

<b>Report to:</b>	QSMTM Q2 2023-24
<b>Report by:</b>	Helen Gardner-Swift, Head of Corporate Services (HOCS)
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	9 November 2023
<b>Subject/ Title:</b> (and VC no)	Human Resources Strategy – review of 2022-23 actions (VC197090)
<b>Attached Papers</b> (title and VC no)	None

## Purpose of report

---

1. The purpose of this Committee Report (CR) is to review the annual actions under the HRS for 2022-23.

## Recommendations and actions

---

2. I recommend that the Senior Management Team (SMT)
  - (i) consider the review of the annual actions for 2022-23 under the Human Resources Strategy (HRS) as set out in the Executive Summary
  - (ii) agrees the publication arrangements as set out in paragraph 21.

## Executive summary

---

3. The HRS sets out what the Commissioner aims to achieve with, and for, staff at all levels and, in doing so provides a framework for the focus of how the organisation manages human resources (HR) and sets operational objectives and activity to develop people and talent.

### Annual actions 2022-23

4. There was continued progress against the HRS and the actions taken in respect of each part of the HRS are set out below.

#### Leadership

- recognising the need for strategy and vision, the Strategic Plan 2020-24 (SP) was taken account of in decision making
- governance requirements, including human resources governance, have been followed and the HOCS provided assurance on this and governance reporting requirements in 2022-23
- the SMT approved the Operational 2022-23, which included operational objectives related to the management of human resources
- management training took place but there was no formal leadership training undertaken.

#### Developing and managing talent

- a Learning and Development (L and D) Plan was approved for 2022-23

- training for managers and staff was provided using approved training providers and platforms on:
  - data protection/UK GDPR – all staff
  - menopause awareness – managers
  - cyber resilience – all staff
  - health and safety – all staff
  - equality and diversity - managers
  - equality and diversity – all staff
  - management training – managers
- updated performance and quality standards and targets were agreed (see below **Performance Management and accountability**)
- induction training for 3 new members of staff was provided

### **Promoting workplace diversity and equality**

- in the work of the organisation, there is due regard to the three aims of the public sector equality duty under the Equality Act 2010 which are:
  - to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act;
  - to advance the equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
  - to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- In 2022-23:
  - staff were asked to complete a confidential equality and diversity monitoring survey - completion of the survey was not compulsory and the return rate was 87% (2021-22 87%)
  - managers and staff undertook mandatory equality and diversity training
  - an approved Equality Policy was in place
  - all CRs included a consideration of equalities impact as a mandatory section
  - where appropriate, we implemented reasonable adjustments to enable staff to fulfil their potential
  - all members of staff were provided with wellbeing guidance
  - the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) was enhanced and available for any member of staff to contact at any time for advice
  - where recruitment for vacant posts was undertaken, our policies and procedures relating to no candidate receiving less favourable treatment on the grounds of a protected characteristic were followed

## **Workforce and resource planning**

- a risk-based approach was taken to mitigate the risk arising from our funding arrangements and this has included taking account of:
  - relationships with external stakeholders
  - having a work-force that concentrates a range of functions in fewer individuals
  - current and interim management structures
  - the ability to fund statutory, mandatory and strategically important functions
  - the impact of decisions, policies and business development on resources including, human resources and workloads.
- as part of the budget process, the Commissioner is allocated funding for staff costs
  - the original approved budget for 2022-23 was £2,120,000 with £1,744,034 allocated to staff costs (2021-22: £1,903,000 and £1497, 816)
  - this approved budget was reduced to £1,940,000 following surrender of £180,000 due to staff costs savings
- salary costs, the biggest single element of our budget, are derived from the SPCB's terms and conditions. The 2022-23 salary budget was set using guidance from the SPCB and pay awards were also in accordance with the SPCB's pay awards
- 1 member of staff was employed on an inward secondment during 2022-23
- recruitment for permanent freedom of information officer posts (4) and administration posts (2) was undertaken
- the SMT monitored and reviewed key workforce statistics, such as staff in post, staff turnover and absence and sickness levels
- the office premises re-opened on 3 May 2022 and staff could work in the office premises, remotely or a mixture of both (hybrid working)

