

approved minutes
DRAFT – prepared by the committee secretary
UNAPPROVED – signed off by the Senior Officer/Chair of the committee
APPROVED – formally approved by the committee



PEOPLE COMMITTEE

4 NOVEMBER 2024

Present: Ann Barnes (Chair), Professor Danielle George, Jatin Patel

In attendance: Patrick Hackett (Registrar, Secretary and Chief Operating Officer), Sarah Fox (Executive Director of EDI), Paul Marks Jones (Lead EDI Officer), Ele Morrissey (Executive Director of People), Andrew Mullen (Deputy Director of People), Sara Sawicki (University Solicitor), Sally Ainsworth (minutes)

Apologies: Professor Duncan Ivison (President and Vice-Chancellor), Robin Philips

1 Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed Sarah Fox and Ele Morrissey meeting of People Committee.

2 Declaration of Interests

Noted: that there were no declarations of interest in relation to the agenda.

3 Terms of Reference

Agreed: The updated Terms of Reference for People Committee, subject to any further suggested amendments by the President and Vice-Chancellor and the Executive Director of People, which may be brought to a future meeting.

4 Minutes of the meeting held on 2024

Agreed: to approve the minutes of the meeting on **26 June 2024**.

5 Matters arising and action log

Noted:

- i. The action log
- ii. People Committee members received an email on 19 August regarding the AHEP case, in which the employee successfully applied for Voluntary Severance (VS) which avoided a compulsory redundancy process.

6 *Forward plan

Received: forward plan for 24/25

Noted:

- i. Members were advised that the forward plan for 2024/25 may be further updated throughout the year, as the Executive Directors of People and Equality, Diversity and

Inclusion identify key pieces of work that will be brought to the Committee for discussion.

Agreed:

The forward plan for 2024/25

7 An update from the Executive Director of People

Received: an update to note, from the Executive Director of People

Noted:

- i. Members were presented with details of the initial analysis of the key areas of demand from the University customers/stakeholders, which also set out some of the additional areas of improvement that the Directorate will be focussing on.
- ii. Information was provided on the new management structure for the Directorate, plus an update on the recruitment process, and that the team are considering a proposal to invest in an in-house talent acquisition team.
- iii. More immediate areas of focus include digital readiness, payroll operating model/ERP readiness, performance management culture, and the capture of mandatory training for staff
- iv. Members were provided with information regarding the Future Foundations Project, which is building a case for an ERP system, which will work across People, Finance and Procurement at the University. A timeline up to Spring 2025 was shared, which set out the next steps, which include a full business, case, procurement and planning for the programme. Further details will be provided at future meetings on this project, but the key benefits were set out, highlighting the opportunities to streamline how we operate, through automation.
- v. Members shared their experiences of working with similar systems, and were content to be approached outside of the meeting to discuss their experiences, including bespoke or 'off the shelf' systems, and web browser and app access to the functionality.

Agreed:

Further updates on the ERP to be shared when available, including a demonstration once a provider has been selected.

8 Contracts Expiry Update report

Received: a report updating the Committee on the Contracts Working Group, Grievances/Appeals/Tribunal and Contract Outcomes.

Noted:

- i. The Joint Task and Finish Group on Casualisation has continued to meet. Discussions have continued with regards the shape of the establishment in terms of contract type and where there may be opportunities to change this or to pilot alternative approaches. UCU have presented two proposals on casualisation and the University has provided a full response and cost analysis of these proposals and UCU have taken an action to significantly revise their proposal.
- ii. With regards the Contract of Employment Policy, the Trade Union members of TUNG were issued with the final proposed interim updates to the policy on 9 October 2024. The interim updates to the policy are specifically to reflect the operational decision to amend the timescale from 4 years to 3 years for FFPC/Permanent contracts to be issued. The Trade Unions were asked to respond by 14 October to confirm their agreement to the updates. No response has been received to date and silence is taken

as acceptance. The timing of the updated policy being launched will be aligned to the plan to operationalise the changes. This plan is being developed and based on a January 2025 implementation date.

- iii. Since the last report in May 2024, there have been two appeals against the ending of a fixed term contract.
- iv. The percentage of employees being redeployed or extended with over four years' service has increased since the last reporting period from **70% to 73%**. The numbers who have been made redundant has reduced from **18% to 15%**.
- v. Members noted that there was a great deal of repetition within the data reported in agenda item 8 and item 9 and requested that an alternative format of presenting the data be investigated.

