour week while others were not, or this would lead to an equal pay claim.

Mrs Inglis said giving notice to those staff that working 35 hours would end, was an option.

Mrs Dyker said the University could serve notice that these staff would move back to the agreed terms and conditions. Mrs Inglis commented that remaining at the status quo was unacceptable. Mr Paterson said that the paper presented the worst case scenario in terms of costs of a 35 hour week. Scandinavia had moved to a 30 hour week and found it had had a positive impact on productivity. Professor Kilburn said it would be difficult to measure and know in advance that that benefit would be achieved.

Mr Paterson commented that when the Technician staff moved from a 38 hour to 36.5 hour working week, no additional Technicians were employed. Mrs Inglis clarified that this reduction in working hours had however cost the University more money.

Professor Kilburn said there was no denying that moving to a 35 hour working week would increase costs and that the University did not have money for that. Mrs Dyker agreed that the biggest issue was cost and proposed that the University moved to serve notice on those staff currently working a 35 hour week, however she would welcome the Trade Unions doing work to identify the potential benefits of all staff moving to a 35 hour week.

Action: Trade unions to provide evidence on the benefits to the University of staff moving to a 35 hour working week.
2.2 Zero Hours

Mrs White confirmed the information shared was the information on spend on Temporary Services, Zero Hours, and Guaranteed Minimum Hours contracts. There was discussion around the reason for some of the increases, for example when the Music Department moved into Language and Literature, the Music Tutors costs also moved. Mrs Inglis also said there had been an increase in Student Life which related to disability, student recruitment, Student Ambassadors assisting at Events and increase in numbers of Non-Medical Personal Assistants.

2.3 Employee Engagement

After the last PNCC meeting in March this paper had returned for further discussion to the Employee Engagement Working Group. The paper was now presented to PNCC for final agreement and progression to Court. Dr Pedersen acknowledged the improvements amendments made and there was some discussion, for the purposes of clarification, around some of the proposals. The Employee Engagement Strategy and Action plan was approved.

3. TERMS AND CONDITIONS REVIEW

Mrs White provided an update on progress of the Working Group. A meeting had been held with UCU and Mary Senior and agreement was reached on a form of words for IP which would be shared at the next Senate meeting. The Working Group had also looked at other clauses in the Terms and Conditions and the outstanding one was overseas travel. The working group had suggested an amendment but since that meeting further consideration had been given to the inclusion of reference to no detriment’. There was concern that this was too open to interpretation beyond what was intended regarding promotion. The proposal was to remove reference to no detriment within the terms and conditions but to include reference in guidance on promotions paperwork.

Dr Pedersen highlighted concerns expressed by UCU members. Mrs Dyker said that since March 2016 when the new T &C’s were implemented, there had been no real examples of staff suffering detriment.

Dr Marie said that the interpretation was that it did not give sufficient cover for their concerns and that staff might be treated differently if they refused to travel e.g. capability. Mrs Inglis said that if there was victimisation taking place it would not be tolerated and needed to be addressed.

Mr Paterson said that there was concern with the line management structure, people were not treated equally i.e. someone being told they would never be promoted would be an issue with trust and line management.

Professor Kilburn said we needed to understand what the concern was about.

Mrs Inglis said Mr Paterson’s point was a reasonable one, if there was a situation they could come informally to make HR aware of it.

Dr Pedersen said that there were countries where sexual orientation or ethnic background made it difficult for someone to travel to that area and that individuals may feel pressured to ‘out’ themselves.

Professor Kilburn said that no-one under those circumstances was being forced to go.

Dr Marie said that needed to be communicated.
Professor Kilburn said it had already been communicated via Senate and in Professor John Paterson’s presentation.

Mrs Dyker said that they would take a view that they would proceed to Senate with the Terms and Conditions for approval.

Professor Ross clarified that if there was any pushback then the current Terms and Condition’s stood.

Mrs Inglis made a formal request for feedback from UCU on any issues by the end of the week i.e. 19 May, to go on UCU AGM agenda on 24 May for a yes or no answer and the IP clause would proceed to Senate.

