

CANTERBURY CHRIST CHURCH UNIVERSITY

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY COMMITTEE HELD AT 2.15 PM ON 6 OCTOBER 2009 IN THE FREDERIC MASON ROOM AT THE PRIORY

Present: Dame Janet Trotter (Chair), Professor Michael Wright (Vice Chancellor), Professor Tony Lavender (Pro-Vice Chancellor [Social & Applied Sciences]), Ms Moira Mitchell (Equality & Diversity Manager), Professor Tony Booth (UCU Representative), Professor Jan Burns (Programme Director), Mr Paul Carney (Director of Partnerships and Widening Participation), Mr John Hallam (Director of Human Resources), Mr Geoff Haworth (Director of Student Support & Guidance), Miss Paulette Holmes (Business School), Revd Jeremy Law (Dean of Chapel), Dr Burkhard Scherer (Arts & Humanities), Dr Janet Wiseman (Health & Social Care)

In Attendance: Mrs Tracy Bell-Reeves (Assistant HR Director [Development])
Mr Paul Bogle (Clerk to the Governing Body)
Mrs Lynn Revell (Education)
Mrs Susan Rhodes-Molden (Director International Office)
Mrs Heather McCulloch (Committee Officer)

19. Apologies

Apologies were received from Mrs Samia Abdiche, Dr John Moss and Ms Helen Reynolds.

20. Declarations of Interest

There were none.

21. Chair's Remarks/Terms of Reference/Membership [Paper B6]

Members of the Committee received Paper B6, the Terms of Reference and Membership. The Clerk informed the Committee that during the coming year the Chairman's Committee will consider the reporting structure for the Equality and Diversity Committee. Currently it reported through the Finance & General Purposes Committee to the Governing Body; however, the Chairman's Committee will consider a proposal that the Equality and Diversity Committee report directly to the Governing Body, particularly as the Equality and Diversity Committee Chair was not a member of the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

Other considerations were likely to include the size of the Committee, its composition and its responsibilities as set out in the Terms of Reference.

The Chair welcomed the proposal as a positive step forward for the Committee.

NOTED

22. Minutes of the Meeting held on 29 April 2009

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 29 April 2009 were agreed and signed as a true record.

23. Matters Arising not appearing elsewhere on the Agenda

23.1 Points Based Immigration System [Minute 253.5 refers]

The Director of Student Support & Guidance reported that the already established 'Cause for Care and Concern' attendance monitoring process will be extended to cover those students who fall under the points based system. He indicated that a briefing paper was being prepared to give guidance in this area to Programme Directors.

The Committee acknowledged the importance of separating two issues: the first was to ensure that these students were supported and made welcome; and the second involved attendance monitoring to ensure that the University fulfilled the UK Border Agency's requirements.

The Equality and Diversity Manager indicated that there will be a discussion on the briefing paper at the next Committee meeting.

NOTED

24. Review of Equality and Diversity Agenda [Paper B7]

Members of the Committee received Paper B7, a Review of the Equality and Diversity Agenda, which set out agenda items to be covered at each Committee meeting during the year ahead. The Equality and Diversity Manager highlighted two major pieces of work to be completed, the Disability Equality Scheme and the Gender Equality Scheme, with deadlines to meet in December and April respectively.

The Chair opened the discussion by asking members if they considered that the Committee was being effective. Professor Tony Booth said some issues had to be addressed when they were reported. He mentioned the year taken to deal with promotion to reader and professor in the Faculty of Education which made people vulnerable and could have equality implications, not least because they impaired people's willingness to raise contentious issues. He reported an upsetting delay for a member of support staff reaching retirement age in sorting out his continuing work. He suggested that all such decisions should be within four to six weeks with a maximum of eight weeks in special circumstances. He mentioned the representation as common University practice of Christian prayers before lunch for candidates for a head of centre post which could lead some candidates to feel they had less chance than others. He expressed concern at appointments of heads of department without interview or open selection. He suggested that the Faculty of Business and Management's resistance to pressures to allocate heads of department posts in this way should be specially commended by the committee.

