



Wellbeing Committee Meeting

Friday, 16 October 2020, 1 p.m.
and (reconvened on) Thursday, 22 October, 3.30 p.m.

Meetings held remotely via Teams

Minutes

Present:

Dr Andy Rice (Chair, ACR)
Jo de Bono (JD)
Quo Pham (QP) for item 6i
Caroline Stewart (CS)
Celia Burns (Secretary, CB)

1. Apologies for Absence

None.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 September 2020 were approved for publication on the Committee website.

3. Situation Update

Committee members each gave a brief update on how they were coping in relation to the coronavirus situation.

4. Update on Action Items

i) Central HR's Review of the Staff Review and Development (SRD) Process
Quo Pham, HR Manager, had shared the feedback from central HR's recent SRD review. Committee members agreed to review the feedback in advance of the next meeting.

Action: Committee members

ii) Counsellor for the West Cambridge site

This initiative was being considered by the Shared Facilities Hub Project Board. JD reported that she had requested an update from Daniella Manca, Secretary of the West Cambridge Advisory Board, but had not yet heard back from her.

iii) *Staff survey about Department members' experience since lockdown*

The Committee had discussed the possibility of running a staff survey about lockdown experiences. ACR apologised for not having had a chance to set up a document of suggested survey questions for the Committee to review. Committee members discussed whether to continue with this initiative, including the possibility of doing a pulse survey (a short survey sent on a regular basis to provide a pulse check on a chosen topic). The Committee agreed to amend this action slightly and do a short staff survey about department members' current wellbeing, with the objective of finding out if more needs to be done to try and help people, as well as to guide supervisors. ACR said he would set up a Google survey form for Committee members to add to and/or edit.

Action: Committee members

iv) *Delegation of issues to the Workload Committee*

ACR reported that the Workload Committee has been working on the technical aspects of a roles database, with the next step being to produce a sample report showing various roles. Once the reporting part has been established, the next step will be to move on to the wellbeing part: using the reported data for considering workload issues.

v) *Safe Space Circles Guidance – Returning to Work*

(a) CS reported that expectations relating to returning to the workplace had been clarified in the latest protocol for safe working in the building. An update had been provided relating to the latest face-covering rules, and CS had sent a few recent departmental communications about these issues.

(b) It had been agreed that any future messaging about the Virtual Corridor drop-in sessions should include reference to the sessions being an opportunity to raise any potential concerns about returning to the workplace. The Committee agreed that this message should be conveyed again and could be done at the same time as we send the questionnaire (item 4 iii above).

Action: Committee members when survey is sent

(c) The Committee had agreed to review the Safe Space Circles Guidance again at this meeting in the light of any concerns that might have been raised in response to department communication about returning to the workplace (<https://www.ourcambridge.admin.cam.ac.uk/resources/safe-space-circles-returning-work>).

The Committee reiterated that the Guidance is not relevant to our Department because staff are not *required* to come into the building. It was felt, therefore, that circulating the Guidance would over-complicate communications, and it was suggested that a question could be included in the survey (see item 4 iii above) to address this kind of issue.

Action: Committee members

5. **Student Wellbeing Internal Audit—Executive Summary**

For prioritising reasons, the Committee agreed to drop this item from future agendas.

6. Expected Reports

i) SRD processes for academic-related staff and professional services staff

Following the Committee's recommendation in June 2020 for the SRD processes for academic-related staff and professional services staff to be reviewed and re-implemented, Quo Pham made a presentation on SRD to the Committee, outlining the process, benefits, recommendations and various available resources (presentation attached).

ACR noted that the SRD framework aligns with what the department is already doing in relation to academic staff SRD and its intentions for professional services staff SRD. The Committee agreed that the SRD would be very valuable but acknowledged that the HR side of delivering the system is difficult and that without good preparation, it would not be a useful process. ACR made two suggestions: (i) to make sure that a system of tracking appraisals is in place; and (ii) to consider the 80/20 trade off and how, in general, the SRDs might be the more useful for early-career academics or for new starters than for senior academics.

