UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
PARTNERSHIP NEGOTIATING AND CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

MINUTE OF MEETING HELD ON 9 SEPTEMBER 2015

Present: Professor J Kilburn, Professor M Greaves, Mrs D Dyker, Mrs T White, Mr B Paterson, Ms F Stewart (Convenor), Mrs C Inglis, Dr A MacKillop, Dr S Lawrie, Ms C Cook (Clerk), Ms Mary Senior, FTO UCU

Apologies: Professor B MacGregor, Professor M Ross, Mrs P Burnett, Mr O Cox

1. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 14 MAY 2015

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 May 2015 were approved subject to the following amendment.

‘3. Ms McGurk said that UCU would be campaigning and encouraging members and non-members to take part in a ballot’ should read ‘encouraging members to take part in a ballot’.

2. MATTERS ARISING

2.1 REMIT AND COMPOSITION OF PNCC

Fiona Stewart (Convenor) welcomed everyone to the PNCC and it was noted that this was the first meeting of this committee chaired by a woman.

Mrs Dyker circulated the remit and composition of the PNCC which were agreed.

3. MATTERS ARISING

3.1 Childcare Voucher Scheme

Ms Cook reported the move from Sodexo to Edenred had been completed with effect from 1 August 2015 and had gone well.

3.2 IAMS Pilot

Mrs Dyker said that there had been reservations when the pilot first started and the uptake and engagement had not been positive since then. Mrs Dyker suggested it might be worth considering if the scheme were to continue or not and this was agreed. Mr Paterson commented that if IAMS stopped it might be prudent to pick up, through Policy Review Group, to see if there were any other actions to address sickness absence.

Action: Management reps. to take a view and report to senate

3.3 COUNTER TERRORISM AND SECURITY BILL

UCU were happy with the Joint Statement tabled at the meeting and would welcome a chance to have an AUCU observer on the Prevent Group. Ms Senior commented that it was an important issue for UCU. Mrs Inglis commented that in principle a UCU representative could observe the Prevent Group, but it might be better if they were a member. Dr Lawrie said they agreed but they had consulted the membership and were keen to have an observer. Dr MacKillop suggested that a report would need to be made through Senate and questioned whether Senate met often enough for this purpose.

Action: Management reps. to take a view and report to senate
Mrs Dyker updated there had been little movement in numbers. There were £4.3 M recurrent savings and 95 approved applications. Things had slowed down over the summer but now people were back and the school plans were out for consultation, it was hoped there would be movement in the scheme again. Dr MacKillop said that UCU were getting concerned that elements of the June agreement had not been implemented as quickly as intended. The school plans were still being developed and others were out for a short consultation period. As a result there was even more uncertainty. UCU stressed that they had received numerous queries from members and the financial strategy overall remained unclear. Dr MacKillop tabled 6 questions:

1. How many new staff had been appointed since 30 March 2015? A formal request was submitted for exact figures and costs in each area for new posts and replacing vacancies.
   
   Action: figures/savings to be provided.

2. What were the headline savings in addition to the savings made through VS and how far were we from the £10.5 M? Professor Kilburn replied that the situation had not changed hugely since Court in June. The target had not changed.
   
   Action: Professor Kilburn to communicate the headline in savings in addition to VS and how far from the £10.5 m it was.

3. Was there a figure below £10.5 M at which the University would be happy?
   
   Professor Kilburn responded that the University would make the savings that they had told Court they would, but would pragmatic in doing so.

4. Would the University consider extending the VS scheme to 31 July 2016?
   
   Professor Kilburn responded that he was not sure what extending the scheme would achieve as we needed to lose teaching staff before the next teaching period in January 2015 to make the savings. Mr Paterson said it was useful to consider that the Professional Services Review would go on past the current scheme and he would like staff to have the same VS scheme moving forward. Professor Kilburn replied that there were no plans for redundancies in Professional Services. Reduction in staff numbers would be managed by natural turnover.

Mrs Inglis said the Professional Services review was underway and it was intended that there was an initial report by the end of October. At that stage there would be an indication of what was planned. She had attended two meetings and people were generally reassured that the University was not intending to enforce job losses, however there would need to be flexibility among staff. Mrs Inglis said the review was not extending to Technicians but did include admin staff in colleges and schools.

Professor Kilburn commented that he too was frustrated working with schools as the new strategic process was taking longer than planned.

5. Dr MacKillop requested that UCU see all the draft school budget plans.

Professor Kilburn said that schools had been allocated budgets and set targets but they had autonomy on how to achieve that.

Dr MacKillop asked that if the schools achieved the savings required would they avoid Compulsory Redundancies.

Professor Kilburn said the savings were expected to come from salary savings and income generation would take longer and the savings were needed now.

6. Dr MacKillop asked that the University give assurance now that there would be no compulsory redundancies after 10 November.
Professor Kilburn replied that there would not be Compulsory Redundancies however the JCCRA process may have to be invoked. Dr MacKillop said that it would be helpful if the University ensured that line managers knew that UCU did not agree to use any compulsory redundancy mechanism before or after 10 Nov 2015.