## **Communication – talking and listening to each other**

- we aim to have an organisation where regular, open and constructive communication is used, encouraged and embedded in our policies and practices, where possible, and recognise the importance of good staff relations and effective communication with staff
- there have been regular team meetings and quarterly All Staff Meetings (ASMs)
- all members of staff can access the agendas, papers and minutes of the meetings of the SMT (information is only withheld from staff where the relevant exemption(s) in the FOI Act or the EIRs would apply if a request were to be made for the information or where a duty of confidence is owed to a third party)
- staff were also asked to complete a well-being survey as part of the work relating to the re-opening of the office premises and this was used by managers in their discussions with their team members on working arrangements
- general all staff communications were sent by email and/or provided at the ASMs

## **Performance management and accountability**

- staff governance and management policies and systems are in place to ensure the performance and development framework is applied consistently to all levels in the organisation and the HOCS has provided assurance on this for 2022-23
- the Performance and Quality Framework 2022-23 was approved by the SMT and a proportionate performance management system has been in place and there has been regular reporting against this throughout the year
- the Annual Report 2022-23 contains a Performance Report, Accountability Report and Remuneration Report

## **COVID-19 pandemic**

5. Our priority as an organisation has been to provide our services and guidance while safeguarding the health, safety and wellbeing of our members of staff. The office premises re-opened on 3 May 2022 and hybrid working has been in place.
6. Our work programme was reviewed to ensure its relevance and we continued to develop how we have carried on our regulatory work in the hybrid working aiming to be flexible and proportionate while safeguarding the transparency, consistency, quality and integrity of our work. For example, in addition to an increase in physical attendance at external meetings, and conferences, we continued to use Microsoft Teams to conduct meetings which enabled us to reaching increased numbers in our public sector network meetings. We also used Microsoft Teams to enable remote training as a provider, participant and audience.

## **Workforce Plan**

7. As part of the external audit process, the auditor recommended that the Commissioner should develop a formal stand-alone workforce plan, in addition any work force planning undertaken under the HRS. A project relating to the development of a Workforce Plan was included in the Operational Plan 2022-23, with the aim of this being put in place for 2023-24.
8. Our budget planning is carried out on an annual basis and it is difficult to plan long term for workforce variations. However, the Workforce Plan can be aligned with the time period of the Strategic Plan.
9. The impact of any extension or relaxation of exclusions or exemptions of FOI law will also need to be taken into account in the Workforce Plan so that human resources requirements can be reviewed.
10. The HRS was formally reviewed and updated to provide for a Workforce Plan and approved by the SMT in January 2023.
11. An annual Workforce Plan for 2023-24 was approved in May 2023 and this helps us to:
  - monitor and plan resources
  - align the needs and priorities of our organisation as regards its workforce
  - as far as possible, reduce costs by helping management to anticipate shortages or surpluses of human resources
  - assist the overall business planning process
12. Monitoring of the Workforce Plan takes place on a quarterly basis.

## **Risk impact**

---

13. The HRS supports achievement of our HR governance objectives and, also, mitigates the risk of not managing HR in support of strategic aims and objectives.
14. Ensuring that HR will continue to be managed, as far as possible, in line with the HRS (and any revised HRS) mitigates the risk of not following appropriate human resource policies.

## **Equalities impact**

---

15. There is no direct equalities impact arising from this report. However, in undertaking HR management, managers should have regard to any relevant equalities issues that arise, and their impact on a member of staff, and seek guidance (as necessary) from their Head of Department or from the HOCS.

## **Privacy impact**

---

16. There are no direct privacy impact issues arising from this report.

## **Resources impact**

---

17. HR will continue to be managed, as far as possible, in line with the HRS. The additional resource relating to the development of a Workforce Plan was carried out within existing resources.

## **Operational/ strategic plan impact**

---

18. HR will continue to be managed, as far as possible, in line with the HRS, to ensure, that as far as possible, we are following an HRS which supports strategic aims.

## **Records management impact (including any key documents actions)**

---

19. None.

## **Consultation and Communication**

---

20. Publication of QSMTM Q2 minute

## **Publication**

---

21. This CR should be published in full