

SCTS PEOPLE COMMITTEE

MEETING: Wednesday 25 August 2021 - Via WebEx

Present:

Dr Kirsty Hood QC, Non-Executive Member, SCTS Board (Chair)
Anne Scott, Non-Executive Member, SCTS Board
Dr Sophie Flemig, Non-Executive Member, SCTS Board
Billy Harkness, Non-Executive Member
Professor Alan Boyter, Non-Executive Member
Sheriff Susan Craig, Non-Executive Member

Also Attended:

David Fraser, Chief Operations Officer, SCTS
Lisa Sellars, Director HR, SCTS
Steven D'Arcy, Interim Corporate Secretary, SCTS
Jackie Carter, Head of Digital Transformation, Education and Learning Unit, SCTS
Lorna Gilbert, Senior HR Manager: People Strategy, Policy and Support, SCTS (Item 7)
Brian Carroll, PCS Union (SCTS Branch Secretary)
Tara McNamara, Executive Support Officer, SCTS (Minutes)

Apologies:

Jessica MacDonald, Director, Education & Learning, Education & Learning Unit, SCTS
Rosemarie Smith, PCS Union (SCTS Branch Chair)

1. Declarations of Interest

1.1 There were no new declarations of interest from Members.

2. Welcome and Apologies

2.1 The Committee welcomed Jackie Carter, Head of Digital Transformation, Education and Learning Unit and Lorna Gilbert, Senior HR Manager: People Strategy, Policy and Support.

3. Minutes of the Meeting

3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 5 May 2021 were approved.

4 Action Points and Matters Arising

4.1 Outstanding action points were addressed under substantive agenda items during the meeting.

Update from the SCTS Board

4.2 The Chair highlighted discussions from the June and August 2021 meetings of the SCTS Board which had a bearing on matters relating to the People Committee.

5. Draft – Annual Report to the SCTS Board (SCTS/PC/Aug21/22)

5.1 Members reviewed their draft Annual Report to the SCTS Board that summarised the work of the Committee over the period of December 2020 to November 2021 and set out the structure and priorities for the coming year.

5.2 The Committee requested that a short precis be prepared, broken down by theme, to accompany the report. The report would be finalised and presented at the next meeting for final approval by the Committee before being shared with the SCTS Board at their November meeting.

6. Education and Learning Unit (ELU) Development Updates (SCTS/PC/Aug21/23)

6.1 Jackie Carter, Education & Learning Unit, Head of Digital Transformation, provided members with an overview of the key areas of recent change and development that had taken place within the Education and Learning Unit (ELU).

6.2 It was explained that ELU was progressing changes and improvements to the SCTS induction programme; enhancing the virtual hearing training programme for re-launch in 2022; conducting a review of the existing Sheriff Court Information Manual (SCIM) training materials; developing an education and training solution to support the introduction of SharePoint, reviewing the model of digital learning and blended learning approaches for future training requirements; and leading the development of a strategic approach to having a trauma informed workforce and a trauma informed organisation. A Learning Council (LC) has been established and will meet in September 2021.

6.3 Members welcomed the update and acknowledged the volume of work and commitment that the ELU Team had undertaken in order to adapt and respond to the changing organisational requirements. The Committee also commended the ongoing work underway to address trauma informed approaches to delivery of justice, and looked forward to future updates.

7. Attendance Levels – Sickness Absence 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021 (SCTS/PC/Aug21/24)

7.1 The Committee reviewed the sickness absence report for the period 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021. The report provided a detailed breakdown of absence levels and also contained a specific section dedicated to COVID-19 related absence.

7.2 It was highlighted that sickness absence levels/figures reported during the period of 2020-21 had been impacted as a result of COVID-19 and therefore a direct comparison with the previous year was not possible. The report identified that sickness absence had significantly decreased during 2020-21, for both short and long term absences, which was expected due to the impacts of having staff working from home, staff on special leave when unable to work, staff shielding or where offices had closed due to lockdown during the period April – June, or they were not working on an essential service provision. Members discussed the report noting an area of interest being in terms of the age profile of SCTS workforce with the largest staff group aged between 50 and 59, with the highest level of sickness absence. It was agreed that a workshop to consider the strategies being developed to support an ageing workforce would be helpful for a future meeting to explore this area further.

7.3 The report also provided details outlining the SCTS's ongoing commitment to wellbeing and integrating wellbeing initiatives with business activities with a specific focus on ensuring our people are supported during and after COVID-19. In recent months a number of new initiatives had been implemented including updated guidance documents available to all employees regarding COVID-19, covering coronavirus and wellbeing, homeworking and returning to work. The Wellbeing Hub was also fully updated with additional information on both wellbeing and mental health during the pandemic. The Executive highlighted that HRU in collaboration with ELU colleagues had also promoted, organised and hosted a course on how to "Ramp up your resilience and boost your wellbeing" in order to provide employees with tools to boost resilience and wellbeing, which had received excellent feedback to date.

