

Attendance: S Deery / M Sands / E Taylor / J McClafferty / M Sweeney / F Dougall
E Denham

1. **Apologies:** Adele McCormick
2. **Minute of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising**

The group agreed the minutes of the previous meeting held on 28 August 2019 as being accurate.

Smarter Working

This is to be brought forward to the November meeting.

- **ACTION:** The HR Team are developing a Smarter Working Principles Paper which will come a future HR Sub Group meeting.

Dignity at Work

- Susan sourced a Dignity at Work package for eLearning through ENEI (Employers Network for Equality & Inclusion) with the intention of launching the course at the same time as launching the policy. This will support staff to receive training on identifying Bullying and Harassment, and support the launch of the policy.
- To support the updated policy, a new eLearning course on bullying and harassment will be available and must be completed by all staff. The online course will take between 30 and 45 minutes to complete. It must be completed by the end of 2020.
- Susan met with Monica after the meeting to discuss the comments received from Unison Branch to finalise matters. [*The policy was launched on Connect on 11 November 2019*].

Carry Over Leave 2019/20

- JMc stated that staff are now aware that there will be two phases of CSAS training and he asked if there will be any flexibility for carry-over of leave into January 2020 for those on the second phase, if required.
- Susan explained that training for CSAS trainers and floorwalkers will begin in January 2020 so extraction of staff will begin then. Susan would like managers to encourage staff to take their leave by the end of 2019.
- By exception, managers may support carry over into January 2020 and any carry over should typically be taken by the end of January. Any carry over is only with line managers agreement. Where returning from maternity/adoption

leave or long term sickness towards the end of the leave year an employee may not be able to take all of their accrued leave by end of January 2020, e.g. if carrying over in excess of 5 days. In these situations a plan should be made in agreement with the manager to schedule the leave asap in 2020.

- JMc stated that the training period has been released January to March. Susan clarified that January will be training for the trainers and floorwalkers and February – early April will be training for the rest of the staff.
- Monica queried if the trainers and floorwalkers will be out of localities at the same time. Eileen understood there will be two blocks of 5, and two blocks of 2. Eileen asked if training dates move again how will this affecting authorising holidays if staff have not been able to take leave during January to March. Susan clarified that development is closer now and that we are still aiming to conclude training and implementation by the end of June. Managers have to think of smarter ways to ensure staff are able to access leave.
- **ACTION:** Place a reminder on Connect to all staff [*done 14.11.19*].

Publication of Facility Time

- Susan verified there is a lot of UNISON training coming up and asked that managers support stewards to attend the training where ever possible.
- If there are any issues to let HR know so we can find a way to support.

Falkirk Council Pension Fund – LGPS Scheme Changes

This is to be brought forward to a future meeting.

- **ACTION:** Morna to provide examples to explain the wording before communicating on Connect. Morna to issue examples to a future HR Sub Group for review.

Guidance for Handling Visually Recorded Interviews

- Feedback has been passed to Bruce Knight on this item with a recommendation that he provide local engagement when rolling it out.

Disability Leave Policy

- Alison Melrose completed the work on broadening the Disability Leave Policy.
- **ACTION:** To be brought back to a future agenda.

People Strategy 2020-23

- The Managers Network and the Head Office Managers meetings were consulted for input on the People Strategy for the next 3 years.
- A lot of useful information was gathered in the consultation workshops which will be considered in the development.
- A draft of the People Strategy will be presented to the Board in December 2019 and thereafter final sign off by the HR Sub Group in January 2020.

Corporate Induction

- Corporate Induction is now live and in use.

Corporate Planning and Performance Manager

- No feedback was received on the job description. Post proceeded to advert. Interviews to be held 22 and 23 October 2019.

