

**JOINT UNION CONSULTATIVE & NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE (JUCNC).**

**Minutes of meeting held on 19 February 2021** Meeting held via Skype under Covid-19 restrictions.

**PRESENT**

Damian McAlister (People & Culture); Paul Davidson (People & Culture); Mark Latuske (People & Culture); Geoff Gillan (People & Culture); Fiona Wills (People & Culture); Tina Gallagher (People & Culture); Kathryn Wills (People & Culture); Paddy Mackel (UCU) ; Linda Moore (UCU); Aisling O'Beirn (UCU) ; Norman Hagan (UCU) ; Richard Young (UNITE); Paul Agnew (UNITE); Judith Hough (UNITE) ; Marianne Buick (Unison).

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Carol Curran (Executive Dean); Christine Irwin (People & Culture).  
Joining the meeting at 11: Brian Murphy (Interim Dean of Academic Business Development), Stephen Doherty (Deputy Director Estates Services), Anne Doherty (Senior Project Manager), Suzanne Bell (Timetable Planning Manager), Michael Chapman (Project Manager).

**APOLOGIES**

Cathy Gormley-Heenan (Deputy Vice Chancellor); Michael Fitzpatrick (Director of Estates); Gareth Scott (Unite).

**21.01 Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 November 2020.**

Draft minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2020, accepted.

**21.02 Matters arising from the Minutes of 23 November 2020.**

No items raised .

**21.03 Policy Sub-committee.**

Mr Davidson explained a draft proposal which outlines four items for discussion and agreement: 1. Process for securing agreement on which of the 3 strands a specific policy should follow: 2. Route for Non-Employment related policies, 3. Route for Health & Safety policies, 4. Route for Employment related policies.

UNITE requested H&S be included in the flow chart, for completeness.

Item 1 - UCU suggested that for practical reasons, a physical group did not always need to meet, to decide the strand to be followed. UNITE advised that they would have 2 branch secretaries and 2 Health and Safety Officers in the working group and would decide which representatives they will delegate to attend policy working group. They agreed that items would not need to go to JUCNC unless the policy working group want them to.

Unison called for an agreed mechanism for review and a shared Terms of Reference for the policy group.

It was agreed that a Policy sub-committee comprising JUCNC and H&S members, would be established to determine a policy's route. UCU requested that this should be made clear in the Terms of Agreement document.

Item 2 - Mr Davidson indicated that policies on non-employment issues do not need go to JUCNC but can be escalated to JUCNC, should employee related matters arise.

UCU expressed disagreement with the suggestion that JUCNC only discuss policies directly related to terms and conditions of employment. UNITE indicated that there was no requirement for a non-employment policy strand.

Mr McAlister advised that not all policy requires JUCNC sign off, as some policies only required engagement. The current approach is that everything goes to JUCNC for sign off, with the exception of Health and Safety matters.

Mr McAlister asked that Mr Davidson, Mr Gillan and Union colleagues continue discussions on how the policy working group would work and come back to JUCNC with a proposal.

#### **21.04 Academic Timetabling and Space Usage Policy.**

Ms F Wills advised that that timetabling team had analysed the feedback which had been collected and Union representatives, students and staff had had huge input on policy development and the policy is now ready to be shared beyond GBD.

Mr Chapman talked through the University wide policy and input from external consultants.

Mr Murphy advised that the new policy brings more automation and a better way of working which was key to delivering an academic operation that is important to student experience.

UCU advised that they had sent tracked changes to the policy that had not been included and asked for these to be considered. For example, comments on SENDO and the availability of Policy, in format other than digital, had not been taken into consideration. Also the core working day of 9-5 is not reflected in the document and asked for further information on the impact of timetabling on admin/support staff to understand the changes that timetabling would have on these roles.

Mr Murphy advised that the policy was available in a number of formats and this would be made clear in the document. He also confirmed that working schedules are defined by the Schools and some courses require evening slots e.g. part-time courses where students are at work in the day may be taught in the evening.

It was explained that the role of timetabling officer has not been defined and was likely to develop over the 1<sup>st</sup> year of policy implementation. There would be differences across faculties and an expectation that the role of timetabling officer requires union engagement, separate from policy discussion.