7.4 The Committee acknowledge and commended the level of detail the report contained, noting that it provided a very good picture of a complex and unprecedented situation for the 2020-21 reporting year.

8. Untaken Annual Leave (SCTS/PC/Aug21/25)

8.1 The Executive advised members, following amendments to the Working Time Regulations, of the revisions made to the SCTS annual leave policy in March 2021 reflecting changes to carryover of leave allowances. The changes made to the SCTS annual leave policy applied only to the 2021, ending 30 April 2021, and 2022 leave years, ending 30 April 2022, with carry forward balances returning to normal for the leave year ending 30 April 2023. Furthermore, in April 2021, following an analysis exercise of leave balances within the organisation it was highlighted that a high proportion of staff had leave balances in excess of 9 days at the end of the 2020.21 leave year.

8.3 In line with the Scottish Government's position the Executive Team, in partnership with PCS, agreed that all excess leave balances should be carried over as part of the annual leave year end exercise with the option of offering those staff with over 20 days excess leave the choice of payment, but limited to payment for any days over and above 20 days

8.3 The Committee acknowledged the implications COVID-19 had presented, and the impacts the organisation had faced whilst delivering business as usual workloads and outputs. Members also discussed the organisational risks around untaken annual leave, mitigations and other financial provisions that could be considered.

8.4 The Executive set out the current processes in place, noting that staff continued to be encouraged by management to take periods of leave to ensure wellbeing, rest and recuperation. Regular reviews of leave balances was also being conducted by HRU and shared with the Executive Team for further consideration throughout the 2021-22 leave year, with the next report due in September. Members thanked the Executive for the update and looked forward to hearing on progress.

9. AGM Partnership Meeting Update/Outcomes (SCTS/PC/Aug21/26)

9.1 The Committee received an update on the outcomes following the Partnership AGM meeting, held on 23 June, including ideas for raising the profile of Dignity at Work, Equality and Inclusion and progress of the Staff Survey Corporate Action Plan, addressing areas highlighted in the Staff Survey 2020.

9.2 Members were advised that following the successful Partnership AGM, held virtually, a number of ideas had been identified in order to further enhance the current partnership model and raise the profile of Dignity at Work, Equality and Inclusion. Furthermore the recent Pulse Survey, held between May and June this year, was discussed at the Partnership AGM, providing a range of ideas and suggestions on how to further raise the profile in these important areas. It was noted that following the Partnership AGM a draft action plan was created, with a meeting with PCS follow up meeting having taken place in August to progress the priority areas raised.

9.3 The Executive provided a further update on the significant amount of work that was being progressed, in partnership with PCS, to address matters highlighted from the Staff Survey 2020. The Corporate Staff Survey Action Plan was shared with members in advance of the meeting, which focussed on the three key corporate themes, and outlined a range of activities currently underway to address the areas from the Survey. Members were also informed that in addition to the action plan, three senior manager discussion groups had been formed to consider Future Working Practices; Team and Individual Communications and Fairness. The outcomes from the discussion groups were being considered with a further meeting scheduled to discuss how ideas and suggestions could be progressed.

9.4 The Committee welcomed the comprehensive update provided, and commended HRU and PCS colleagues for their continued efforts in responding to the results of the staff survey and commitment to raising the profile of Dignity at Work, Equality and Inclusion.

10. Review/Discussion of Other Papers (SCTS/PC/Aug21/27-34)

10.1 The following papers were provided for scrutiny/exception reporting only:

- COVID-19 Update – Operational Matters
- HR Policy Update
- HR Risk Register
- ELU Risk Register
- HR Measures for SCTS Board
- HR/ELU Business Plan Tracker
- ELU Internal Audit Review - Update
- Employment Tribunals

10.2 The content of these papers was noted and no matters of concern were raised.

11. Any Other Business

11.1 The Committee received an update on the current HRU structure. Members were advised of recent difficulties HRU had experienced, in terms of recruitment into vacant posts within the department, including an unsuccessful recruitment exercise for Strategic Partner posts.

11.2 As a result of vacant posts within HRU, it was noted that Senior Management were currently involved in additional aspects of work, due to limited resources within the department available for delegation, which had presented challenges. Members acknowledged the volume of work HR was involved with, including the development of a new e-recruitment module and the upcoming interim pay award negotiations. It was agreed that shorter updates providing key information to the Committee would reduce pressure on the HR Senior Team when preparing for future meetings. An outline of key information required would be discussed and agreed ahead of the November meeting.

11.3 There was no other business discussed.

12. Close

12.1 The next meeting would be held on 10 November 2021.

13. People Committee Performance Appraisals Exercise (SCTS/PC/Aug21/35)

13.1 A summary of members' responses to the appraisal questionnaire was discussed in a members' only session following the formal meeting. Members were generally content with the operation of the Committee and felt they continued to function effectively.

Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service
August 2021