3. Learning and Development Policy

- This policy requires revision, created in 2006. The underlying principles remain but it would benefit from modernisation in terms of our approach.
- This policy can be used to try to encourage people to think creatively about learning and development and to encourage individuals to focus on their own learning and development needs.
- HR hold the training budget. Susan is keen to hear from managers on what they consider would be the best use this budget for 2020/21 so that it is responding better to local requirements. This should hopefully help with the annual training plan.
- JMc enquired if there is scope to provide a small allocation of funding to localities for training purposes. If given a small funding locally the money can be used for multi-agency training in relation to child development etc.
- **ACTION:** Susan agreed to take a note of this.
- Susan explained that the training budget is limited but she would like to see a better response to training needs and not just to one off requests. For example, having the funding to be able to pay for the Dignity at Work eLearning package.
- Fergus asked if there has been any thought to setting CPD expectations for each role that staff could focus on each year. Might be helpful if people are given the obligation to complete their CPD. Susan explained that staff would all need to recognise the importance of CPD if this was to have true benefit, and we would have a challenge resourcing a piece of work to identify the CPD requirements for each post. Fergus explained that he would not expect it to be too detailed for every role but an approximation of the expected number of CPD hours per year with the evidence provided during supervision/appraisal.
- JMc expressed that getting some staff to complete a CPD could be challenging although some staff would have no problems in getting their hours in as some staff attend internal and external courses throughout the year. Susan asked if staff recorded external training on iTrent as it would be useful to see what people are doing. JMc was doubtful that staff do that. Susan expressed the struggle we currently have in employees completing the mandatory training. Encouragement from managers to record all training on iTrent would be helpful.
- Susan agreed that further thought could be given to CPD.
- Fergus and JMc agreed that evidencing training in a Reporter role would not be too challenging. Morna queried if CPD hours need to be quantified or can the request be that staff evidence 'demonstrable continuous professional development' on their PDP.

- Monica asked if HR can see what people put in their personal development plan. Susan clarified that a report from iTrent could be generated but unlikely that all learning will have been recorded. Eileen stated that this has only been the first year since staff have been able to record training so it may take a while for staff to get used to the system.
- Monica stated that it might be an idea to be able to identify from PDPs if there are a number of employees across the organisation who have a specific interest in doing the same training, and then this can be resourced if possible.
- Susan agreed with Monica's point as some of the issues that came out of the People Strategy consultation was better use of skills and knowledge across the organisation. If skills are logged onto iTrent we would be able to find out who nationally has a particular skill or knowledge area by generating a report. JMc acknowledged that this is working informally across localities and it seems to be working well.
- Morna stated that if it's recorded then we can tap into skills that we don't know are out there. Morna thought it may be helpful to reference CPD in PDPs because people recognise CPD generally and the need for it, and it gives people ownership of their own continuing personal development.
- **ACTION:** To consider amending PDP guide to make reference to including any CPDs requirements in PDP.
- In relation to Section 6 of the Learning & Development Policy and the development of a Learning Network - Susan informed that we have a number of staff who deliver training across the organisation and it's about recognising the skills, knowledge and experience we have out there and bringing them together as a Network. If someone is part of the network with a particular set of skills we could think about expanding the type of training they are delivering rather than being limited to practice or reporter type training. Eileen appreciates that although the Senior Practitioners have their own network and are a skilled group she is concerned that this limits opportunities for others as Senior Practitioners do a large amount of practice training, assessing PDPs etc. However, nationally she wonders how we are ensuring that others in the organisation are given the same opportunities to develop.
- Susan recognised that the learning network could be considerable and could perhaps be managed by having representatives from different roles. JMc questioned if there may be a risk of a crossover with the Practice Network or could it possibly sit as an agenda item on the Practice Network. Susan thought it to be broader than Practice as it wouldn't be merely practice training but a more comprehensive exercise.
- Eileen emphasised the difficulty in engaging some support staff with development or training. Local training is open to all support staff but some seldom attend. Susan concurred and hoped that the Learning Network would be able to help to identify broader aspects of training need and how to resource this. We need to think of different ways of engaging support staff.
- Susan acknowledged that it may not be as easy for support staff to travel to do training and we currently have a contract with Falkirk Council to provide corporate training but it might be worth engaging with other local authorities to provide a similar arrangement to make it more accessible.
- **ACTION:** HR to explore whether other local authorities could provide training.
- JMc and Eileen both suggested Domestic Violence training for all staff so staff have a better awareness, better understanding, and better empathy to some

of the families that come into our hearing centres, perhaps as part of corporate induction.

