PEOPLE COMMITTEE

17 June 2026 online via Microsoft Teams

CONFIRMED SUMMARY MINUTES

Contact Georgina Lawson georgina.Lawson@northumbria.ac.uk, Secretary to the Board of Governors, with any queries about these Summary Minutes.

Present: P Judge (Chair), Dr R Blackman-Woods, H Fairfoul, H Kajee, Prof A Long,
Apologies: None
Secretary: G Lawson and B Lenney (Assistant Secretary)
In attendance: Dr L Brown [excluding where noted], K Barnes [minutes 25.059-25.060], A Carter [minutes 25.053 – 25.054], M Davis [minutes 25.057-25.058], Jane Embley, K Fawcett [excluding where noted], L Hurford [minutes 25.050–25.051], L Johnson [25.054-25.069], Dr H Robson [minutes 25.057-25.058], Dr P Rumbold [excluding where noted], J Wilson [minutes 25.053 – 25.054]

	MAIN ITEMS DISCUSSED/DECIDED ON AT THE MEETING
1	**Chair's Opening** [Oral Report] The Chair welcomed members and attendees to the meeting noting that Governors had been invited to attend the SHINE awards. **Declarations of Interest** [Oral Report] No new declarations of interest were made at this meeting. The Committee noted that previously declared interests in relation to pensions would apply during the Pensions Update item and that affected Staff Governors would withdraw at the point of decision-making. While not directly impacted by the Staff Cost Reductions paper, Staff Governors had the option to withdraw for that discussion if they felt it appropriate to do so. **Vice-Chancellor's Horizon Scanning** [Oral Report] The Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive provided an update on national, regional and local sector and policy developments and their implications for Northumbria. The University had won two Educate North Awards, for Campaign of the Year and for the Students' Union, and had been shortlisted in three categories at the HEIST Awards, for Best Use of Social Media, Best Widening Participation Initiative, and Best Community and Business Engagement Initiative. The UNEE Spinout Inspire Fund, supporting companies arising from research across North East universities, had launched on 11 June at Northumbria, with Mayor Kim McGuinness in attendance. Four members of the University community had received significant external recognition: Nigel Coates, founder of Newcastle Business School's Business Clinic, had been awarded an MBE for services to Higher Education and Business in the King's Birthday Honours 2026. Assistant Professor Colin Richardson had been awarded an OBE for services to firefighter safety. Prof John Woodward, Pro Vice-Chancellor (International), had been awarded the Polar Medal for his contribution to UK polar science and Prof Michael Stockdale had received the Outstanding Achievement Award and the High Sheriff Certificate for Meritorious Service at the Northern Law Awards. **The Committee noted the update and commended the successes of colleagues.** **Chief People Officer Update and Scorecard** [Oral Report] The Chief People Officer provided an update on key developments across the People and Organisational Culture portfolio. The University had taken proactive steps to reshape its workforce in support of long-term financial sustainability, with the Voluntary Severance Scheme resulting in reduced FTE. Goal-setting participation had improved and the University was targeting 80% of colleagues having live goals recorded in the NUPF system by October 2026. Mandatory training completion had reduced slightly to 92.8%, reflecting the recent refresh of modules, with a targeted campaign planned to accelerate completion. The University had been shortlisted at the Universities HR Awards in recognition of its work to encourage EDI data disclosure, and Angela Carter, Head of Recruitment and Reward, received the UHR HR Star Award. **The Committee noted the update**.

2	**Items for Approval or Consideration** **Pensions Update – Total Reward Approach for Academic Colleagues** [PC25/23] Staff Governors Dr L Brown, K Fawcett and Dr P Rumbold were in the room for the discussion of this item but left the room at the point the decision was taken. **The Committee noted the update and agreed that further information was required before endorsement could be given. An additional meeting of the Committee would take place the following week to allow for further discussion. This was subsequently endorsed at a Special meeting held on 24 June 2026.** **Staff Cost Reductions Update** [PC25/24] **The Committee noted an update on Staff Cost Reductions.** **Industrial Action – Staff Impact and Response** [Presentation] **The Committee noted an update on Industrial Action noting that, the period of industrial action ran from 12 February to 24 April 2026, comprising 20 strike days, and lessons learnt included the need for more centralised advance rescheduling of teaching sessions and further standardisation and automation of mitigation data collection. The Committee commended the considerable efforts of colleagues across faculties and professional services to manage the industrial action alongside the voluntary severance programme simultaneously, and noted that formal complaints were still being processed through a robust procedure, with further work ongoing to ensure no student was academically disadvantaged.** **2025 Engagement Survey Update** [PC25/25] The Committee considered the 2025 Engagement Survey Update and the actions taken in response to colleague feedback, following a request made at the 2 April 2026 meeting. The University had adopted a revised approach to action planning in 2025, moving away from a centrally managed RAG-rated model towards a locally owned, insight-led and continuous improvement approach. The response rate for the 2025 survey was 54.2%, representing 1,808 of 3,337 colleagues, the highest response rate since 2018. Targeted leadership engagement had been undertaken across key forums to drive alignment and build understanding. Actions to address the top areas for improvement had included the introduction of the Total Reward Approach for Academic colleagues in relation to pay and pension concerns, the Academic Workloading Project to address workload pressures, and enhanced communication mechanisms including an Ideas Hub and All Staff Briefings. The next engagement survey was planned for November 2026. **The Committee noted the update, requested that future updates include further information on progress against the action plan, including any pulse survey outcomes, and noted that the current presentation of survey results grouped responses into agree, disagree, and neutral categories, and suggested that a more complete picture to show the distribution across all five response options, would be beneficial.** **Pay Gap Report 2025** [PC25/26] The Committee considered the Pay Gap Report 2025, noting that limited time at the 2 April 2026 meeting had meant the item was brought again for fuller consideration. The mean gender pay gap had reduced to 10.7% and the median to 13.9%, with the gap continuing to be driven by the underrepresentation of women in senior academic and leadership roles and occupational segregation rather than unequal pay within grades. The overall mean ethnicity pay gap was 0.4% in favour of ethnic minority staff and the median 2.9% in their favour, indicating that on average ethnic minority staff earned slightly more than white staff overall, though this concealed significant internal variation with pronounced disparities for ethnic minority women in professional support roles compared with white men. The disability pay gap had substantially narrowed to a mean of 6.3% and a median of 6.7%, largely due to improved declaration rates and more even pay distribution, though disabled staff remained underrepresented at senior levels. A mean LGBTQ+ pay gap of 8.2% and a median of 3.7% was reported, with variation between academic and professional support groups. Across all characteristics, the primary cause of pay gaps was workforce composition and occupational segregation rather than unequal pay for equal work. Raising awareness of key themes across leadership and management groups was identified as a priority for 2026/27 to ensure insights could actively inform organisational planning, restructuring, and reward-related decisions. **The Committee noted the report and that the Senior Sponsor for LGBTQ+ was developing an action plan to explore and address potential barriers, and requested sight of this for information when available.** **EDI Performance and Progress 2025/26: Mid-year Update** [PC25/27]

