Glasgow Colleges' Regional Board

Nominations & Remuneration Committee

Date of Meeting	Thursday 28 March 2024
Paper Title	Update from College Employers' Association
Agenda Item	8
Paper Number	NRC3-D
Responsible Officer	Executive Director
Status	Disclosable
Action	For Noting

1. Executive Summary

1.1 The latest information from the College Employers' Association in respect of negotiations with teaching and staff trade unions is attached for Members' information.

2. Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is invited to **note** the update.

3. Risk & Compliance Analysis

3.1 There are no risks associated with the report which supports the Committee's understanding of external factors relevant to its decision-making.

4. Financial & Resource Implications

4.1 There are no immediate resource implications associated with this report, however, nationally agreed positions on pay and conditions are a factor in Committee decisions on annual salary increases.

5. Equalities Implications

5.1 There are no new equalities implications associated with this report.

6. Learner Implications

6.1 This report does not have direct implications for the learner, however, robust governance arrangements are essential to the effective determination and delivery of GCRB objectives.

Support Staff Pay Talks Key Messages – 8 March 2024

- The industrial action which has affected colleges is due to a dispute over pay. Following fresh talks and guided by Fair Work principles, the three support staff trade unions (UNISON, Unite and GMB) have been offered a **three-year, consolidated pay rise of £5,000**. This is the employers' **full and final offer**.

- This £5,000 consolidated pay offer includes the offer of a **£2,000 pay rise for Academic Year (AY) 2022/23** and **£1,500 for AY 2023/24**, together with a **£1,500 rise in AY 2024/25**.

- College employers have also confirmed that any **compulsory redundancies would not be directly related to the pay award**, were the full and final offer to be accepted.

- If accepted, the proposed three-year pay award would provide **an average pay increase of nearly 16% for college support staff from September**. For support staff earning less than £25,000, **the increase would be 21.5**%.

- The proposed £2,000 pay increase for AY 2022/23, which equates to an average 6.6% rise for college support staff, is significantly above the headline cash uplifts recommended in the Scottish Government's 2022/23 Public Sector Pay Policy.

- The proposed £1,500 pay increase for AY 2023/24, which equates to an average 4.6% rise for college support staff, is ahead of the 3.5% central metric set out in the Scottish Government's 2023/24 Public Sector Pay Strategy.

- The full and final offer remains on the table despite the exceptionally difficult and deteriorating financial circumstances facing colleges. Scottish Government funding has been cut by 8.5% in real terms since the 2021/22 Financial Year and the Scottish Government's draft Budget for 2024/25 proposes a further cut of £32.7 million, or 4.7%.

- The revised pay claim from UNISON is for a three-year, consolidated pay rise of £6,500. This comprises a proposed £2,000 pay increase for 2022/23, £1,500 for 2023/24 and £3,000 for 2024/25. College Employers Scotland has advised that the claim is completely unaffordable.

- The offer full and final pay offer has been overwhelmingly accepted by Unite and GMB members in formal ballots. Nearly two-thirds (65.4%) of Unite members voted to accept on a turnout of just over 70%. The GMB's ballot results show 100% of its members voted to accept on an 85% turnout.

- UNISON is being urged to accept the full and final pay offer given it has been overwhelmingly accepted by Unite and GMB members.

- UNISON acceptance is required for payment of the full and final offer to college support staff.

- UNISON (alongside the EIS-FELA) took part in a national strike day on **29 February 2024**.

- Staff participation in February's national strike day was lower than on the last national strike day on 7 September 2023. **Data indicates only 29% of college support staff took part – down from 34% on 7 September 2023.**

- We know that college support staff want to see a pay rise as soon as possible. Colleges are ready and willing to apply the proposed pay increase in the earliest possible pay period following acceptance by UNISON.

- Given the financial challenges facing colleges and their staff, we urge UNISON to follow the example of Unite and the GMB and ballot its members so that they have the chance to accept the employers' very substantial pay offer.

EIS-FELA Pay Talks Key Messages – 8 March 2024

- The industrial action which is affecting colleges is due to a dispute over pay. Guided by Fair Work principles, the EIS-FELA has been offered **a three-year, consolidated pay rise of £5,000**. This is the employers' **full and final offer**.

- This £5,000 consolidated pay offer from employers includes the offer of a **£2,000 pay rise for Academic Year (AY) 2022/23** and **£1,500 for AY 2023/24**, together with a **£1,500 rise in AY 2024/25**.

- College employers have also confirmed that any **compulsory redundancies would not be directly related to the pay award**, were the full and final offer to be accepted.

- If accepted, this substantial offer would deliver an 11.5% average pay increase for college lecturers from September, keeping them as the UK's best-paid college lecturers. Those at the start of the National Pay Scale would benefit from a rise of 14.2%.

- The full and final offer remains on the table despite the exceptionally difficult and deteriorating financial circumstances facing colleges. Scottish Government funding has been cut by 8.5% since the 2021/22 Financial Year and the Scottish Government's draft Budget for 2024/25 proposes a further cut of £32.7 million, or 4.7%.

- The EIS-FELA's own public communications acknowledge the challenging financial context in which colleges find themselves.

- The EIS-FELA's current claim is for a consolidated, flat-rated pay rise of £8,000 over AYs 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25, on all lecturing scale points. College Employers Scotland has advised that the claim is completely unaffordable.

- On 12 February 2024, the EIS-FELA launched industrial **Action Short of Strike**, including a **resulting boycott**. It is anticipated that ASOS will continue until **15 July 2024**, though it will end earlier if a resolution to the pay dispute is found.

- Colleges are determined to protect the interests of students. They will do everything they can to avoid a repeat of the situation last year when a resulting boycott caused significant disruption and was only mitigated thanks to the hard work of college staff and colleagues at partner organisations across the education system.

- Over 90% of colleges have now written to staff who may take part in the resulting boycott to warn them that this would be considered a breach of contract and could result in pay deductions.

- Deducting pay from staff is never a measure that colleges want to take. However, they simply cannot accept the risks that another resulting boycott would create for the awarding of qualifications, and the ability of students to progress in their learning journeys and careers.

- The EIS-FELA (alongside UNISON) took part in a national strike day on **29 February 2024 and is planning targeted action at three colleges during March 2024**. Colleges will put in place measures to mitigate the impact of strikes and all forms of industrial action on their students' education.

- Staff participation in February's national strike day was lower than on the last national strike day on 7 September 2023. **Data indicates that lecturer turnout was 38% compared with 47% on 7 September 2023.**

- Colleges are ready and willing to apply the proposed pay increase in the earliest possible pay period following acceptance by the EIS-FELA.

- Given the significant financial pressures affecting colleges and staff, we urge the EIS-FELA to face the reality of the situation facing colleges, cancel their industrial action, including the damaging resulting boycott, and ballot its members so that they have a chance to accept the full and final fair pay offer from employers.