Agreed:

- i. To investigate re-formatting the reports at item 8 and 9 if possible, to avoid repetition of the data, and create a more accessible report. **Action: Exec and Deputy Directors of People and University Solicitor.**

9 Report from PVC on fixed term employees and those on open-ended contracts

Received: a report from the President and Vice-Chancellor on fixed term employees and those on open ended contracts with finite funding

Noted:

- i. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) has established a Task & Finish Group (T&F Group) with the University's Trade Unions on (UCU's term) 'casualisation'. The objectives of this group are twofold; 1. To increase the understanding of when fixed term contracts are appropriate; 2. To ensure that colleagues are on open-ended contracts where appropriate. The T&F Group will also consult collectively on the likely number of fixed term contracts and finite funded permanent contracts that are due to end within a defined period to meet any requirements under Section 188 of the Trade Union Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992. The T&F Group will report to the People Committee on its progress. Once the work of the T&F Group is done, the Contracts Working Group will continue overseeing fixed term contracts. In addition to making recommendations to the Board.
- ii. It is therefore considered appropriate for the People Committee as set out in Statute XIII, Part II and Ordinance XXIII to meet to consider those contracts at risk of termination due to redundancy for the period 1 July 2025 to 31 December 2025, the total of which, is 262.
- iii. It is important to note that it is likely that the employment of many of the staff affected will not, in fact, be terminated because there are a number of potential alternatives to this course of action
- iv. Members enquired on the impact of reducing the timescale from 4 years to 3 years for FFPC/Permanent contracts to be issued. They were informed that it would not be a huge cultural change but will be combined with other elements being considered in how the University uses FTC will change over time.

Agreed:

- i. to recommend to the Board of Governors that it approves proceeding with the process outlined in the Contracts Procedure to deal with those staff considered to be at risk on open ended contracts linked to finite funding for the period from 1 July 2025 to 31 December 2025.
- ii. to recommend to the Board of Governors that the University continues to take all steps outlined in the report to avoid the need for redundancy wherever this is possible.

- iii. to acknowledge the work of the Task and Finish Group on Casualisation.

10 Workforce demographics

Received: a report detailing key workforce demographics

Noted:

- i. The slides comprise key workforce demographics. This will be a standing item for People Committee and future iterations will be refined to include key insights and emerging trends.
- ii. One member asked if sexual orientation data could be added to the demographics. It was agreed that this could be added, if the data is held. It was noted that declaration rates may be an issue.
- iii. Members requested that they leavers and dismissals data be presented in a different, more easily understandable format.

Agreed:

- i. Workforce demographics data to be presented to each meeting of the Committee, with a different focus on each occasion
- ii. Sexual orientation to be added as a filter to the data, if the data is held
- iii. Leavers and dismissals diagram to be presented in a more understandable format on the next occasion
- iv. Commentary to be added to the next data set to explain the trends
- v. Mental health data to be presented as percentage figures

Action for all: Deputy Exec Director of People

11 Uniac report regarding the implementation of grievance appeal panel recommendations and decisions

Received: A report from Uniac

Noted:

- i. Following a concern raised by UCU (and communicated to the Board) about the perceived lack of progress in implementing an appeal panel recommendation, the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) requested assurance that grievance outcomes and lessons learned were being implemented in a timely fashion.
- ii. Based on the scope of the work undertaken, the report provided a rating of reasonable assurance regarding the operation of the University's grievance and Dignity at Work procedures, including the implementation of resulting agreed actions. The two moderate risk findings related to clarity and status of actions and recommendations and timescales for resolving cases at both investigation and appeal stage.
- iii. Whilst there had been recent improvements in administration and processing, Statutes required that all hearing, appeal and grievance panels contained a lay Board member and substantial improvement in timescale was unlikely to be achieved without reform of the Statute (already enacted in many peer institutions) and this was a matter that would receive attention as part of a forthcoming review of employment related Statutes and Ordinances.
- iv. Members asked if the report had been shared with the Trade Unions, and requested that their responses to the report be shared with the Committee.

Agreed:

Responses from the Trade Unions to the report, to be shared with the Committee.