The Committee considered the EDI Performance and Progress 2025/26: Mid-year Update. The new EDI structures at Faculty level were now in place, with all School EDI leads working more closely with the central EDI team, and all previous University Equality Steering Groups had become Equality Forums. Work had taken place to migrate all previous Departmental Athena Swan awards to School awards aligned with the new academic structure, with 10 schools now holding Bronze awards and the Schools of Business and Law holding Silver awards, and work having begun to migrate all 12 School awards into three Faculty-based submissions. Prof Louise Bracken, as Senior Sponsor for Disability and Accessibility, had launched the new Disability Action Plan. Voluntary EDI disclosure had improved across most characteristics, with unknowns reducing significantly. As of 31 March 2026, 10.3% of all colleagues had declared a disability, a significant increase suggesting greater confidence in disclosing, and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic colleagues represented 15.1% of the workforce. All four median pay gaps – gender, ethnicity, disability, and LGBTQ+ – had reduced from 2024, with the next EDI Annual Report due to be published in December 2026 and intended to integrate the Pay Gap Report. **The Committee noted the update and commended the increase in EDI data disclosure and the University's win at the HR&D North East Awards in the EDI category, and noted that the EDI conference held on 10 June had received very positive feedback, reflecting the visibility and senior-level support of EDI work at the University.**

Technician Commitment: Renewal Self-Assessment and Action Plan 2026–2029 [PC25/28]
The Committee considered the Technician Commitment: Renewal Self-Assessment and Action Plan 2026–2029. The University had become a Technician Commitment signatory in October 2021 and the renewal reflected on the first plan period, setting out the direction for 2026–2029. The technical staff community comprised 133 staff (124.4 FTE) organised across three faculty-aligned sub-teams, with the workforce broadly young, stable with a gender imbalance in senior technical management roles and succession risk among older staff identified as priorities for the new plan. The majority of 39 actions from the first plan had been completed or were in progress, with notable achievements including the Technician Commitment Fund supporting 25+ projects, Dr Liam Pearson-Noseworthy completing a PhD whilst working full-time, and, Dr Cecil Cherian Lukose serving as EPSRC Co-Investigator on a grant and being selected for the Royal Society Pairing Scheme 2026. The 2026–2029 plan was structured around the four Technician Commitment pillars of Visibility, Recognition, Career Development, and Sustainability, with targets including 100+ technical staff profiles published, a 40% professional registration rate, 10 apprentices by Year 3, and 30%+ women in technical leadership (Grade 7+) by Year 3. **The Committee noted the update, requested a further report on implementation progress at an appropriate future point.**

Mercer Master Trust Report [PC25/29]
The Committee considered the Mercer Master Trust Report. UCRSS, the pension scheme offered to colleagues employed in Northumbria University Services Limited (NUSL), was delivered through the Mercer Master Trust, a multi-employer defined contribution pension scheme. The Aviva Governance Report had been considered and noted by the NUSL Board at its meeting on 10 March 2026, and the Mercer Master Trust Annual Report had subsequently been endorsed by the NUSL Board by Written Resolution agreed on 9 June 2026. The performance and governance of the Mercer Master Trust were considered to provide assurance that the pension savings of UCRSS members were held within a scheme being effectively governed, managed, and administered. **The Committee noted the Aviva Governance Report 2025 and the Mercer Master Trust Annual Report 2026 and approved continued participation in the Scheme based on satisfactory performance following endorsement by the NUSL Board of Directors, noting that complaints handling and any issues arising from the annual reports were managed through regular contact with the scheme administrator rather than solely through the formal reporting cycle.**

Annual Evaluation of Committee Effectiveness [PC25/30]
The Committee considered the Annual Evaluation of Committee Effectiveness, with findings to be submitted to Board of Governors on 29 June 2026. Responses were received from four of 11 potential respondents (36%), comprising two Committee Members or Observers and two Members of University Executive. All responses to the quantitative questions were either agree or strongly agree two free text responses were received, noting that the Committee was finding its stride following recent membership changes, and that while agendas had become more focused there remained work to ensure the right depth of focus given the breadth of the Committee's interests. **The Committee noted the report and that the meeting schedule and agenda content would be reviewed.**

Georgina Lawson
Secretary to People Committee
June 2026