UHI | INVERNESS

MINUTES of the MEETING of the HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE held via Microsoft Teams on Thursday 04 June 2026.

PRESENT:	Innis Montgomery, Annie Nelson, David Stewart, Lindsay Ferries, Sally Blyth, Donald MacKenzie, Chris O'Neil, Janette Campbell & Jane Davidson
CHAIR*:*	Innis Montgomery
APOLOGIES:	Representative from Anderson & Strathern
ATTENDING:	Vice Principal – Curriculum, Operations and External Relations (VPCOER) Vice Principal – Curriculum, Student Experience and Quality (VPCSEQ) Head of HR Paul Travill, UHI Court Governance Officer

The Governance Officer confirmed that this meeting was quorate.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting; apologies were noted.

Sally Blyth declared interest in all research related agenda items and will withhold from discussions about research at today's meeting.

The Chair welcomed Paul Travill to the meeting who has been invited to take part in the discussion around agenda item 4. VS Scheme Update (confidential). The Head of HR will join the meeting before 9am and Paul Travill agreed to re-join the meeting at 9am for item 4.

Paul Travill left the meeting.

1. MINUTES

a.) Minutes of the Meeting of the Human Resources Committee held 12 March 2026

Decision: The Minutes of the Human Resources Committee held on 12 March 2026 were **AGREED** as a correct record and were **APPROVED.**

b.) Confidential Note (CN-HR-01-032026) of the Human Resources Committee held on 12 March 2026

Decision: The Confidential Note (CN-HR-01-032026) of the Human Resources Committee held on 12 March 2026 was **AGREED** as a correct record and was **APPROVED.**

c.) Confidential Note (CN-HR-02-032026) of the Human Resources Committee held on 12 March 2026

Decision: The Confidential Note (CN-HR-02-032026) of the Human Resources Committee held on 12 March 2026 was **AGREED** as a correct record and was **APPROVED.**

The Committee requested for the Confidential Note (CN-HR-02-03-2026) to be amended in regard to ‘pension strain’ and not ‘pension stream’. Note approved subject to requested amendment.

d.) Confidential Note (CN-HR-03-032026) of the Human Resources Committee held on 12 March 2026

Decision: The Confidential Note (CN-HR-03-032026) of the Human Resources Committee held on 12 March 2026 was **AGREED** as a correct record and was **APPROVED.**

e.) Confidential Note (CN-HR-04-032026) of the Human Resources Committee held on 12 March 2026

Decision: The Confidential Note (CN-HR-04-032026) of the Human Resources Committee held on 12 March 2026 was **AGREED** as a correct record and was **APPROVED.**

f.) Confidential Note (CN-HR-05-032026) of the Human Resources Committee held on 12 March 2026

Decision: The Confidential Note (CN-HR-05-032026) of the Human Resources Committee held on 12 March 2026 was **AGREED** as a correct record and was **APPROVED.**

g.) Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Human Resources Committee held 30 April 2026

Decision: The Minutes of the Extraordinary Human Resources Committee held on 30 April 2026 were **AGREED** as a correct record and were **APPROVED.**

The Governance Officer will circulate the correct list of actions that followed the Extraordinary HR Committee meeting.

2. OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

- **Collaborative Leadership Presentation – ONGOING -** The Professional Development Manager reported a shift in the work culture reported by participants. Empirical Evidence, for example via a pulse survey, to be gathered from participants to measure the development and shift within college culture.

- **UHI Transformation Update – ONGOING -** Board's concerns about the lack of transparency of the transformation project, lack of involvement of college Board Members, tight timelines and lack of paperwork prior meetings to be raised with the Chair of the Court.

- **HR Quarter 1 Report – ONGOING -** Gaps within the PRD process to be identified and addressed.

- **HSE Wellbeing Survey Report – COMPLETE -** An Extraordinary HR Committee meeting to be scheduled to discuss the HSE Wellbeing Survey Results report.

  Decision: It was **AGREED** that this item could be removed from the list.

- **HSE Wellbeing Survey Report – ONGOING -** The management plan to respond to the changed factor question and how organisational change is

managed and communicated in the organisation to be shared with the Committee.

- **HSE Wellbeing Survey Report – ONGOING -** Concerns around increasing staff absence figures, stress support for line managers and return to work interviews to be raised with the Head of HR.