Ms. Senior commented that they had just come from a Branch meeting and there seemed to be a sense that line managers were saying to staff, if you don’t take VS then you are out the door after 10 November.

Professor Kilburn said that had not been said. Ms Senior said that staff just think redundancy has been delayed.

Professor Kilburn said the University wanted to get to the end point by 10 November which was still two months away. The University was making clear, areas for investment and disinvestment. Professor Greaves said that consistency of message was really valid. Professor Kilburn said the final plans would be available to all in the University.

Ms Stewart said UCU would request a final draft of the savings plans and a regular update on overall savings.

Action: Professor Kilburn

5. POLICIES – Smoking and Appeals

Mrs Dyker said the policies had been approved by Policy Review Group and would now go to Court. There was discussion that the Smoking Policy applies to students and the difficulty of policing at Foresterhill.

The trade unions requested that reference be made in the Appeals Policy to appeal meetings being arranged to suit all parties.

ACTION: HR

6. STAFF SURVEY

Mrs Dyker tabled a headline report. Tony Anagboso would do a presentation to the committee with more detail.

ACTION: HR

7. CAR PARKING CHARGES

Management presented an outline proposal to increase car parking charges for staff grade 3 and above. It was explained that this had been prepared as part of considerations to generate efficiencies.

Mr Paterson stressed that it had previously been agreed that any funds generated from car parking charges would be used to fund sustainable transport initiatives. Mr Paterson requested figures regarding this.

ACTION: Mrs Inglis to provide figures.

Following discussion it was agreed that the proposal to amend parking charges would not be pursued.
8. **CAPABILITY PROCEDURE**

Mrs Dyker updated that there had been a meeting between management and unions to discuss how the procedure was used. Mrs Dyker commented that agreement had been reached that reference to pre-informal meetings would be built into management guidance and would also be incorporated into academic line management training starting in September.

Dr MacKillop said the caveat agreed was that UCU would take the proposal back to committee which they had done and now had some further caveats. Firstly management said they would give information to line managers in guidance material, but how would this information be given to individuals and secondly it muddied the waters as to the procedural status. If the individual wanted to challenge this and if it was just contained in the advice to the line manager, what procedural basis could staff use to challenge this?

Mrs Dyker replied that this would be a normal type of discussion between an individual and a line manager. It was a pre-informal, regular discussion between line manager and staff, not a procedural discussion. Dr MacKillop said they had members coming forward who had not been told there was a problem and the UCU branch were reaching breaking point. Dr MacKillop stressed that line managers should have clear procedural steps. Dr MacKillop asked if staff could receive the same guidelines as managers.

**ACTION:** Guidance to be provided.

Mrs Dyker said these discussions should be part of routine line management and there had not been a problem in Professional Services with this.

Dr MacKillop said that UCU were no longer in agreement and wanted the pre-informal stage built into the policy and the group to reconvene.

**ACTION:** Further consideration to be given to the points raised by UCU.

9. **USS UPDATE**

There was new information on the changes to the scheme and there was a further communication for staff regarding the USS website ‘For the Future’. Suzi Laing was the Implementation Officer. There were also changes to AVC’s and a tight timescale.

Evelyn Argo asked whether staff could now remain in UASLAS if they were promoted to grade 5. Mrs Dyker said she had asked David Beattie to clarify this.

10. **SCOTTISH RATE OF INCOME TAX**

Mrs Dyker said that the paper was for information and there would be appropriate communication to staff in due course.

11. **PURCHASE OF ANNUAL LEAVE**

At the request of the unions it was proposed that the wording was amended slightly to ‘two weeks’ instead of ‘10 days’. This was agreed.

Mrs White said that there had been 33 applications so far and approximately £40,000 of savings which would be reported in the overall savings figures.

12. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**HONORARY PAYMENTS**

Mr Paterson referred to the First Aid/Health and Safety honorary payments that had not been paid to staff as per the normal timescales. Mr Paterson expressed concern that the trades
unions and staff had not been informed of this. Mr Paterson also queried why they had to be the subject of a business case to the Restructuring Committee.

Mrs Dyker replied that the honorary payments were ‘on costs’ and these all had to be looked at and approved.

FRAMEWORK FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE (FAE)

Dr MacKillop said that it was perhaps an issue for a JNCC but UCU wanted to bring forward their concerns re FAE and Capability.

COMPULSORY REDUNDANCIES

Dr MacKillop updated that should the University move to Compulsory Redundancies then UCU would ballot and if necessary take strike action.

Professor Kilburn clarified if that also included going to JCCRA as detailed in the joint statement agreed in June.

Dr MacKillop said that would be clarified if a ballot had to be initiated.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting of the Partnership Negotiating and Consultative Committee is 18 November 2015 at 10.30 am.