



**MINUTES of the MEETING of the HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE held via Microsoft Teams on Friday 08 March 2024.**

**PRESENT:** Innis Montgomery, Donald MacKenzie, Gillian Galloway, Jane Davidson

**CHAIR:** Innis Montgomery

**APOLOGIES:** Mark Sheridan, Chris O'Neil, Sally Blyth, Vice Principal – Curriculum, Operations and External Relations

**ATTENDING:** Vice Principal – Curriculum, Student Experience and Quality  
HR Manager  
Professional Development Manager  
Sarah Monan from Anderson and Strathern  
Governance Officer

The Governance Officer confirmed that this meeting was quorate.

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

There were no declarations of interest, statements of connections or transparency statements noted.

**1. MINUTES**

**a.) Minutes of the Meeting of the Human Resources Committee held on 16 November 2023**

**Decision:** The Minutes of the Human Resources Committee held on 16 November 2023 were **AGREED** as a correct record and were **APPROVED**.

**b.) Confidential Note (CN-HR01-112023) of the Human Resources Committee held on 16 November 2023**

**Decision:** The Confidential Note (CN-HR01-112023) of the Human Resources Committee held on 16 November 2023 was **AGREED** as a correct record and was **APPROVED**.

**c.) Confidential Note (CN-HR02-112023) of the Human Resources Committee held on 16 November 2023**

**Decision:** The Confidential Note (CN-HR02-112023) of the Human Resources Committee held on 16 November 2023 was **AGREED** as a correct record and was **APPROVED**.

**d.) Confidential Note (CN-HR03-112023) of the Human Resources Committee held on 16 November 2023**

**Decision:** The Confidential Note (CN-HR03-112023) of the Human Resources Committee held on 16 November 2023 was **AGREED** as a correct record and was **APPROVED**.

**e.) Confidential Note (CN-HR04-112023) of the Human Resources Committee held on 16 November 2023**

**Decision:** The Confidential Note (CN-HR04-112023) of the Human Resources Committee held on 16 November 2023 was **AGREED** as a correct record and was **APPROVED**.

## **2. OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

- Shared Finance Service – **COMPLETE** - In respect of the procurement of the integrated HR and Payroll System, the Principal advised the Committee that

this process was still being undertaken by the relevant partners within the organisation. The Principal provided the Committee with a confidential update in respect of the Shared Finance Service (CN-HR01-092023).

Niall McArthur has been appointed as the new Director of Finance and will start in his role on 15 January 2024.

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

- Review of Talent Management Strategy – **COMPLETE** - Board Members will be given access to the strategy review document.

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

### 3. POLICIES FOR APPROVAL

#### a) Special Leave Policy

The Committee had been advised that the Special Leave policy had now been approved by JCC and EMT. The HR Manager confirmed that the implementation of this new policy is being closely monitored by the HR Team.

The Committee Members asked for more clarification in regard to financial implications of this policy and confirmation if budget adjustments had been factored in. The Committee decided not to approve this policy until requested clarification has been received.

**Action 1: Clarification has been requested in regard to financial implications and the confirmation that budget adjustments had been factored in.**

### 4. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Professional Development Manager spoke to her report which provides a brief update on staff professional development activities in 2023/24, including the

focus on supporting staff to engage with AI tools, and workshops on positive classroom management.

### **Supporting staff to engage with AI**

#### **Internal provider**

The Digital Skills Training Officer (DSTO) provided sessions for both teaching and professional services staff on 'Exploring AI Tools' during Staff Conference 2023. Building on this, regular training sessions have been offered to staff during 2023/24 to encourage them to explore how AI tools such as Bing chat and Chat GPT 3.5 can enhance their working practices.

#### **External provider**

Staff members, including one of the Tertiary Education Leaders and the Digital Skills Training Officer, have been funded to complete relevant AI courses and conferences. Learning from these events has been shared with team members and wider staff and is also used to develop further courses for staff.

#### **Staff research related to the use of AI**

Three of the successful projects in the Enquiring Minds Scheme are exploring the use of AI within our organisation and outputs from this research will be shared with all staff through an event in May/June 2024 and recommendations and implementation of innovations will follow.

### **Workshops for lecturers on positive classroom management**

The rise in challenging behaviour by some students, particularly since the return to mainly face to face teaching, has been noted throughout the sector. A series of workshops for staff will be offered during March to explore aspects of positive classroom management and research around high impact pedagogy.