- Susan informed the group that she had a conversation with Gill Short as there is a recommendation from the Assistant Reporter project that all practice training be opened up to Assistant Reporters.
- **ACTION:** Still some work to do on the Learning and Development policy to incorporate CPD and learning network. Group is asked to review the policy and pass any comments to Susan. This item to be kept on the agenda until finalised.

4. Internal Transfer Scheme

- Morna gave an overview of the amendments suggested at the last HR Sub meeting, and explained that these have been incorporated. However, upon re-reading the scheme she wanted to highlight some additional changes and discuss these today - highlighted in red.

6.7 SCRA Internal Transfer Scheme

- *“SCRA is a national organisation. The aim of the Transfer Scheme is the retention of skilled staff. Any permanent member of staff can make a formal request, after obtaining authorisation from their manager, to transfer on the same grade and salary / terms and conditions of employment, to the same post in a different SCRA team or location, potentially without the need for a competitive process. A temporary member of staff can **also** make a request to transfer, however, the vacancy needs to be like for like i.e. for the contract term; **and the remaining term of the employee’s temporary contract should be sufficient for the operational impact of their transfer from their current post, to be manageable, e.g. 6 to 12 months remaining on contract.**”*
- Morna explained the temporary member of staff’s remaining term of contract should be taken into consideration for operational purposes.
- JMc voiced that there may be instances where the manager may not be able to sign off release of transferees as it may have a detrimental operational impact. Morna clarified that the employee should be on the register for 3 months before they can register for a transfer and they should have at least 6 to 12 months remaining on their contract. I.e. it wouldn’t be prudent to transfer a couple of months before contract end date as there would be no return on investment.
- Eileen suggested that this section should be viewed in the same way as the Secondment Policy where the organisational and operational needs are considered in the authorisation process by the manager, i.e. whether it is feasible to release the employee at that time.
- Discussions around the table were based on the concerns around temporary staff not having enough remaining time on their contract to do a like for like transfer, temporary staff travelling to more remote localities to obtain a permanent post and concerns of temporary staff moving on before they make any operational impact. Susan suggested that temporary staff contracts should state that ‘they must have a contract of 12 months or more left on their contract’ to make it viable and to be able to get a return on investment and avoid a constant churn of staff moving around the

organisation. Susan suggested we link this to the probationary period having been completed also.

- **ACTION:** Morna to reword qualifying period for temporary members of staff to register for a transfer, to ensure that they are competent in their role and so that the department that's invested in recruiting them and training them gets a return on their investment.
- Morna amended the wording regarding line managers re-authorising employees' registration for transfer every 6 months. This makes it more onerous for managers but it helps reduce the risk of transferring someone who may not be competent enough at time of application.
- *“Line Managers must support and authorise an employee's registration, unless the employee is subject to any documented **formal or informal stage** capability, performance improvement discussion or disciplinary proceedings, including active investigations. Or where there are active concerns with regards to someone's frequent short term absence, and this is being managed under SCRA's Maximising Attendance policy – either under the Supervision Policy Action Point, or the Formal Absence Review Action Point, and is documented. All authorisations by managers should be discussed with HR for consistency / fairness of application.”* Morna added that those for whom there is a live issue against them under investigation that is not yet at the point of an investigation recommendation, should not be signed off on the transfer scheme, e.g. it may not be known whether a recommendation would be into a formal process such as disciplinary. Transfer process would be held until then. Morna also added where you a manager may not sign an employee off on to the register if the employee was on some form of absence management.
- JMc asked if a helpful action to someone's health and wellbeing would be to be transferred to another team, does this come under the Internal Transfer Scheme. Susan suggested that this may be more suited to redeployment as a possible reasonable adjustment.
- JMc offered whether in a Formal Absence Review meeting a view might be formed on the suitability and reasonableness of transfer. Morna advised that this may be a possible reasonable adjustment under redeployment rather than the transfer scheme.
- Morna also informed the group that if the scheme deliberately referred to 'active concerns' regarding short term absence, because you may have an employee who has had a formal absence review and who's absence has sufficiently improved since that meeting but who remains within the 12 month review period – in those circumstances it might be suitable to sign that employee off due to a sufficient sustained improvement. Morna emphasised the aim should be to support people where possible but also need to be mindful of the appropriateness of any receiving department inheriting somebody whose absence is still a live concern.
- **ACTION:** Communication to include a decision tree on whether a vacancy can be filled through redeployment or through the Internal Transfer Register or if not suitable then the Locality will go through the recruitment process.

