Minutes 1 –12

CHURCHILL COLLEGE

CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE SEVENTY-THIRD MEETING OF THE STAFF CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE held on Monday 14 OCTOBER 2019 at 10:00 in the Club Room.

Present:  Professor Dame Athene Donald  Chair
Professor Alison Finch
Dr Paul Russell
Mr David Spaxman
Mrs Stephanie Cook
Mrs Teresa Cassidy
Mr Kevin Hill

In Attendance:  Mrs Katherine Shirley, HR Manager  Minuting Secretary

Apologies:  Dr Sally Boss
Ms Roxana Branas

Absent:  Mr Phil Dillon

In attendance for items 1 to 4:  Mrs Tamsin James, Bursar

1  Apologies

Dr Sally Boss and Ms Roxana Brancus had sent apologies for the meeting.

2  Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 April 2019 were confirmed with minor corrections. The minutes of the Extraordinary meeting of 3 July were also confirmed.

3  College policy on recognition of long service and staff leaving (SCC-2019-003)

The Bursar spoke to her paper which put forward a new proposal regarding the recognition of long service and of the departure of long serving staff. In summary it was proposed to recognise staff with 25 years of service by granting an additional week of annual leave. It was clarified that the additional week of leave would be a one-off, and it would have to be taken within 12 months of the date on which the employee achieved 25 years of service.

In response to a query it was clarified that if the proposal was adopted the additional leave would be given to those staff achieving 25 years after its adoption. Staff who had achieved 25 years’ service prior to this would have already received a financial award and so would not also benefit from the leave.

There was a discussion regarding the suitability of the Summer Event as an occasion to present flowers and a certificate to those achieving long service awards. It was felt that this was a suitable occasion but that the acoustics of the presentation had not been good and that steps should be taken for the next event to remedy this. The Bursar stated that the College’s intention had been to hold a summer event every other year. Given the success of the event this was under review, but if a
Summer Event was not held every year an alternative occasion would be arranged to present long service awards.

The Bursar confirmed the College's intention to withdraw retirement payments given the changing nature of retirement. The meeting discussed the idea that long serving staff could be given the opportunity to dine, with a number of guests, at High Table to mark their departure. It was suggested that staff with ten years' service or more upon leaving be given this opportunity and that three guests might be a suitable number, but that views would be sought on this point.

It was agreed that Committee Members will consult their constituents regarding these various proposals and will feed views back to the Committee Secretary (HR Manager) by the end of week commencing 4 November 2019.

Committee Members

4 Review of Terms of Reference and operating practices of the Committee (SCC-2019-004)

The meeting discussed the suggestion that it be indicated for each item on the agenda whether representatives should consult with constituents in advance of the meeting, whether it was anticipated that they would consult with constituents following the meeting or whether the item should be treated as confidential by Committee members. It was felt that this would be helpful and agreed that this practice should be used in future. The other proposed minor amendments to the Terms of Reference were approved.

There was a discussion about the channels of communication for feeding back discussions of the Committee to staff and for staff to be aware of what was coming up on the agenda for discussion. It was agreed that the HR Manager will work with the Communications Manager to create a Staff Consultative area on the Staff Resources pages, where agenda, papers and minutes could be made available for all staff to view. This would be publicised at the next General Staff Meeting. It was also agreed that minutes should be approved by circulation as quickly as possible after the meeting had taken place, to ensure that these could be made available to staff without delay.

HR Manager

5 Committee Membership 2020

The HR Manager informed the meeting that the term of office of two members of the Committee, Mr Phil Dillon (representing Catering and Maintenance) and Mr David Spaxman (representing Admin, Porters, Library, Archives), would cease at the end of 2019. Mr Dillon was eligible to serve for a further two year term, but Mr Spaxman was reaching the end of his second term and therefore was not eligible to stand again. It was highlighted that Mr Spaxman also served as a staff representative on Council and a replacement would need to be found from amongst the staff members on Staff Consultative Committee. The HR Manager will issue a request for nominations shortly and an election will be held should more than one nomination be received for the relevant constituencies.