  The Governance Officer will circulate the correct list of actions that followed the Extraordinary HR Committee meeting.

The Chair decided to go item 03.e Harm Reduction Policy next.

3. POLICIES FOR APPROVAL

e.) Harm Reduction Policy

The Vice Principal – Curriculum, Student Experience and Quality spoke to the policy and informed the Committee that the name of the document has been changed to Harm Reduction to reflect the supportive approach of the process. The document was taken to JCC, and the trade union representatives were supportive of inclusion of staff within the scope of the policy with the harm reduction and focus on wellbeing approach. Sections 2.2 & 3.7 have got Staff Code of Conduct added to reflect the Student Code of Conduct. The policy will be presented to the LTR Committee for further comments the following week.

The Chair commented on the lengthy drafting process of this new policy and welcomed the changed name. The Committee agreed and expressed their thanks to the VPCSEQ and the team involved in the process for their excellent work. All concerns raised by the Board over the last year relating to potential reputational damage and reporting processes have been addressed and amended within the new proposed policy draft. The Members wanted to know how this new policy compares with the wider partnership and the sector and the VPCSEQ replied that the picture across the Scottish sector is not very clear with better data available from England. But majority of approaches focus on the disciplinary aspect and not the supportive and proactive approach adopted by UHI Inverness. There are talks with EO indicating that this policy could be adopted by all partners.

One Member raised her concerns about the 'harm' word used in the naming of the policy as this could be interpreted as self-harm. The Chair explained that the word 'harm' has been used in relation to drugs since the 1971 Misuse of Drugs Act and is defined by statutes hence appropriate to be used in the name of this new policy. The VPCSEQ added that from previous discussions the Board decided to move away from drugs and alcohol in the name of the policy due to negative connotation. The draft policy has been open for staff consultations with the process closing off today and any proposed amendments will be presented to the LTR Committee next week.

The Committee asked for the wording in section 3.7 around reporting offences to the authorities to be more explicit and suggested that the possession of illegal drugs 'will always be' reported to the police instead of current 'may be'. There is a need for policy consistency for staff and students. The Members also asked for clarification in regard to the location, drug and alcohol suppliers and what the process was around challenging suspicious behaviour and at which point the police will be involved in the process.

The Head of HR joined the meeting.

The VPCSEQ confirmed that work will be done over summer on staff guidance to give support and address the issues.

The Interim Chair of the Board positively commented on the proactive approach of the policy and the college taking the lead locally. She also suggested firmer statement about zero tolerance regarding drug and alcohol possession for staff and students whilst on campus. The VPCSEQ confirmed that once the policy has been approved by the Board the guidance for staff will also be updated, with the zero tolerance being considered as part of the process.

Jane Davidson joined the meeting.

The VPCSEQ thanked the Committee for their comments and confirmed the policy will now be presented to the LTR Committee next week for further feedback and will be brought back to both Committees in September 2026. The Chair asked for the implementation timeline and the VPCSEQ clarified that the

need for getting the policy right is more important than launching it at the start of the next academic year.

Decision: The Committee **DID NOT APPROVE** the Harm Reduction Policy.

Paul Travill joined the meeting.

The Chair decided to go the Items for Discussion, joint items 4 VS Scheme Update & 5 Financial Recovery Plan – HR Aspect next.

4. & 5. VS SCHEME UPDATE (CONFIDENTIAL) & FINANCIAL RECOVERY PLAN – HR ASPECT (CONFIDENTIAL) (incl. progress update and next steps)

The Committee were provided with a confidential update in respect of VS Scheme Update and FRP – HR Aspect (CN-HR-01-062026).

The Principal and Paul Travill left the meeting.

The Chair decided to go to item 3.a Staff Flexible Working Policy next.

3. POLICIES FOR APPROVAL

a.) Staff Flexible Working Policy

The Head of HR spoke to her report and informed the Committee that the revised policy has been updated to include references to ACAS Code in the policy statement, the scope was amended to reflect new statutory framework, and responsibilities have been updated to include a Leadership Forum Member in the decision-making process.

David Stewart left the meeting.

