



SCTS PEOPLE COMMITTEE

MEETING: Wednesday 12 August 2020. Via WebEx

Present:

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

Also Attended:

David Fraser, Chief Operations Officer, SCTS
Lisa Sellars, Director HR, SCTS
Nicola Anderson, Head of HR Organisational Development (Items 8, 9 & Deep Dive)
Jackie Carter, Head of Digital Education & Learning, Education & Learning Unit (Item 6)
Brian Carroll, PCS Union (SCTS Branch Secretary)
Rosemarie Smith, PCS Union (SCTS Branch Chair)
Tara McNamara, Executive Support Officer, SCTS (Minutes)

Apologies:

Richie Adams, Acting Director Education and Learning Unit

1. Declarations of Interest

1.1 There were no declarations of interest from Members.

2. Welcome and Apologies

2.1 The Committee welcomed Jackie Carter, Head of Digital Education and Learning.

2.2 The Chair informed members that a Board recruitment exercise was underway following Sheriff Anwar's elevation to Sheriff Principal South Strathclyde, Dumfries and Galloway on 1 April 2020. A new Board Member would join the Committee in due course.

2.3 Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the meeting was held via video conference.

3. Minutes of the Meeting

3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2020 were approved. The Committee had agreed not to meet in May due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

4. Action Points and Matters Arising

4.1 There were no outstanding action points from the previous meeting.

4.2 The Chair highlighted discussions from the last meeting of the SCTS Board which had a bearing on matters relating to the People Committee.

5. HRU Business Plan 2020-21 (SCTS/PC/Aug20/08)

5.1 Members reviewed the HRU Business Plan 2020-21. The plan contained 8 main objectives for the year, covering developmental and core service delivery activities, which support the strategic priorities set out in the Corporate Plan and are underpinned by the themes of the People Strategy.

5.2 The Committee were very supportive of the HRU Business Plan and the agreed objectives for 2020-21. They commended the HR Director and HR Team on the good progress that had been made during the course of the COVID-19 pandemic.

6. Education and Learning Unit (ELU) Business Planning (SCTS/PC/Aug20/09)

6.1 Jackie Carter, Head of Digital Education and Learning, presented a paper to the Committee which set out the Education and Learning Units (ELU) revised business plan, with particular focus on the training needs of SCTS employees.

6.2 It was highlighted to members that as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, ELU was presented with an opportunity to develop and implement digital learning transformation within the organisation. The impacts of COVID-19 had re-focussed business planning and resource requirements within ELU, which had identified the need and establishment of a Digital Learning Transformation Team, in order to ensure the changing needs of the organisation continued to be met. This, so far, has included providing ongoing and continued support to the development of a pilot for virtual Summary Trials within Grampian, Highland and Islands (GH&I), expected to be rolled out Sheriffdom wide. Training requirements for staff had also been assessed in order to identify and develop an accessible platform to provide on-line training that meets learner's needs.

6.3 Members were advised, following recent advertisement of a temporary development opportunity, a member of the Digital Services Unit (DSU) would transfer to the ELU team for a period of 6 months. This was a welcomed development for ELU following a period of significant staff changes, which included the loss of a Digital Support Officer, and would provide an opportunity to work collaboratively and strengthen resilience between the business units.

6.4 The Committee raised concerns and sought reassurances following the recent Internal Audit of Learning and Development. Recommendations from the audit had been accepted and would be used to develop and accelerate the digital learning strategy. Members were advised that an audit action plan had been developed to address the recommendations made with oversight from the Executive Team. The audit action plan would be shared with members for information.

ACTION: ELU to share the audit action plan which responds to the recommendations outlined within the Internal Audit Report for Learning and Development.

6.5 The Committee welcomed the update provided in respect of developments and business planning within ELU and commended the ELU Team on the volume of work undertaken to date, which had ensured that the essential training needs of the organisation were continuously met through the use of different training models during the COVID-19 pandemic.

7. Interim Pay Award (SCTS/PC/Aug20/10)

7.1 The Committee were informed that the interim pay award for 2020-21 had been agreed and implemented in June 2020. The interim award had ensured that all SCTS employees received a meaningful financial award in a timely manner, in particular during a time of great uncertainty due to COVID-19. Members were advised that pay negotiations this year had been paused due to the impacts of COVID-19, with further negotiation discussions on the flexibilities element of the pay award scheduled to take place later this financial year.

7.2 The Committee acknowledged the successful joint working between Finance, HR, the PCS Union and the Scottish Government, to implement the interim pay award during lockdown.

8. Attendance Levels – 1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020 (SCTS/PC/Aug20/11)

8.1 The Committee reviewed the sickness absence during the period 1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020. The report identified that sickness absence had increased during 2019-20 in comparison to 2018-19, particularly in relation to long term sickness.

8.2 Members discussed the report and highlighted their concerns in relation to Mental Health related absence, in particular the percentage of absences associated with stress, anxiety, and depression. The Executive highlighted the organisation's continued commitment to raising Mental Health Awareness within the workplace, and the ongoing work underway to strengthen resilience and the launch of the Wellbeing Initiative. It was suggested that further analysis, for future reports, identifying Mental Health absence that was work induced would provide further context on the analysed statistics for absence.

8.3 Members also noted factors to be considered for the year ahead, as a result of COVID-19 and the ongoing restrictions within the SCTS estate. Following the recent lockdown, and associated restrictions on travel and closure of work places, it was highlighted that absence levels for 2020-21 may be more difficult to record and analyse in relation to medical and illness related issues. The Executive advised that absence statistics for 2020-21 were being collated and monitored in relation to both COVID-19 and non COVID-19 related absences, with data available from end of March 2020 to date.

