

People Committee minutes

4 May 2023

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

1. Introductions and apologies

- 1.1. Apologies for absence were received from Jane McCall. Jeannette Lichner chaired the meeting. Nicola Wood attended the meeting to substitute for Jane.
- 1.2. Julia Christie was welcomed to her first meeting as part of the UKRN Next Generation NEDs programme. Introductions took place.

2. Declarations of interests

- 2.1. No declarations of interests were made. John Edwards and the ICO staff members declared interests in the pay and non-pay benefits items (item 5).

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. All actions from previous meetings had been completed.
- 3.3. The Committee received an update on the prioritisation of projects being led by People Services. This had included reducing the number of professions which would be taken forward in the initial phase of the professions work.

4. People-related risks and opportunities

4.1. **Summary of people-related risks and opportunities**

- 4.1.1. Sarah Lal presented a report which gave the Committee a high-level overview of people-related risks and their mitigations.
- 4.1.2. The Committee particularly discussed the industrial relations risk and questioned whether the risk score remained static. The Committee was given assurance that more controls had been put in place since this risk was

raised around 12 months ago, although the current economic circumstances had created new risks. These two factors had effectively netted off. The Committee also discussed the mitigations that were in place and planned for the future, as well as the links to the pay benchmarking work.

- 4.1.3. The Committee also discussed the controls for the compliance culture risk and the enforcement of the policies which were part of this control, and noted the upcoming report to Audit and Risk Committee regarding controls.

4.2. **Deep dive: Leadership Development**

- 4.2.1. Sarah Lal provided the Committee with a presentation which set out the leadership development programme to support ICO25 and facilitate a discussion into current work on leadership capabilities across the organisation.
- 4.2.2. The Committee supported the proposed leadership proposition and provided feedback on the proposed approach based on their experience at various organisations.
- 4.2.3. The feedback included ensuring the programme was directly linked to the ICO 25 change and transformation programme, as well as the importance of ensuring leaders had comfort in leading through ambiguity. The Committee also commented on the importance of strong collective leadership at senior levels to effectively lead teams and manage behaviours that are not aligned to expectations. .
- 4.2.4. The Committee also provided guidance on how to successfully launch leadership development programmes such as this, particularly focusing on the importance of explaining the short-term and long-term benefits of the training to the individual, rather than it being seen solely as a mandatory corporate requirement. The Committee also highlighted the importance of the leadership programme being an ongoing priority, and senior managers modelling both the learning from the training and the need for continuous development.

5. **Employee value proposition (EVP)**

5.1. **EVP overview**

- 5.1.1. Sarah Lal provided the Committee with a presentation which set out the ICO's current EVP.
- 5.1.2. In considering future development of the EVP, the Committee felt it was important to frequently measure employee engagement through targeted pulse surveys, and recommended continuing to consult with new staff members about EVP offers from their previous employers or organisations they applied for roles with. The Committee also highlighted the benefits of emphasising the ICO's mission and continuing to build a strong EDI culture, including the full scope of the ICO's diversity offer as a UK-wide organisation.
- 5.1.3. Sarah Lal thanked the Committee for their feedback, and confirmed that research of potential expansions to the EVP was a priority going forward.

5.2. **Pay benchmarking – outcomes**

- 5.2.1. Sarah Lal provided the Committee with a presentation which set out the draft findings of the recent pay benchmarking exercise, ahead of this being considered by Executive Team to consider the action to take as a result of the benchmarking.
- 5.2.2. The Committee received clarification regarding the scope for flexibility to respond to the benchmarking, including flexibility in specific professions.
- 5.2.3. The Committee discussed the interrelationship between pay and EVP, particularly in terms of raising employee awareness and emphasising benefits such as pension, leave and flexitime, potentially finding a way to identify the equivalent financial value of these benefits.
- 5.2.4. The Committee highlighted the importance of understanding the relationship between retention and recruitment data and pay, as well as the level of internal promotions in the organisation. The Committee also discussed how the information in the report would be shared with staff, once the report was finalised.
- 5.2.5. Sarah Lal informed the Committee that the outcomes of the benchmarking report would be discussed with

Executive Team, and outcomes of this discussion would be reported to the Committee.

5.3. **Review of non-pay staff benefits**

- 5.3.1. Sarah Lal provided the Committee with an overview of the current work to improve staff benefits, including information on cost-of-living support for staff. She also explained that the outcomes of the recent cost-of-living survey would be brought to a future meeting, and provided a comparison of the current benefits in comparison to other regulators.
- 5.3.2. The Committee discussed the cost-of-living support provided to staff in the current economic circumstances, including discussion of the acuteness of the challenges being faced by staff members, especially those at lower levels. The Committee also discussed whether there was more support that the ICO could offer to staff to support them through this time, but noted the restrictions of the pay remit. The Committee commented on the career development offer that the ICO had, particularly in terms of the rate of internal promotions and career banding progression.
- 5.3.3. The Committee also discussed potential indicators of staff struggling in the current circumstances, such as whether there were links between staff selling more leave and having higher sickness absence rates, or links between the staff working overwhelmingly from home and mental health absence rates, or links to performance assessments or grievances.
- 5.3.4. Sarah Lal explained that she had provided assurance to the Committee on this in February and would be bringing another report about sickness absence figures to the next meeting, and would factor these potential indicators into this report.

ACTION: Sarah Lal to submit a report to a future meeting regarding absence rates, including information on potential links between absences, grievances and performance assessments and factors such as selling leave, working from home. Due date: 9/11/23

6. Career banding outcomes and pay data

- 6.1. Sarah Lal presented a report providing information of the outcomes and trends from the October 2022 career banding window.
- 6.2. The Committee discussed the low level of declaration of disabilities and emphasised the importance of maximising declaration rates, which would ensure that the data was as useful as possible. The Committee received assurance that further work would be done to promote the importance of declaring protected characteristics to improve declaration rates, which would include explanation of how the data is used and protected, to encourage declarations.
- 6.3. The Committee also commented that it would be useful for future reports to provide comparators between minoritised groups and the non-minoritised group, rather than just measuring improvement within the minoritised group.
- 6.4. The Committee also asked whether there were measures of intersectionality of multiple protected characteristics. However, due to small sample sizes it was not yet possible to provide information on intersectionality.

7. Annual report – people-related sections

- 7.1. Louise Byers presented a report giving the Committee oversight of the people-related parts of the Annual Report, ahead of the full draft report being considered by Management Board.
- 7.2. The Committee noted the report and would provide comments in writing following the meeting.

8. People Committee work programme

- 8.1. Chris Braithwaite presented a report setting out the Committee's work programme for future meetings.
- 8.2. The Committee noted the report.

9. Messages for Management Board

- 9.1. The Committee agreed that the key messages for Management Board were the discussions on the leadership offer and links to ICO 25, the employee value proposition and work on pay benchmarking, as well as the interlinks between these matters.

10. Any other business

- 10.1. There were no items of other business.

Attendance

Members

Jeannette Lichner	Non-Executive Director
Nicola Wood	Lead Non-Executive Director
Tracey Waltho	Non-Executive Director

Attendees

Jen Green	Executive Director (Strategic Change and Transformation)
John Edwards	Information Commissioner
Louise Byers	Director of Corporate Planning, Risk & Governance
Naheed Mirza	Head of Organisational Development and Capability(for item 4.2)
Sarah Lal	Director of People Services

Secretariat

Chris Braithwaite	Senior Corporate Governance Manager
Fiona Wilcock	Corporate Governance Manager

Observer

Julia Christie	Office of Rail and Road (UKRN Next Generation NEDs programme)
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