Action: Deputy Director of People

12 Proposal regarding Chairs of Panels

Received: A paper detailing a proposal regarding the selection of Chairs for panels

Noted:

- i. The University's Statute XIII prescribes that a lay member of the Board must chair certain dismissal/appeal panels. The University's Employee Relations (ER) team has recently struggled to obtain a lay member of the Board to chair such panels for a variety of reasons, which were set out in the report.
- ii. It is not currently possible to constitute a panel for disciplinary/dismissal hearings within a reasonable timescale, which is adverse to the wellbeing of employees involved and potentially impacts upon the overall fairness of the proceedings. This matter was highlighted in an Internal Audit by UNIAC, discussed at item 11 on this agenda.
- iii. It was therefore proposed that for an [initial] period of 9 months the requirement for a lay member of the Board to chair disciplinary/dismissal panels is replaced by a senior member of staff who has had no prior involvement in the case (drawn from a list agreed from time to time by the Senate in the instance of a panel considering the case of a member of the academic or research staff, or by the Board in the instance of a panel considering the case of a member of the academic-related (excluding research) staff).
- iv. The Committee noted that lay members of the Board will still be required to chair appeal panels.
- v. Members noted that it would be helpful to have data shared with staff and Trade Unions to show the number of cases where an appeal was upheld or not upheld, and share this at the end of the 9 month period, to show the effect on outcomes. They also noted that it would be key to communicate to staff how any conflict of interests will be avoided.
- vi. Members asked what other Russell Group Universities do and it was suggested staff be informed of all other possibilities which were considered regarding the Chairing of panels, prior to this recommendation being made.

Secretary's note: in relation to points i, iii and iv above and i below, clarification was provided after the meeting. The relevant Statute stipulates that lay members participate in relevant panels, but does not require them to chair such panels

Agreed

- i. The Committee recommend to the Board that the requirement for lay members of the Board to chair disciplinary/dismissal panels is delegated to a member of staff (drawn from a list agreed from time to time by the Senate in the instance of a panel considering the case of a member of the academic or research staff, or by the Board in the instance of a panel considering the case of a member of the academic-related (excluding research) staff). This delegation does not extend to procedures for dismissal relating to redundancy or the chairing of appeal panels.
- ii. At the end of the 9 month period, share data with staff Trade Unions regarding the number of cases where an appeal was upheld or not upheld, to show the effect on outcomes.
- iii. A clear communications plan to be established, to explain the change in process

Action: Exec Director of People and Head of Employee Relations

13 EDI Strategy Update

Received: a report on the delivery plan and updates for EDI strategy

Noted

- i. Members received an update on progress against the EDI Strategy Implementation plan, and key highlights included:
 - Engagement with the Digital Inclusion Team has ensured we have a suite of guides and resources to support staff. This addresses compliance with digital inclusion and web accessibility
 - Dignity at Work and Study Policy & Procedure Review
 - Active Bystander training now delivered to over 900 staff members
 - Inclusive Recruitment Review
- ii. Academic promotions and progression data had been requested previously (as noted in the action log at item 5 on this agenda) and was provided as an appendix to the report. An additional appendix provided an update on the Leadership and Development (Diversity) Programme.
- iii. Members commented that they looked forward to receiving the Board training programme in due course.
- iv. Members discussed the pause in participation in the Stonewall Diversity Champion programme, and looked forward to further updates at future meetings. The money which would normally have gone to this programme had been utilised in other ways to support LGBTQ+ staff
- v. One member requested further information on the Board apprenticeship scheme, and a further request was submitted by email regarding reference to the escalation and rectification of issues relating to Accessible Toilets in the “Accessible, Inclusive and flexible learning experience for students” section of the report.
- vi. Discussions were held around the objective that all leaders and managers to commit to at least one measurable personal EDI related objective stated in their PDR. The next step was to exploring the position in other Faculty and PS leadership teams, an update to be provided at the next meeting.

Agreed:

Further details on the Board apprenticeship scheme; accessible toilets; and EDI objectives in managers’ PDR to be provided at the next meeting.

Action: Executive Director of EDI and Lead EDI Partner

14 An update on Stonewall Workplace Equality Index

Received: an update on the University’s participation in the Index

Noted:

- i. The paper outlined progress made with the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index – a national measure of how LGBT+ Inclusive organisations are.
- ii. The University has participated in the Index annually since 2012 (excluding 2021 when the Index paused due to the pandemic). The University has maintained a Top 100 position for the last 9 years, and in 2024, achieved a strategic aim of achieving a Top 10 position and currently sit in 7th place.
- iii. Manchester is currently the highest ranked Russell Group University in the Index.
- iv. Members were informed of the plans for 2025, including further discourse about the benefits of becoming a Diversity Champion with Stonewall, as the University membership is currently paused.

15 Any other business

None reported

Date of next meeting – 5 February 2025