ACTION: The Executive to share analysis on absence for the period of March – August 2020, including a breakdown of COVID and non-COVID related absences.

8.4 Members thanked the Executive for the report and commended the level of detail it contained.

9. Staff Transfers (SCTS/PC/Aug20/11)

9.1 The Committee were updated on the recent transfers of staff to the SCTS, which had taken place on 1 April 2020. The transfers included nine members of staff, four from the Auditor of Court of Session, transferred under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection & Employment) (TUPE), and five to the newly created Parking and Bus Lane Appeals Service, under the Cabinet Office Statement of Practice (COSOP).

9.2 Both transfers had been successful, with all staff transferred under COSOP having already harmonised to SCTS terms and conditions. The Auditor of Court staff, transferred under TUPE, had retained their existing terms and conditions, with further discussions scheduled to take place regarding harmonisation to SCTS terms and conditions.

9.3 A further COSOP transfer, as part of the Tribunals Reform Programme, was also discussed in relation to the expansion of the Social Security Chamber. A People Workstream Project Group were overseeing the transfer process and would provide further updates to the Committee throughout progress. It was anticipated that the transfer would likely take place in 2022 as opposed to 2021.

10. Draft Annual Report to SCTS Board (SCTS/PC/Aug20/12)

10.1 Members reviewed their draft Annual Report to the SCTS Board that summarised the work of the Committee over the period of December 2019 to November 2020 and set out the structure and priorities for the coming year.

10.2 The Committee were content with the draft report, subject to minor amendment. 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.

ACTION: The Executive to update the People Committee draft Annual Report to reflect comments made by members in respect of the priorities for the coming year.

11. Any Other Business

HRU Structure Update

11.1 The Committee received an update on the current HRU Structure. Risks had been identified within the staffing of the Payroll Team, however two new members of agency staff had now been successfully appointed. One of whom was experienced in iTrent, the new system being implemented by SCTS to replace the current Zellis Payroll and People System in October. Members were advised that the HRU structure was currently stable. A review would be carried out later in the year to identify additional resource requirements to ensure adequate support remained in place for the development and implementation of HR and Payroll systems.

11.2 There was no other business discussed.

12. Review/Discussion of Other Papers (SCTS/PC/Aug20/13-20)

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

- HR Policy Update
- HR Risk Register
- HR Measures for SCTS Board
- HR Business Plan 2019-20 Tracker
- Employment Tribunals
- Employment Law
- Internal Audit Report – Learning and Development

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

13. People Committee Performance Appraisals Exercise 2019-20 (SCTS/PC/Aug20/21)

13.1 Members reviewed their assessment of the Committee's performance and the support received from the organisation over the past year.

13.2 Members confirmed they were content with the operation of the Committee and felt that they had continued to function effectively throughout the year. Members agreed the support provided by the Executive was of good quality, with meetings conducted in a professional and supportive manner. Members highlighted that they would continue to provide ongoing support to the Executive and Committee as the organisation returns to full activity post COVID-19 lockdown.

14. Date of the Next Meeting

14.1 The next meeting would be held on 11 November 2020.

Deep Dive Session – COVID-19 and People Policies, Guidance and Support (SCTS/PC/Aug20/Deep Dive)

15.1 The Director HR and Head of Organisation Development provided the Committee with an overview of the recent changes and developments that had been implemented in respect of people policies, guidance and support available to staff, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

15.2 A paper provided a detailed overview of the co-ordination and response arrangements in relation to the COVID-19 outbreak. It outlined the sequence of significant events and the wide ranging response which had been taken by the organisation in response to the outbreak.

Oversight of the organisation's response had been provided by the Strategic Incident Management Team, which had met on over 70 occasions since the outbreak began. The SIM Team had ensured that the situation was kept under review, key information was shared and sound decisions made.

15.3 The outbreak had resulted in the consolidation of essential business into ten hub Sheriff Courts. Non-essential business had been postponed during the lockdown period, in order to minimise travel and support the public health response. An extensive programme of risk assessment and associated works was completed ahead of the re-opening of premises in line with Phase 1 of the Scottish Government's route map out of lockdown. This ensured that court and tribunals premises were safe and capable of observing physical distancing rules. The extensive move to working from home, and the development of a range of new and innovative approaches to allow business to resume, were welcomed by the Committee.

A commitment to all staff was made in order to ensure no staff member or agency worker within SCTS would suffer any detrimental impacts, in respect of their terms and conditions of employment.

15.4 Throughout the pandemic the HR Team worked in partnership with the PCS and Health and Safety colleagues, in order to produce a number of accessible documents and guidance to provide support, assistance and reassurance to staff, at a time where SCTS had to react and respond to a substantial amount of change in significantly short period of time. The documents produced have assisted and supported staff in embracing new ways of working in a very different SCTS environment. The documentation would continue to be reviewed and updated regularly in-line with further guidance released from Scottish Government.

15.5 The Committee welcomed the updates provided and the overview of the extensive work and consideration that had been given in order to ensure that all SCTS staff had remained fully supported throughout such an uncertain time. It was acknowledged that continued consideration would be required going forward as we move into the next stages of the pandemic, with a suggestion from members that the Committee could offer additional assistance in respect of any re-prioritisation of People Committee matters which may be required dependant on the financial impacts on the organisation as a result of COVID-19.

Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service
August 2020