The Vice Chancellor stated that some of Professor Booth's comments were factually inaccurate. He nevertheless recognised that genuine issues of concern could be raised in Committee meetings and should be addressed. He suggested that such issues could be brought to his attention and addressed through direct discussions with the Committee Chair.

The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Social & Applied Sciences) stated that he was preparing a report on career progression in response to questions raised in the Staff Survey, and the transparency of the promotions process was being carefully considered. The

report will be submitted to the Senior Management Team in the next month and will be considered by this Committee in due course.

The Assistant HR Director (Development) reminded the Committee of its requirement to remain within its terms of reference when considering items for its agenda.

The Chair acknowledged that there may be times when the Committee needed to consider an issue on an 'ad hoc' basis, and provision would be made to do so.

NOTED

25. Single Equality Bill Update [Oral Report]

The Equality and Diversity Manager reported that the Single Equality Bill was currently in the Committee stage. Consultation had taken place, and universities and the Equality Challenge Unit had provided feedback. One of the key challenges was how to achieve an equal level of monitoring for each equality characteristic. It was noted that dual or multiple characteristics could be taken into account when considering a case of potential discrimination; for example, a female from a BME background could bring a case if she considered she had been discriminated against in favour of a man from a BME background.

The Committee noted that the implementation date for the duty to promote other equality characteristics of age, sexual orientation and religion and belief was April 2011; until more details were available, the Committee will progress work as planned.

NOTED

26. Draft Disability Equality Scheme [Paper B8]

Members of the Committee received Paper B8, the draft Disability Equality Scheme. The Scheme was currently at the consultation stage and both staff and students will be invited to comment. Once the consultation procedure had been concluded it will be submitted to the Senior Management Team for approval. The Equality and Diversity Manager highlighted section four which listed the University's significant achievements on behalf of disabled staff and students as measured against the previous three year Action Plan.

The draft Disability Equality Scheme, together with its accompanying Action Plan, set out the priorities for the next three years 2009/12.

Members of the Committee commented that some of the data required further explanation and context, for instance it could be benchmarked against other institutions. The Equality and Diversity Manager indicated that statistical records were not always comprehensive, and she had been mindful of avoiding replication of information that appeared in the Annual Report.

Members suggested a number of minor rewordings to the main text and to the Action Plan and these will be incorporated.

A member of the Committee raised the issue of the status of 'carers for those with disabilities' as they were not covered in the Scheme. The Assistant HR Director

(Development) stated that staff who cared for children were taken into account in the University's policies and procedures, but perhaps there was further work to be undertaken by looking at carers as a wider group. It was suggested that the demographic of the student population at the University, which included a large number of mature and part time students, could indicate 'hidden' issues in this area.

The Chair highlighted the need for a further piece of work to be undertaken on this subject in the future.

NOTED

27. Sexual Orientation Paper [Paper B9]

Members of the Committee received Paper B9, a Sexual Orientation Paper, which had been prepared by a Working Group comprised of members of staff and some students. The section entitled 'The Church of England and Human Sexuality' had been drafted by the Dean of Chapel.

The Equality and Diversity Manager indicated that the Paper replicated the format of previous Position Statements on (1) Age and (2) Religion and Belief, and included a legislative history, examples of good practice and proposed recommendations.

The Committee discussed the Paper and a comment was made that the positioning of the section on the Church of England promoted it unduly and that it would be more appropriately placed as an appendix. Another suggestion was to make it clearer that the traditional view held by some sections of the Church was in conflict with the work of this Committee.

However, others argued for retaining the section where it was in view of the fact that the Church of England held a privileged position at the University, and that it was important to include the Church of England's history on human sexuality as part of the historical context.

The Chair took a vote on a motion to recommend the retention of the section on 'The Church of England and Human Sexuality' in its current position, and the motion was carried.

