

People Committee minutes

2 February 2023

Details of attendees are provided at the end of the minutes.

1. Introductions and apologies

- 1.1. There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of interests

- 2.1. No declarations of interests were made. Jane McCall noted that ICO staff members would have an interest if any discussions touched on pay and conditions.

3. Matters arising from the previous meeting

Minutes

- 3.1. The minutes of the previous meeting had been approved as a correct record.

Actions

- 3.2. The Committee noted the completed action from the previous meeting. The action regarding pay levels had been in relation to information emerging from pay benchmarking. This work was ongoing and would be provided to the Committee at a future meeting. The Committee agreed that this should feature on the work programme for the Committee and could be removed as an action.

ACTION: Corporate Governance to ensure that pay benchmarking outcomes is included on the Committee's work programme. Due date: 28/2/23

4. Draft High Performance Strategy

- 4.1. Sarah Lal presented a report setting out the new High Performance Strategy for the Committee's review and comment.
- 4.2. The Committee particularly discussed the importance of bringing the strategy to life for all staff and welcomed the blogs which Paul Arnold had been sharing as a key part of this. The Committee also discussed the reaction from staff to the strategy, and the reassurance that the communications had given to staff. This more

personal and relatable approach may also inform the final version of the strategy to make it more accessible, which the Committee welcomed. The Committee also talked about how the strategy would be embedded with managers to ensure that it was clearly understood and applied in all areas; this would have a big impact on the purpose and motivation of staff, which may also have significant impacts on retention.

- 4.3. The Committee discussed how to ensure that strategies, policies and procedures did not slow down decision-making across the organisation. The Committee also discussed the importance of encouraging leadership at all levels of the organisation, rather than leadership being primarily hierarchical, and the importance of empowerment and accountability in delivering this. This latter point would be a focus of future blogs.
- 4.4. The Committee agreed that with Management Board having approved the overarching ICO 25 strategy, it was appropriate for Executive Team to approve this and similar strategies.

5. [People-related risks and opportunities](#)

- 5.1. Sarah Lal presented reports which gave the Committee a deep dive into how capability and capacity opportunities are described and the actions in place to fully exploit them, as well as a high-level overview of all people-related risks and their mitigations.
- 5.2. The Committee discussed the current sickness absence figures, particularly mental health absences. They received assurance on the support that was available for staff and managers in these circumstances, the quality of support provided by managers to their staff in this area, and the work that was ongoing to further develop this support.
- 5.3. The Committee discussed leadership maturity, support, and development across the ICO, which appeared to be a theme that fed into many of the risks and opportunities. The Committee was given an overview on work to further develop leadership skills for all managers to support staff and deliver ICO 25. The Committee highlighted the importance of being supportive to managers but also being clear on expectations of them and suggested that it may be useful to clearly set out where responsibilities lay between line managers and People Services.
- 5.4. The Committee discussed the pull factors which attracted people to public sector jobs and whether there were any ways to give

more clarity on possible salary ranges and the importance of the current pay benchmarking exercise. The Committee received information about the current approach to advertising pay, as well as information about how the ICO promoted the non-pay benefits of the ICO, particularly the pension.

- 5.5. The Committee welcomed the annex on inclusive practices and integration of equality and diversity issues and requested that this be provided on a regular basis to give them assurance in this area. They welcomed the assurance that EDI Board had reviewed this information in detail and did not feel that they demonstrated an overarching concern about equality and diversity but would keep this under regular monitoring.
- 5.6. The Committee highlighted risk themes which they had observed emerging in other organisations, particularly in relation to staff working from the office compared to working from home, especially in relation to mental health concerns and access to opportunities. The Committee received assurance that management was aware of these emerging trends but was not aware of definitive consensus; management was also live to the importance of managers' behaviours to mitigate risks and create opportunities for their staff.

6. Development of the workforce planning framework and methodology

- 6.1. Sarah Lal presented a report which gave the Committee an update on the development of the workforce planning framework and methodology.
- 6.2. The Committee welcomed the proposed approach and discussed how to ensure consistent high quality planning across the whole organisation, as well as the risks to delivery. The Committee received assurance that there was expertise in People Services to deliver this, although capacity within this team was a risk. The approach was currently being trialled in Economic Analysis and People Services, and the wider roll-out to the rest of the organisation would then be carefully managed, including lessons from the trial. Clarity on what was expected of leaders in this process would be vital.
- 6.3. The Committee commented that a key challenge was consistency across the organisation, and it may be useful for the Executive Team to provide direction of expected areas of potential growth, to

ensure the shape of the workforce planning work was in the correct direction. In addition, the Committee suggested that a focus on skills and functions, rather than Directorates, may also assist with this.

