

PEOPLE COMMITTEE

30 September 2024 in room 209, Sutherland Building, City Campus West

CONFIRMED SUMMARY MINUTES

Contact Georgina Bailes georgina.bailes@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: L Orme (observer)
 Secretary: G Bailes, R Elliott (Assistant Secretary), B Lenney (Assistant Secretary)
 In attendance: Dr S Corbett, J Embley, Prof T Lawson, L Mayfield [Pensions Update]

MAIN ITEMS DISCUSSED/DECIDED ON AT THE MEETING

1	<p><u>Introduction</u> The Chair opened the first meeting of the new People Committee and thanked the previous Employment and Finance Committee for its work.</p> <p><u>Vice-Chancellor’s Horizon Scanning</u> [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. UCEA had advised participating employers to implement the 2024/25 pay award and whilst some Universities were looking to delay paying the award due to financial pressures, at Northumbria this would be paid in September. Recruitment for the beginning of the academic year had gone well in the context of the significant challenges faced by the sector. The recent Academic Development Review had concluded with 155 academic colleagues participating in total. The Committee noted the update and that the overall success rate for women being awarded a promotion had increased.</p> <p><u>Committee Terms of Reference and Agenda Plan</u> [PC24/01] The Committee noted its Terms of Reference, Agenda Plan and future meeting agenda items and suggested some minor amendments to be reflected in the next formal review of the Terms of Reference; it confirmed that the Agenda Plan provided appropriate coverage of the Terms of Reference. It was noted that any items that had not been endorsed or approved would be fully described within the Chair’s Report to Board. The Committee explored a range of options for the Committee, and other interested Governors, to increase visibility and further engage with the staff population, including welcome events, meetings with staff networks and All Staff Briefings.</p>
2	<p><u>People</u></p> <p><u>People Scorecard</u> [PC24/02] The Committee noted the People Scorecard as a summary of the University’s performance as it relates to its people. To measure success against the goals of the Strategic Delivery Plan for People, the People Scorecard had been developed in consultation with the previous Employment and Finance Committee and would be reported twice a year; it used people metrics to identify patterns, trends, and correlations, benchmarking against external standards when available. The Committee commended the positive framing of the report and requested that further data be included regarding Professional Support colleagues’ career progression and best practice across the HE sector.</p> <p><u>Management of Staff Costs in 2023/24 in Response to Increased Cost Pressures</u> [PC24/03] The Committee noted the activity that took place during 2023/24 to address rising institutional staff costs at a time when income growth opportunities were limited and that, through early action and careful planning, the University was able to reduce the 2024/25 staffing budget by circa £11m without placing any colleagues at risk of compulsory redundancy. This helped to secure the University’s long term financial sustainability and support the successful delivery of the University Strategy 2030. Further detail regarding Academic impact would be shared with the Committee once available. The</p>

Committee noted the report and that further work was being conducted out to understand the full impact of the cost reductions on staff.

Employment Tribunal Update [PC24/04]

The Committee noted the update in relation to ongoing employment tribunal claims.

Pensions Update [Oral Report]

H Fairfoul, P Judge, and Prof A Long declared an interest in this item as holders of USS pensions. Dr R Blackman-Woods declared an interest in this item as a holder of a TPS pension. The Committee considered an update on the University pension schemes. Costs related to TPS had increased considerably in recent years and were now at around 30% employer contribution rate. The cost to the University was significant due to the higher contribution rates and average salaries within that scheme. Discussions were taking place with other Universities with significant TPS membership. **The Committee noted the update and that scenario mapping was taking place and a further report would be brought back to both the Committee and Finance and Resources Committee.**

Draft Annual Report of Employment and Finance Committee [PC24/05]

The Committee considered the draft Annual Report of the previous Employment and Finance Committee, which summarised how the Committee provided assurance to Board of Governors over its key areas of responsibility in 2023/24. **The Committee noted the Report, a final version of the which would be presented to Committee for approval on 11 November 2024 prior to submission to Board of Governors on 28 November 2024.**

Beth Lenney, Assistant Secretary to People Committee
September 2024