Action: UCU

4. REVIEW OF PROMOTIONS

Professor Kilburn said that Working group had been set up to streamline the promotions process and that there had been good engagement and progress made. Mr Nicol asked about the link between Promotions and Annual Review. Professor Ross said that the Annual Review process would need to be looked at to incorporate good practice. Dr Pedersen said he was concerned about the role of the Framework of Academic Expectations and how it fitted with HERA and National Academic Role Profiles (NARPS). Professor Ross said that she had been working on the linkage between NARPS and how schools set expectations for staff, as they were not using it routinely. Drafts had been prepared using the NARPS descriptions with a tool for the Heads of School to set expectation in their local area. This had been shared with the Heads of School to road test to see if they found it helpful.

Dr Marie said that FAE was local but NARPS and HERA were national and had there been any discussion how they all came together and to ensure some kind of consistency.

Mrs Dyker said that HERA was separate but they had discussed how that linked to promotion review to ensure consistency, and also how to use the FAE and NARPS to support promotions. Professor Ross said the intention was to pull it altogether. Professor Hannaford said it had originated in the Medical School and was intended to be a helpful document and to let people know what was expected of them.

Action: Progress to Court

5. TRADE UNION ACT

The paper outlined the new statutory obligations under the Trade Union Act 2016 in relation to Facilities time for Trade Union Representatives. There was discussion regarding how this would work in practice. It was agreed that there would be investigation into the possibility of extracting data directly from outlook calendars to populate the forms was. It was agreed a communication would be drafted for Trade union representatives with further guidance on how to record that data required for recording requirements.

Action: HR

6. HONORARY APPOINTMENTS

6.1 The Working Group had made recommendations presented in the paper to clarify and improve the Honorary Appointment process. The paper recommended that car parking would not be
part of the benefit on the Foresterhill site because of the pressure of car parking on the site.

The committee was content to move forward with the policy and the recommendation re car parking.

7. PAY NEGOTIATIONS

7.1 The final offer of 1.7% for the pay negotiations had been made.

8.0 CAPABILITY

The committee was invited to note the figures presented.

9.0 POLICIES

Mr Qamar was present to talk about the Eye Protection Policy and the Biosafety Policy. Mr Qamar said that both policies had been to the Health and Safety committee and there were no comments on the Biosafety Policy however there were comments on the Eye Protection Policy. It was felt that the policy was overly prescriptive in regard to eye protection zones. Professor Kilburn said that the fact that wearing eye protection was not mandatory was of concern to him as a chemist, and wanted to be reassured that appropriate action was taken. If it was to be decided by risk assessment then we needed to be confident that that took place and included students. Mr Qamar said that there were certain areas that could be designated as Eye Protection Zones and everybody would wear safety glasses, i.e. certain workshops and labs designated but there were others where there was much lower risk. There was a need for risk assessments and there would be costs involved.

Action: Mr Qamar

CCTV Policy

This policy had been discussed further since the last PNCC meeting and a few small changes to the wording as requested by Unison had been made. The policy was agreed and Owen Cox, the Unison Representative confirmed he was now content with the content. Mrs Inglis thanked Owen for his work on the policy.

10.0 A.O.B.

Door Access System

There was ongoing work required to completely resolve this but Mr Paterson thanked Ms Cook for her work on this.

Electric Cars

Dr Pedersen commented that Robert Gordon’s University had purchased electric cars for travel between campuses and asked whether this was something the University might consider.

Action: To be referred to Chris Osbeck, Transport & Waste Manager.

Protected Conversations

UCU commented that they had been made aware that a number of people were being called in and told that this was a protected conversation and being asked to consider their position.
There were also rumours that the Heads of School had also attended training on how to have a Protected Conversation.

Mrs Inglis said that the number of protected conversations that had taken place was less than two. The Heads of School had received the opportunity to be trained in new legislation which has a role and can be used effectively in certain circumstances. Line Managers should be aware of changes in legislation. Mr Paterson commented that he had represented someone in this situation and it had provided a satisfactory conclusion and a better outcome for everyone in that particular situation.

Action: Peter Sharp to deliver training to PNCC on Protected Conversations.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

11.1 The date of the next meeting of the PNCC is 6 September 2017 at 10.30 am in VC suite, University Office.