7. Profession Mapping

- 7.1. Naheed Mirza joined the meeting to present a report which gave the Committee an update on work on profession mapping across the ICO.
- 7.2. The Committee discussed the risks of professions creating silos in the organisation, rather than creating cross-office collaboration, and the mitigations that could be put in place to prevent this. In this context, the Committee discussed role-modelling, strong leadership in professions, sufficient capacity to devote to embedding and developing professions, and identifying interdependencies across the organisation. The Committee suggested that it may be worthwhile to reduce the scale of the initial pilot.
- 7.3. The Committee also commented on the need to ensure that an emphasis on professions did not create an emphasis on technical skills at the expense of behavioural skills, especially in leadership skills as staff progressed in their careers.
- 7.4. The Committee also discussed the interdependencies between this work and the people management capability development discussed earlier in the meeting, as well as other projects being led by People Services, and asked whether there was sufficient capacity for the team to deliver all of this work. They also commented that there may be limits on the capacity for leaders to engage in all of these workstreams at the same time.

ACTION: Sarah Lal to facilitate Executive Team discussing the prioritisation of work being led by People Services, including professions work and people management capability building, to ensure that there was sufficient capacity to deliver this work, and report back to the Committee on how these pieces of work will be sequenced. Due date: 4/5/23

ACTION: Jen Green and Tracey Waltho to discuss experiences of Head of Profession roles to identify lessons learned. Due date: 31/3/23

8. Organisational design phase 2 – Executive Team roles

- 8.1. Paul Arnold presented a report which gave the Committee information of proposals for phase 2 of organisation design as it relates to ET roles. He explained that in addition to the report he had circulated a supplementary note to the Committee members to provide additional context.
- 8.2. The Committee provided challenge on the size of the proposed Executive Team, the attendant challenges for alignment and coordination in a team of this size. The Committee agreed there were benefits of additional capacity and expertise at executive level, particularly in the context of the current data protection reform, but that any growth should be proportionate and able to be justified. The Committee also commented that it may be challenging to find a candidate with sufficient experience and expertise across the whole remit of the proposed Corporate Resources role.
- 8.3. The Committee recommended that the new Executive Team roles should be considered to be a transitional structure, with the understanding that the structure of the Executive Team will be reviewed at any time that a vacancy emerged in the Team.
- 8.4. The Committee received assurance that the Commissioner and the Executive Team were satisfied that the proposed size of Executive Team was manageable and was required to ensure there was sufficient leadership capacity.
- 8.5. The Committee noted the proposals on posts below Executive level and were assured that any new roles would be assessed to see what, if any, efficiencies or changes could be made to minimise the financial impact.

9. People Committee work programme

- 9.1. The Committee noted a report setting out the Committee's work programme for future meetings.

10. Messages for Management Board

- 10.1. The Committee agreed that the key messages for Management Board were the themes of management and leadership capability and expectations, the focus on delivering organisational priorities rather than team priorities, the current landscape of people risks and opportunities, as well as the level of activity in this area and the capacity available to deliver.

11. Any other business

Senior Independent Director (SID) – time commitments

11.1. Paul Arnold provided the Committee with an update about the number of days that the SID was committing to ICO activities, which was currently well in excess of the contracted expected time commitment of 25 to 30 days. Following discussion with the SID, the Commissioner was proposing to increase the expected time commitment for the SID to 40 days.

11.2. The Committee supported this proposal.

Attendance

Members

Jane McCall (Chair)	Non-Executive Director
Jeannette Lichner	Non-Executive Director
Tracey Waltho	Non-Executive Director

Attendees

Jen Green	Executive Director (Strategic Change and Transformation)
Paul Arnold	Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Operating Officer
Louise Byers	Director of Corporate Planning, Risk & Governance
Naheed Mirza	Head of Organisational Development and Capacity (for item 7)
Sarah Lal	Director of People Services

Secretariat

Chris Braithwaite	Senior Corporate Governance Manager
Fiona Wilcock	Corporate Governance Manager