The Committee welcomed the update and a discussion about the future role of the Staff Resource Panel and the inclusion of Leadership Forum Member in the decision-making process took place. These new changes will align the policy with examples of sector's best practice and should accelerate the decision-making process for staff requests going through the panel whilst still being

overseen by the Leadership Forum. The Head of HR confirmed that VS applications received from staff will be considered by the Leadership Forum.

Decision: The Committee **APPROVED** the Staff Flexible Working Policy and recommended for Board's approval.

b.) Maternity & Parental Leave Policy

The Head of HR spoke to her report and informed the Committee that the revised policy has been updated to include new relevant legislation, clearer definition of shared parental leave, consistent use of the word Employee and the updated team's name for Professional Services staff.

The Committee welcomed the update and positively commented on the legislation update.

Decision: The Committee **APPROVED** the Maternity & Parental Leave Policy and recommended for Board's approval.

c.) Dignity in the Workplace Policy

The Head of HR spoke to her report and informed the Committee that the revised policy has been amended to include updated format and structure to align with format of other policies, amended legislative framework and links to relevant policies, and updated definition of harassment in line with ACAS guidance.

The Committee welcomed the update and asked for clarification in regard to 3rd party harassment. The Head of HR confirmed that this aspect has been covered within the procedure document and that the college is looking into developing a stand-alone policy in the future. The Committee requested for the Whistleblowing policy document to be updated in line with sexual harassment and to be aligned with the Dignity in the Workplace policy.

Decision: The Committee **APPROVED** the Dignity in the Workplace Policy and recommended for Board's approval. Subject to alignment with the Whistleblowing Policy.

d.) Staff Code of Conduct Policy

The Head of HR spoke to her report and informed the Committee that the revised policy has been updated to include additions on the contents page, relevant legislative framework, responsibilities and amended the term college to UHI Inverness. It was confirmed that staff consultations for this policy have also finished with feedback being reviewed.

The Committee welcomed the update and requested for the policy be closely linked with the Harm Reduction Policy section 3.7.

Decision: The Committee **APRROVED** the Staff Code of Conduct Policy and recommended for Board's approval.

6. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

The Chair confirmed the report as read and due to time constraints the Professional Development Manager was not called into the meeting to present the report.

The Committee welcomed the report and a short discussion about the shift in supporting staff wellbeing in light of increased stress and absence levels took place. The VPCSEQ added that the college is aware of the levels of student stress and is actively preparing to embed resilience skills within curriculum delivery going forward. The staff narrative is running in a parallel with the student one and managers are trying to find the balance between levels of support offered going forward. The Professional Manager and the Head of HR are aware of the stress and absence levels and are working in partnership to address both issues.

One Member asked if the fraud training, as recommended by the internal auditors, has been added to the training list as it was not mentioned in the report. The VPCSEQ informed the Committee that the report provides selected highlights and not the entirety of the training delivered and that the fraud training is still to be rolled out to all staff.

The Chair thanked the Committee for their comments. The VPCSEQ will pass the comments onto the Professional Development Manager.

7. UHI TRANSFORMATION UPDATE (CONFIDENTIAL) (standing item)

Nothing raised.

8. NATIONAL BARGAINING / JOB EVALUATION (CONFIDENTIAL)

Due to time constraints the Chair asked for comments to be sent to the Governance Officer.

9. HUMAN RESOURCES – QUARTER 3 REPORT 2025/26 (CONFIDENTIAL)

The Committee were provided with a confidential update in respect of HR – Quarter 3 Report 2025/26 (CN-HR-02-062026).

10. HYBRID WORKING UPDATE

The Chair asked for this item to be discussed at the September meeting.

11. EMPLOYMENT LAW UPDATE

Due to time constraints the item was taken as read with comments to be sent to the Governance Officer.

The VPCOER confirmed that the college is in the process of procurement review of the current legal services contract.

12. COMMITTEE AND CHAIR EVALUATION

The Governance Officer spoke to her report and confirmed the timeframe for the annual evaluation exercise which will take place over summer.

The Chair thanked the Governance Officer for her report.

13. EMPLOYEE RALATIONS – CONFIDENTIAL

The Committee were provided with the minutes of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee & JCC meetings held in AY 2025/26.

14. AOCB

Nothing raised.

The Chair thanked all for their time and input and a productive meeting.

15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Thursday 3rd September 2026 at 08.30am.

Signed by the Chair: 

Date: 03/09/2026