

**Notes of meeting no 27 of the combined JNC held on Thursday 22 October 2020**

**Present (virtually)**: Stephen Shute, Pro Vice Chancellor, (Planning and Resources) (SS) (chair); Tim Westlake, Chief Operating Officer (TW); Siobhan O’Reilly, Director of HR (SOR); Keith Hart, Deputy Director of Human Resources (KH); Sarah Cox, HR Business Partner (SC). UCU: Jo Pawlik (JP), Nadya Ali (NA); Andrew Chitty (AC). UNITE: Paula Burr (PB); Daniel Hyndman (DH); Steve Pearce (SP). UNISON: Caroline Fife (CF); Claire Colburn (CC); Jack Nugent.

1/27 **Apologies**: None

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| 2/27 | **Notes of Previous Meetings**  Notes of the meeting held on 29 September 2020 (no 26) were agreed subject to the revisions previously suggested by UCU and the University being incorporated. |  |
| 3/26 | **Review of Action Log** (items that are open or closed since last meeting)  **47, 59 and 63** – closed – SC forwarded a response from Governance that the request had been turned down under the General Principles for the Release of Council Papers on Sussex Direct. AC said that the response was unsatisfactory and UCU would be taking it further.  **74** – still open – SC will follow up with Kelly Coate and Jayne Aldridge.  **96** – SS provided oral update – the position on student numbers remained fluid. The University had recruited well in respect of home undergraduate and postgraduate students, although numbers in the foundation year were smaller than expected. International student numbers remained a challenge. The University had received applications but it was unclear whether these would translate to actual uptake and whether those students could get to campus in January 2021. The shortfall would become apparent in next few weeks in the approach to the census date – action closed.  **100 –** Concern re 6-8pm teaching slots being issued to those who have already declared a caring or health reason why they cannot teach at that time. **UCU to confirm whether or not this has been addressed and has been closed**.  **111** – still open – request to see Clive Webb’s report on mental health. The University was planning to provide a copy of the recommendations that came out of that report along with an update. JPk said that the unions were considering a response to this.  **112** – still open - Request for Allan Spencer to attend a forthcoming JNC – he will do so in November.  **113 –** closed – meetings to discuss UCU’s Failure to Agree Motion have taken place.  **114** – closed – meeting to discuss Doctoral Tutor issues has taken place. | **JPk** |
| 4/27 | **Ways of working update**  KH said that based on discussions at the Ways of Working meeting SC had produced some design principles which would be sent to the unions. These would include the need for both sides to be respectful, and to be responsible for calling out inappropriate behaviour.  The unions requested that ‘terms of engagement’ be included in the principles, to establish timelines for advance consultation with the unions about matters that were going to be put to their members.  The schedule of meetings and the possibility of moving to separate JNC meetings was discussed. It was noted that alongside the JNC mechanisms a number of informal meetings were also taking place. It was suggested that given the current circumstances termly meetings would be too infrequent and that the schedule of meetings every two weeks was maintained, but that these would alternate between a single SCJNC with all unions present and separate UCU and Unison/Unite JNCs. SOR agreed to consider this.  AC reminded the SCJNC that in the Ways of Working meeting it had been suggested by UCU that the Chair should be neutral and should not be present to represent the management or union sides. |  |
| 5/27 | **JNC subgroup on policies and procedures** (Unite) *item 6 on the agenda*  PB said that before he left the University John Hallam had chaired a JNC subgroup that was looking at all the policies and procedures in order to remove those that had been superseded, update those that had out-of-date references and review and update those that had not been updated for a while. A list of priorities had been drawn up. The group had covered the Dignity & Respect policy with Claire Annesley. PB said that the website should also be improved to make the policies more accessible.  TW agreed that this should be done and that colleagues wished to do this work given the current circumstances there may not be the capacity to do so.  SOR said that Sharon Neal in HR had committed to looking at all the current policies, logging the dates they were last updated and prioritising those that needed to be reviewed. SOR was happy to bring the results of that back to the JNCs. SOR noted that in the recent HR Division planning sessions the updating of policies and processes and the improvement of the website had both been identified as key areas of work. |  |
| 6/27 | **Chartwells redundancies –** *item 5 on the agenda*  JN said that there were some Unison members working for Chartwells, and Unison wanted to know the timescales for the proposed redundancies and the number of posts that would be cut. CC said that they would like to know the plans for consultation with the unions and were requesting any available information.  TW said that Chartwells was a partner of the University but was not part of the University and Chartwells staff were not directly employed by the University. Chartwells had significant challenges nationally and their turnover on the University was down 90% on this time last year due to the COVID crisis. The Estates team were working in partnership with them and discussing how they could support them but any consultation about redundancies would be with Chartwells as the employer and not the University of Sussex. TW said that if the University were to provide financial assistance to Chartwells this would come out of the University’s budget and add to the University’s own financial pressures.  AC said that he was on Council when the outsourcing took place and one of the objections raised was that University staff would be more vulnerable if they were employed by a contractor and this had now happened and the University couldn’t wash its hands of what was happening on its own campus.  TW said that this is not what he said and that the University was working closely with Chartwells. The University did not want their catering provider just walking away as had happened at another University. TW clarified that if the University employed the catering staff and were facing a 90% reduction in sales the University would have to act to address that just as Chartwells have. AC said that if the staff were directly employed the University, the University would feel responsible to redeploy them or put them on the furlough scheme and the unions believed the University should see itself as responsible for these staff in the same way the would have done if they had not been outsourced.  **TW said that he would speak to the team in Estates and facilitate conversations with or information provision from Chartwells to the unions if this was not already taking place.** | **TW** |