The Chair suggested that the section on 'Recommendations' be turned into an Action Plan, and the Equality and Diversity Manager confirmed that this will be undertaken in the future, along with similar conversions of the action points contained in the papers on 'Age' and 'Religion and Belief'.

The Committee discussed the first of the recommendations around work placements for students. It acknowledged the inherent tension between working with a school that displayed racist and/or homophobic attitudes and not wanting to alienate schools that provided much needed placements. The Committee acknowledged the need for clearer guidance for departments in this area.

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND:

that, subject to some minor re-wording, Paper B9 be recommended for approval by the Governing Body.

28. Staff Development [Paper B10]

Members of the Committee received Paper B10 on Staff Development. Following the Staff Development Programme report produced by consultant Ann Allcock, the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Social & Applied Sciences) chaired a small working group to consider the recommendations made in the report, and this Paper outlined the actions the University would take in response to the report. He reminded the Committee that a concern arising from the consultant's report was that the University was too compliance-led in its equality and diversity work.

The Assistant HR Director (Development) commented that Paper B10 reflected the need for the University to be 'assured' in its equality and diversity work whilst continuing to strive to embed good practice. She considered that the Paper had responded to the concerns expressed regarding being solely compliance-led; it had sought to take a more pro-active stance, whilst still emphasising the need for staff to be aware of their obligations.

The Committee recommended Paper B10 for approval by the Staff Development Committee.

NOTED

29. Staff Data Monitoring [Paper B11]

Members of the Committee received Paper B11 on Staff Data Monitoring. Human Resources had written to all members of staff over the summer asking them to update their personal data held on file where applicable. The exercise had resulted in an increase in the percentage of staff from a BME background on the previous year, and a marked increase in the percentage of staff declaring a disability. The latter figure was now 6.2% compared with a national average ranging between 1.1 and 3.1%.

The Equality and Diversity Manager commended Human Resources on conducting the exercise, and the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Social & Applied Sciences) thanked the Director of Human Resources for providing the data in time for the meeting. The Director of Human Resources considered that the first Staff Survey had helped to promote confidence amongst staff to disclose such information.

When considering the data the Committee identified the following possible areas of concern:

- that for both professional and support staff it appeared less likely that BME staff will progress from both application to short list and short list to appointment stages;
- that for both professional and support staff it appeared less likely that male staff will progress from both application to short list and short list to appointment stages;
- that the ratio of male/female staff in the Management Group was not as would be predicted from the total staff group ratio in that there were fewer women.

The Committee did acknowledge problems with the data such as a disproportionately large shift in the trend data that can be caused when dealing with very low base numbers, such as the small number of BME staff. The general consensus of the Committee was that the data needed further analysis.

The Chair highlighted further analysis of staff data as a future piece of work for the Committee.

NOTED

30. Staff Survey Follow-up Outcomes [Oral Report]

Members of the Committee received an oral report on the Staff Survey Follow-up Outcomes from the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Social & Applied Sciences). He reported that work was continuing and that members of the Senior Management Team were holding focus group meetings, conducting one to one interviews and reviewing policy as part of the information gathering process.

There were seven areas of work being undertaken; one of these had been completed and a further six reports will be submitted to the Senior Management Team over the next month.

A single outcome report will be produced which will be brought to the next Committee meeting if prepared in time.

NOTED

31. Notes of the Meeting of the Equality and Diversity Delivery Group held on 5 May 2009 [Paper B12]

Members of the Committee received Paper B12, the Notes of the Meeting of the Equality and Diversity Delivery Group held on 5 May 2009 for information.

NOTED

32. Any Other Business

- The Clerk reported that he had received the annual report from the Head of Computing which confirmed there had been no instances of any web sites being blocked for any reason during the previous year; strict controls remained in place for under 18s at the University.
- The Chair recorded that it was Professor Tony Booth's final attendance at an Equality & Diversity Committee meeting, and she thanked him for his tireless efforts on behalf of the Committee and wished him well in the future.

33. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 27 January 2010 at 2.15pm at the Salomons Campus.

The meeting closed at 4.40pm.