HR Manager

6 Update on Staff Survey

The HR Manager informed the meeting that a Staff Survey would be run later in the term and members were provided with a copy of the survey. It was highlighted that
the survey would consist of questions that had been asked in previous surveys, but that new questions had been added on general attitudes to the College, reward and benefits, communication, and fairness and respect. The Master asked if it was desirable that the questions on fairness and respect related to the last 12 months only. The HR Manager expressed the view that it was helpful to gain a snapshot of current issues rather than historical matters that might no longer be relevant. It was agreed that it would be helpful to include a broader question on whether staff felt the organisation to be inclusive.

The issue of whether the survey should be made available via hard copy was discussed. Heads of Department preferred that staff complete the survey online. It was felt that take up amongst Housekeeping would be reduced if staff could only participate online, as having the facility to use a computer in the office to participate would not reassure staff about confidentiality. The HR Manager was willing to provide hard copies if required, and requested that the views of the department on this issue be sought and fed back to her. The HR Manager stressed that responses would be anonymous and treated in confidence. Staff would be asked to identify into which group of department they fell and also which banding of grades. The grouping of departments was organised to reflect reporting structures at a senior level. This would assist the College in targeting actions arising from the survey results but was not intended to be a means of identifying individual respondents. The HR Manager asked that representatives make her aware of any concerns around this.

Committee Members

7 Donations to charity

The HR Manager informed the meeting that each year the College receives money, usually a few hundreds of pounds, which is generated from various small sources of income, e.g. deriving from sale of bikes removed in the bike cull, from Amazon orders placed through the Amazon Smile scheme in Churchill College’s name etc. Previously income raised from these sources had been donated to the College’s nominated Charity of the Year, however the College has not had such a charity for some while, which has resulted in a build-up of funds to a few thousand pounds (confirmed after the meeting to be £3,700 approximately). The HR Manager noted that no interest had been shown when staff were asked if they wished to get involved with co-ordinating fundraising activities for a Charity of the Year. The Committee was asked for their view as to whether:

- The money should be donated to a charity selected by SCC representatives.
- All staff should be asked to suggest a charity to receive this money.
- The selection of recipient should be passed to the Donations Committee. This is a pre-existing College Committee that deals with the allocation of funds to charities that make requests to the College for support.

After discussion it was agreed that the money should be given to the Donations Committee to distribute, with the guidance that the Staff Consultative Committee would wish to see educational charities being supported.

8 College Policy on women’s health

A request had been made via the representatives for the Admin/Porters/Library constituency that the College consider having a policy on women’s health and in particular how support could be given to employee’s experiencing the menopause. The HR Manager outlined that the University had undertaken a lot of work in this
area and had produced guidelines for managers, staff and signposts to sources of support. The HR Manager undertook to produce similar content for the College and to provide training to Heads of Department on this topic.

HR Manager

9 College policy on working from home

A query had been raised via the representatives for the Admin/Porters/Library constituency as to what the College’s policy was regarding home-working. The HR Manager confirmed that there was no overall specific policy on this issue and no entitlement existed for staff to work from home. This was because of the varied nature of the roles in College, not all of which would be suitable for home-working. Due to this variation it was left to the discretion of Heads of Department as to whether home-working was appropriate: requests would be considered in light of the operational needs of the College. It was noted that the amount of home-working had seemed to increase. The HR Manager commented that the College was supportive of flexible working practices and technology had made flexible working easier, so it was true that this was happening more frequently. She encouraged anyone interested to make a request to their Head of Department and confirmed that this could be done informally or through the statutory Flexible Working Request procedure which would ensure that the request be formally considered. If staff members were concerned about making such a request they could approach HR for guidance.

10 Simplyhealth: level of benefits

A query had been raised via the representatives for the Admin/Porters/Library constituency as to whether there were any plans to increase the level of benefits available through the Simplyhealth healthcare cash-plan, as these had remained unchanged for a number of years.

The HR Manager confirmed that these had remained unchanged since the scheme’s launch in 2015, but that premiums had also remained unchanged. The College covers the entire cost of premiums including the cost of the tax on the benefit. The HR Manager informed the meeting that she would shortly be meeting with the Simplyhealth Account Manager to review claims experience and discuss plans for the next scheme renewal, which is due in May 2020. Some changes to benefits and costs were therefore anticipated and it was possible that the College would engage in a wider review of the market to look at alternative providers. Staff would be kept informed of any proposed changes.

11 Any Other Business

No other business was raised.

12 Date of next meeting

Lent Term 2020 – date to be circulated. Ideally this should be scheduled after Staff Survey results are available.