| 7/27 | **Student COVID notification** (UCU)  AC said he had sent an email advocating that students and staff at teaching events should be notified if a student at one of their events subsequently tests positive for COVID. This would be unlikely to be picked up by test and trace or the NHS app.  SOR said that AC’s email had been forwarded to Bridget Edminson who leads the team who were contact tracing on campus, she would consider this but she had been off sick earlier this week so had not had chance to do so.  TW said the University’s current contract tracing system was recognised as an exemplar in other institutions. Three full-time members of staff had already been taken out of their ‘day jobs’ to do the work that the government track and trace system should do. They had been contacting students and making sure they went into isolation. To add the extra layer that AC had requested would require significant additional resource. TW noted that the mitigations in place in the classroom significantly lowered the risk of catching COVID from an infected person in that environment. There had not been a single case of COVID on campus that had been transmitted in a classroom.  JPk said that the best mitigation against COVID transmission in the classroom was to move all teaching online. TW said that it was safe to be on campus and noted that even in Tier 3 areas it was recommended that teaching environments should remain open. TW said that what had been put in place at the University was over and above what was in place in our day-to-day lives, when going to the supermarket for example.  AC said that it may well be safe to come into campus and sit in an office but there was a difference between that and spending a prolonged period of time in a room with 20, 30, or 40 students where people were speaking. AC also suggested that PhD students could be used to do the contact tracing work.  TW said that he would consider the suggestion of using PhD students and would pass that on to Bridget. |  |
| 8/27 | **Furlough update**  KH noted that a written update had been sent to the unions a few days previously. There were no questions on the update. |  |
| 9/27 | **Report from Doctoral Tutors meeting**  KH said that a meeting had taken place with a number of Doctoral Tutors, KH, SC and JPk and also two members of staff in HR who had been working on the Language Tutor contracts. The purpose of the meeting was for the University to listen and obtain clarity on Tutor concerns. The next step was to go through those issues to see what could or could not be done. There were some pressing concerns about the administration of Tutor contracts and communication with Tutors. The meeting was the beginning of a dialogue to see if the situation could be improved – KH was confident that it could. |  |
| 10/27 | **UCU failure to agree motion** (UCU)  JPk said that she and AC had met with Stephen, Siobhan and Graeme Pedlingham to discuss UCU’s concerns. UEG provided a response which UCU discussed with their Executives and reps the previous day. UCU would like to move towards drafting a joint statement between UCU and UEG. If such a statement could be agreed UCU would no longer issue the Failure to Agree.  This was a positive step and further conversations would take place outside of the SCJNC. |  |
| 11/27 | **Academic promotions** (UCU)  JPk said that HR had agreed to work with UCU and other stakeholders to review future rounds of the Academic Promotions process with a view to addressing equalities issues and **requested that this be added to the SCJNC Action Log.** | **SC** |
| 12/27 | **Any other business**   1. **Request for reassurance on teaching delivery survey**   UCU had sent an email that morning regarding the survey of how academic staff were delivering their teaching and asking for reassurance that their answers would not have any bearing on career or pay progression or similar. SOR confirmed that it would not.   1. **Cost-saving survey**   JPk said that UCU had sent an email to their members cautioning them against replying to the survey. There had been widespread concern about the framing of the questions and the unions were not happy that they had not seen them in advance. CF said that asking staff about cost-saving methods was always a good idea but the unions required notice and the ability to comment prior to something going out.  SOR said that the staff engagement project dated back to end of Aug when the plans were communicated to the SCJNC and the unions were invited to be part of the design team, which was declined. The staff engagement meetings went ahead and 70 staff attended. They generated some very good ideas, and one was that all staff should have the chance to vote on the ideas that were generated. At the recent VC’s forum numerous questions were asked about these sessions and what would happen next. When informing the unions of the survey and providing a copy of the questions the University were not expecting comments and were not entering into a consultation, they were providing a copy for information. The suggestions were all ideas that came from staff in the engagement sessions.  The results of that survey would be looked at in the round, along with financial information, and any suggestions that were proposed to be taken forward would be subject to consultation. SOR said that in less than 24 hours 700 responses had already been received so staff were already taking the opportunity to air their views.  JPk said the unions were blindsided that options like pay cuts or unpaid leave were on the table and they seemed to come out of nowhere. They were devasting for people that were already overworked as a result of VS and there was a lot of cause for alarm in the suggestions.  AC said there was something about the way the options to staff had been presented. AC commented that a number of UCU members had not participated in the staff engagement sessions because it was not possible to make sensible suggestions for cost saving without seeing the Management Accounts, which had not been shared. AC said that putting these suggestions out to a vote was bypassing the role of the unions, and management should be asking the unions what they thought about these ideas first. It seemed that a staff vote was being sought so that the results could be used against the unions.  TW said that there was a balance in the survey in that there were some questions around terms and conditions and remuneration but there were others about use of space, IT licences etc. CF said that it was a good idea to go to staff about the other cost saving measures but changes to terms and conditions or remuneration should go through the unions rather than be put out for general survey.   1. **SCJNC minutes**   AC asked about turnaround times for the minutes and suggested that the draft minutes were sent to the unions within 48 hours and they would send corrections within another 24 hours. This was agreed as a principle although if there were practical reasons why this may not be possible this would be flagged at the meeting. |  |
| 13/27 | **Date of next meeting**  Monday 2nd November 2020 11.30am |  |

**Human Resources**

**22/10/2020**