- *“If only one employee is on the Register for a vacancy, the recruiting manager will undertake an Inward Transfer Meeting with the employee, and where, after mutual agreement on the **terms of the transfer** ~~their suitability~~, the recruiting manager can appoint the employee.*”* Morna informed Unison that this paragraph has been changed as a result of the discussion in last meeting.
- *“Where more than one employee is registered as a suitable transferee for a vacancy, then a competitive selection process will be required. The vacancy can be ring-fenced for the registered employees. **This will be done for the initial three months after the Register has been set up. Thereafter the vacancy will be filled by the person who has been on the register for the longest period.**”* Morna voiced that this could potentially be an area that we may have some difficulty with. Unison had supported the initial 3 months but thereafter recommended that transfer opportunities be filled on a first come, first served basis. HR and managers suggested in the last meeting that recruiting managers should have an opportunity to recruit the most suitable candidate. Monica had taken this issue back to the Branch and Unison’s position was that it should be the candidate who has been in the register the longest. Monica confirmed that Unison’s view still remains the same.
- Susan emphasised that HR’s position is trying to align the same process as the agreed Redeployment Scheme by applying the same principles i.e. by recruiting the best fit and the most suitable person for the role with the receiving manager’s involvement in the process. Morna expressed that this could be a deal breaker in terms of the transfer scheme going ahead. Monica conveyed that she was conscious that this is something that staff have been asking for for a long time and would be opposed to the scheme not going ahead because of one clause. Monica suggested that she is happy to listen to any other wording that would act as a compromise.
- **ACTION:** Monica to go back to Branch to discuss issue again. Morna to supply wording from note of meeting re this clause.
- *“If the employee has been interviewed for the same role in the same team/Locality within the last 6 months, and was not deemed to be **appointable in that process** ~~has been unsuccessful~~, the recruiting manager may after **careful consideration**, decide not to progress with a transfer if the employee has not been able to meet any shortfall in competence / behaviour in the meantime, **i.e. they would effectively require to be signed off again by their manager for consideration under the scheme. Advice from HR should be sought in such instances.** ~~was deemed not appointable in the initial recruitment process.~~”* Morna explained that this paragraph infers that there is a gap in the applicants’ skills and experience at the time of consideration for a post through recruitment. Monica questioned how a manager could sign the employee off as competent and yet they were then un-appointable. Morna reasoned that it could be that the employee was signed off as competent but perhaps a new system was implemented or a new change that they had not come up to speed with a development, or there had been a deterioration in their practice since the point of sign off on the transfer scheme.

Section 6.10 - Extension of Temporary posts or Conversion to Permanent Posts

- Clarification was made that if an employee is on a temporary contract of 12 months or more and it is decided to make that post permanent then the employee will only be moved into that post if there is no one on the Internal Transfer register. If names were on the register, then the vacancy would go through the Recruitment & Selection process including consideration under the Internal Transfer Scheme.

5. Shadowing and Mentoring Scheme

- This has been taken to the Equalities Network. It was generated from the Women Into Leadership action plan and signed off by the Equalities Network.
- Thought needs to be given on how we roll it out within the organisation - we need to attract people to put themselves forward to be a Mentor, and to open up the Mentors to potential Mentees. We may also look out with SCRA.
- JMc queried whether the training for the Mentors is sufficient for managers to have a reassurance that it would be a reliable and credible scheme. Susan assured that this is not coaching so there is no psychological part in the training - mentoring is about sharing experience / how to deal with situations.
- Eileen voiced particular interest in people getting shadowing opportunities but she has found it difficult to make it come to fruition in the past.
- **ACTION:** Carry item forward to November meeting.