Ms Bell said that the policy was intended to reduce workload but that module sizes were not controlled through policy.

UNITE asked for greater visibility of the timetable for technical staff who needed to know who was teaching in labs/workshops spaces and when they were being used. There is a need for a clearer link between Academic and Technical staff.

Mr McAlister advised that as there were still some outstanding aspects for clarification, further discussion was required before a final version was brought to JUCNC for agreement.

#### **21.05 Belfast Campus Car Park – Needs Assessment.**

Mr Doherty and Ms Doherty spoke on the Belfast Campus car park arrangements.

Needs assessment is for Belfast only and looks at parking needs based on category of need (or both staff and students). There are 350 spaces available in total. Each of the tiers was explained i.e. blue badge holders, those with long term mobility and health difficulties and those with temporary health based needs was explained. Clarity was provided on information in the guidelines regarding eligibility and how to apply for a space. It was also confirmed that there is a right to appeal a decision on space allocation and confidentiality is maintained throughout the process.

Once the needs based assessment is completed, any spaces remaining will be open to applications via a lottery system (Tier 4).

All staff are eligible to use the car park during the off peak times - weekends evenings etc.

UNISON asked whether Noonan staff were considered in the tiers. Ms Doherty agreed to discuss with the Facilities team and provide a further update on this.

Discussion took place on car park charges and it was confirmed that current permit charges will apply (including the £1 nominal fee for blue badge holders).

It was explained that spaces would be allocated on the basis of an annual permit with review each year to assess if a parking space is still needed. A close eye will be kept on the usage over the year to help with future allocation.

UCU asked if Tier 4 “lottery” parking space winners could be advised that they would not be eligible to enter the draw for a space the next year. It was agreed to look into facilitating this option.

There was some discussion on alternative modes of transport such as the Cycle to work scheme and also bike leasing options. Belfast City Council are looking at a refreshed smart bike scheme with a £25 annual fee membership.

It was agreed that there are still a number of items to be resolved in relation to the Car Park Needs Assessment and these should be discussed and agreed at the GBD forum before the policy comes to JUCNC for agreement.

#### **21.06 Consultation Responses – Discussion on format.**

Mr Davidson introduced a discussion on the format of consultation responses. Mr Davidson talked through some of the response formats being received and associated challenges:

- Document issued and Union comments in sidebar – whilst helpful with identifying aspects of disagreement it creates challenges as it is difficult to work out which are the important issues.
- A conversation is initiated and we get a series of questions back – however there can be many replications of same question.
- With the Emergency covid related leave policy, the Unions response highlighted 8 points of issue and confirmed which 2 were really important - this was very useful and management found this an effective way of consulting.
- Due to work pressures there is a preference from UNITE to respond verbally, rather than provide written feedback.

UCU advised that the different responses reflect the different nature of issues they have been asked to respond on. Responses are driven by the members.

UNITE said that the track changes approach had been very helpful in discussing the Sickness Absence Policy and for policy and procedures, track changes can be helpful.

The Unions explained they are obligated to show that they have asked the questions raised by their members and Management has a responsibility to answer those questions.

Unison said that meaningful consultation has not taken place under remote working conditions. Mr Davidson advised that this would be responded to formally.

#### **21.07 Review of frequency and duration of ‘fortnightly’ special JUCNCs.**

UCU propose Friday 13:00 – 16:00, every 3 weeks.

UNITE and Unison to check if this would suit them too.

#### **21.08 AOB:**

*Information sessions:* Mr Davidson advised that flexible working policy information sessions have commenced and the Unions had been written to on this matter. UNITE advised that precedent for policy development has been that unions are appointed to a working group ahead of consultations going out to staff. UNITE believe that the commencement of staff sessions, bypasses the recognition agreement . Mr Davidson said that conversations were at very early stage and that there was no policy proposal to put before the Unions, as yet.

*Furlough:* Ms Gallagher advised that with lockdown extended to 1 April. Sports Services are considering further extension to furlough.

**Meeting ended 13:05**