The Chair thanked Professional Development Manager for her detailed report.

*HR Manager joined the meeting.*

Discussion took place with following items being commented on:

- An inspiring level of staff training offered and budget allocation to retain it.
- The challenge of attracting and retaining staff in the Highlands region.

- Impact assessment in regard to additional qualification, attraction of staff and budget allocation. The Professional Development Manager confirmed that an extensive quality enhancement procedure has been put in place and the quality process is being followed throughout all stages of professional development provision. There is also the aspect of the built-in continuous evaluation process for all activities undertaken.
- Joined up approach across the whole partnership, led by EO, in regard to AI.
- Information Security Officers in place to ensure security guidelines are followed.
- Risks attached to the use of AI.

The HR Committee acknowledged the new potential risks created by the use of AI and would like for that risk to be monitored by the Audit Committee.

**Action 2: AI risk implications to be monitored by Audit Committee.**

**5. NATIONAL BARGAINING / JOB EVALUATION**

The Committee were provided with a confidential update in respect of a National Bargaining / Job Evaluation report (CN-HR01-032024).

**6. HUMAN RESOURCES – QUARTER 2 REPORT 2023/24**

The Committee were provided with a confidential update in respect of a Quarter 2 Report 2023/24 (CN-HR02-112023).

**7. EMPLOYMENT LAW UPDATE**

*Sarah Monan from Anderson and Strathern joined the meeting.*

*Lindsay Snodgrass & Gillian Galloway left the meeting.*

For transparency reasons Jane Davidson reported that she had worked with Anderson Strathern before.

Sarah Monan provided the Committee with verbal update in regard to legislative changes and general update around AI:

- 06/04/2024 – changes coming to life in regard to Flexible Working law that came in force in 2023. Sensible flexible working arrangements now need to be agreed on within the first day of the contract compared to the previous 26 weeks. Reasons now need to be given for refusals and within 2 months of requests being received, compared to the previous 3 months. Staff can now submit 2 requests per year as well, not only one. The code of practice will be updated and circulated once ready.
- The Carers Leave Act – this unpaid leave can now also be requested on day 1 of employment contract, with maximum duration of one week per year. Employers will not be able to deny it but might be able to postpone it due to business operation.
- Redundancies – current special protection for maternity, parental and adoption leave will now be extended to pregnant people and one that have returned from maternity leave and will offer 24 months of protected period.
- October 2024 – new positive duty will be placed on employers through the work protection equality act to prevent sexual harassment at work.

The Chair asked for clarification if any new safeguards will need to be put into place by the employers, different to the ones used already. Sarah Monan replied that we are still unclear about the standards of this new positive duty, but employers should be able to prove that steps have already been taken to prevent it, but only to staff directly employed, the new law is not being extended to 3<sup>rd</sup> parties. The HR Manager confirmed that changes have already been made to college policies to ensure dignity in the workplace and to prevent sexual harassment risk. The Chair asked for the risk to be added to the Risk Register.

### **Action 3: Sexual harassment risk to be added to the Risk Register.**

- AI associated risks – during recent studies hidden bias has been found within the software and staff using it should be made aware of this, as AI is only as good as data given to it.

The Chair thanked Sarah Monan for her detailed report. The Committee welcomed this useful update on work legislation and found it insightful.

*Sarah Monan left the meeting.*

## **8. EMPLOYEE RELATIONS - CONFIDENTIAL**

### **a) Industrial Action & ASOS**

The Committee were provided with a confidential update in respect of the Industrial Action & ASOS report (CN-HR03-032023).

**b) Minutes of JCC meeting held on 23 November 2023**

**Decision:** The minutes of the JCC Meeting held on 23 November 2023 were **AGREED** as a correct record and were **APPROVED**.

**c) Minutes of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee held on 08 November 2023**

**Decision:** The minutes of the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee Meeting held on 08 November 2023 were **AGREED** as a correct record and were **APPROVED**.

**9. VOTE OF NO CONFIDENCE - CONFIDENTIAL**

The Committee were provided with a confidential update in respect of a Vote of No Confidence report (CN-HR04-032023).

**10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Thursday 06 June 2024 at 08.30am.**

**Signed by the Chair:**

**Date:** 14/06/2024