6. Supervision Framework

- Susan informed the group that she has had feedback informally about the efficacies of the Appraisal Scheme and wondered if we should continue with the scheme. The potential rationale being that the supervision framework is embedded in the organisation. Susan suggested that if we ensure supervisions are meaningful, organic and ongoing discussions, this may in some instances be more beneficial than any tokenistic conversations during appraisals. Do we need the formal appraisal process alongside supervision?
- **ACTION:** This item to be brought forward to the November meeting.

7. Transgender Policy and Guidance

- This policy has been signed off by the Equalities Network.
- The group agreed to adopt the policy as a means of good guidance for staff and the organisation.
- **ACTION:** Policy to go live on Connect [*done 20.11.19*].

8. Organisational Change Policy

- To be brought back to a future HR Sub Meeting
- It has been 10 years since it has been reviewed. We are currently going through a big change process and we need ensure that it's fit for purpose. Also there is a change to the Scottish Government Severance Policy which applies to SCRA as an NDPB which puts limits on what we can offer for a

voluntary exit scheme. The maximum that can be offered to staff is £90,000 which includes any redundancy payment and the cost of any strain to the pension scheme with a maximum 2 year payback.

- **ACTION:** Susan to email the draft document to the group for feedback as she is keen to get the policy signed off before the we head into the change process in 2020. For reassurance Susan had used Unison's Organisational Change Policy as a backdrop to revision from Unison's website with more detail on early retirement.
- Susan awaiting confirmation about Certification of Protection of Benefits regarding situations where an employee's salary is reduced through organisational change and what pension protection applies (i.e. at the higher salary rate for last 10 years). Falkirk Council to clarify that point - in the meantime it remains as it was before.

9. Job Descriptions

- Head of Operations (new post), Corporate Planning & Performance Manager (new post), and Operations Manager (new post) job descriptions, Diversity & Inclusion Manager (new post).
- Susan to email around the job descriptions for feedback.
- Intended these are submitted to Job Evaluation Committee on 5 November.
- **ACTION:** Unison to aim to provide comments by 30 October 2019.

10. Smarter Working Principles

- **ACTION:** Item to be carried forward future HR Sub.

11. Standby for Public Holiday

- As previously discussed, there has been difficulty in some localities in attracting staff to do standby on public holidays.
- One of the issues raised in June was the low level of standby allowance that was attached to the standby callout. One of the options that Susan looked at previously was to include an increase in standby in the pay offer but it was additional monies that could not be built into the offer within pay policy parameters. Any increase to monetary terms and conditions need to go through a pay remit process and this will be after the forthcoming public holidays in 2019/20.
- Susan suggested signalling to staff we are looking into this as part of any future pay offer.
- Eileen stated that majority of her staff in Glasgow are young mums and doesn't believe that an increase of say £30 would make a significant difference as they would have to cover for childcare etc. Eileen has suggested a rota but Unison advised that staff cannot be forced to take their turn if they do not want to cover.
- Susan stated that professional graded members of staff know that they have to cover bank holidays and Susan suggested that by doing a rota staff may only have to cover standby once every three years and they are remunerated.
- **ACTION:** Monica to take to the Branch for comments on how we do that and to emphasise that staff will not be forced to do it but we have to deliver a

service on public holidays and we have a legal duty to deliver that service on public holidays.

- There are other options open to the organisation where we can change the contract of employment to say that 'as a professional member of staff you are required to provide cover from time to time on public holidays'. Susan emphasised that we do not want to amend contractual changes but that could be a potential outcome.
- JMc has a rota made up of people who want to be on the rota and with it are the dates for the year. Staff are then asked if they have difficulty with any of the dates to then arrange to exchange with another colleague. This rota is purely through a voluntary process. JMc questioned that if in the unlikely event he finds himself in a situation where no-one is willing or able to cover then what can he do to ensure we satisfy our statutory function.

12. AOB

- None

13. Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 27 November 2019