The discussion about SRD led to discussion about institutional training and the acknowledgement that this subject lies beyond the remit of the Wellbeing Committee. This in turn led to a proposal by JD for a departmental HR Committee, whose remit could include issues such as SRD. Committee members considered such a committee to be a strategic body (rather than a body for consultation or dissemination) and, in terms of membership, the Committee thought that it would be beneficial to have a member of the HoD Team as Chair. Acknowledging the high workload of the HoD Team, ARC said that he could be Chair if needed. JD said she would be happy to represent professional services staff (also providing background from the Wellbeing Committee).

A discussion about the difficulty in assigning academic SRD reviewers led to the suggestion that this might be something an HR Committee might do. Another task suggested was a review of the induction materials (see item 11 below).

The Committee agreed to pass on the HR Committee suggestion to the HoD Team.

Action: CS

ii) Research Staff Forum (RSF): wellbeing-related suggestions

The RSF has been asked to discuss wellbeing at its next meeting, on 6 November, and to provide some suggested issues for the Wellbeing Committee to consider.

iii) Research Staff Forum (RSF) wellbeing report

A wellbeing report is expected after the RSF's next meeting, on 6 November.

iv) Graduate Student Forum (GSF) wellbeing report

A wellbeing report is expected after the GSF's next meeting which will take place in Michaelmas term (date to be arranged).

7. Composition of the Committee

The Committee discussed whether it would be useful to have further representation on the Committee, for example a junior academic or a member of the research staff. Various issues were noted, including:

- whether the Committee needs dialogue with research staff and graduate students in addition to the reports it already receives from their respective committees
- the benefit of having a small committee
- the opportunity for an early-career representative to meet other people
- the already heavy workload of potential representatives
- the need for the Committee to consult widely
- the possibility of an HR Committee being set up, which might also require representation from these groups.

Committee members agreed to leave the Committee composition as it is for now but to bear in mind the need to think about the lines of communication available, particularly for academic staff.

8. Linkages with Wellbeing Initiatives in other Departments on the West Cambridge Site

JD reported that she had raised the issue of linking up with other departments at the Wellbeing Advocate lunch, where members had considered having support networks in clusters to share practices and ideas. Advocates had seemed interested and Miriam Lynn is going to consider the idea.

The Committee agreed that it would be useful to do an experiment to gauge interest from other departments for linking up. As the Physics Department (Irene O'Flynn) had been the most engaged with JD's earlier communications with other departments, it was agreed that the Committee would send the top three takeaways from each meeting to the Department of Physics initially (and later potentially to all the departments we would like to cluster with), with the hope that they might reciprocate and possibly suggest meeting regularly to discuss wellbeing issues. CB agreed to suggest the three main points from this meeting for consideration by the Committee. JD would then send them on to Irene O'Flynn, offering them for their committee's information.

Action: CB and JD

9. Discussion Item(s)

The Committee has agreed to leave discussion of more general wellbeing items until the COVID situation stabilises, and for now address the more pressing issues relevant to the COVID situation as they arise.

10. Next Discussion Item(s)

As item 8 above.

11. Any Other Business

Comment raised at a recent Faculty Board meeting

At a recent Faculty Board meeting, a Faculty Board member had noted that the Wellbeing Committee had not been as active recently as it had been at the beginning of COVID, commenting that there were new staff and students who might not know of the existence

of the Committee. In considering this, the Committee noted that the induction materials include reference to the Wellbeing Committee but that newer and/or transient initiatives (such as the virtual corridor and tea/coffee meetings) may not appear in those materials. Another example suggested for inclusion in the induction materials was a comprehensive list of compulsory trainings for University staff and students. This led to a discussion about the need for the induction materials to be reviewed, and it was suggested that this might be another example of a task for the HR Committee suggested above (see item 6(i)).

Departmental social offerings – Wednesday Meeting breakout rooms

CS raised the issue of the current lack of any social offerings (for example, the weekly Pilates class she ran before the pandemic). Committee members discussed the possibility of having post-Wednesday Meeting breakout rooms where, after the meeting, participants could go to one of three breakout rooms (convened by the HoD and the two Deputy HoDs) to present a forum for more general conversations. It was agreed that this suggestion would be passed to the HoD Team.

Action: CS

12. Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting would take place from 1-2 p.m. on Monday, 30 November 2020.