

People Committee minutes

9 November 2023

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

1. Introductions and apologies

- 1.1. There were no apologies for absence. John Edwards gave apologies as he would be joining the meeting late.
- 1.2. The Committee welcomed Victoria West, Interim Director of People Services, in Sarah Lal's absence. The Committee also welcomed Ranil Boteju as a new member.

2. Declarations of interests

- 2.1. All ICO staff present declared an interest in the item relating to the pay strategy.

3. Matters arising from the previous meeting

Minutes

- 3.1. The minutes of the previous meeting had been approved as a correct record.
- 3.2. The Committee discussed staff who had progressed multiple career bands in the April to May 2023 window, and received assurance that the Pay Consistency Panel had considered the cases and received assurance about the increases.

Actions

- 3.3. The Committee noted that some items remained outstanding due to Sarah Lal's absence. These would be addressed upon her return.

4. People-related risks and opportunities

4.1. Summary of people-related risks and opportunities

- 4.1.1. Jen Green gave an oral update on the overarching, strategic approach to people issues. She described that three strategies were being developed to achieve objective 4 of the strategic enduring objectives in ICO 25, including a People Strategy, an IT Strategy and an Accommodation Strategy. Due to their interdependence, these have been brought together in the ICO's High Performance Strategy

(HPS) which was developed to bring this work together. We recognise that there is a lot of work required to deliver our HPS objectives. It is also recognised that this can be confusing for staff and may be a significant amount of change to digest at once. Therefore we have the "Doing It Differently" culture programme. This brings together 12 key strands of these strategies to sequence and align the work so that long-term, sustained culture change is achieved.

- 4.1.2. The Committee discussed the focus on doing things differently, and the importance of teams standing down work if it does not align to the objectives ICO 25.
- 4.1.3. Jen Green also presented a report which gave the Committee a high-level overview of people-related risks and their mitigations, noting that it is anticipated that the one red-rated risk will be mitigated by the Doing It Differently programme.
- 4.1.4. The Committee requested that in future, the risk report includes the ratings in the previous two quarters, so that the Committee could identify trends. The Committee also requested information about the path to risks being rated as green (or to an acceptable level within our risk tolerance), noting that a deep dive into the risk register will be presented to the next Management Board meeting.

ACTION: Vikki West and Caroline Robinson to ensure that future people-related risk reports include the risk ratings in the two previous quarters, and paths to green (or to an acceptable level within our risk tolerance). Due date: 1/2/24

4.2. Deep dive: well-being and staff absence

- 4.2.1. Victoria West and Naheed Mirza presented a report providing the Committee with a deep dive into the risks and mitigations associated with staff well-being and absence. The Committee noted that the upcoming People Survey in Quarter 4 and ongoing polls will naturally inform future work in this area.
- 4.2.2. The Committee requested that all analysis of the People Survey results should have an EDI perspective to ensure that we are analysing the information through the lens of EDI.

- 4.2.3. The Committee particularly discussed whether there was any evidence of a link between mental health and working remotely. The Committee was informed that evidence was not available, as office attendance was monitored in totality, but not by team or Directorate. Each team had agreed Ways of Working which has flexibility to be tailored to their needs. There has been an increase in office attendance for collaboration and project work, but knowledge work and report writing tended to be done primarily from home.
- 4.2.4. The Committee discussed the accuracy of absence recording, which is manager-led and therefore assumed to be accurate. The Committee discussed the difficulty of identifying underlying causes of mental health absences; although workload may contribute, it was often not the root cause of such absences. The Committee underlined that the ICO needed to continue to ensure that staff were supported at work during times of personal crisis.
- 4.2.5. The Committee discussed whether there were any EDI trends in sickness absence (as well as any links to other issues, such as probation or performance management) and the benefits of maximising the amount of data available regarding as many EDI characteristics as reasonably possible.

5. [EDI Action Plan update](#)

- 5.1. Naheed Mirza presented a report summarising progress with delivery of the EDI objectives and action plan, along with staff wellbeing actions.
- 5.2. The Committee welcomed the action plan and particularly praised the prominence of the EDI staff networks within the action plan, as they would be vital in sharing insights into lived experience and continually emphasising the importance of EDI to all staff. The Committee welcomed proposals for senior level sponsors for the EDI staff networks, given the potential for this to increase inclusion and awareness of different perspectives. This may also create additional avenues for career developmental relationships, such as mentoring, sponsoring or tailored support. The Committee also noted the benefits of additional mandatory EDI training for senior leaders (including ET and Non-Executive Directors).

- 5.3. The Committee discussed the importance of considering intersectionality when assessing the effects of EDI matters. The Committee suggested there may also be benefits to analysing specific aspects of EDI characteristics (for example, whether each cohort of staff from ethnic minoritised backgrounds were affected differently by policies). The Committee was informed that this should be possible through Workday's functionality, and the People Committee would be provided with a further report about information available for such analysis. The Committee also agreed with the push to maximise the amount of staff declaring their EDI statuses through Workday, and suggested emphasising the benefits to them and to the ICO in declaring this information. Information on these matters would be provided at the Committee's next review of the EDI action plan.

ACTION: Vikki West and Naheed Mirza to provide the Committee with a further report on the status of EDI disclosures linked to the work in our EDI action plan, to include reference to how we may extend our reporting to include other EDI categories that we don't currently report on, such as socio-economic groups. Due date: 2/5/24

- 5.4. The Committee also suggested the creation of EDI targets in relation to recruitment activities, including the EDI targets for the number of candidates applying and for the composition of interview panels.
- 5.5. The Committee thanked Naheed and her team for the excellent work in development of the action plan and delivery to date.

6. [People-related Key Performance Indicators](#)

- 6.1. Margaret Wilson-Savage and David McKeever presented a report setting out people-related KPIs and metrics. The Committee noted that the work is evolving and there was still progress to be made in improving quality of data metrics.
- 6.2. The Committee discussed which metrics would be helpful in achieving their objectives, noting the importance of providing EDI analysis of all figures. The Committee requested that the People Survey data is added to the report, including information from the regular pulse surveys.
- 6.3. The Committee also requested that both data and narrative were provided, to give insight into why the figures are as reported, and what steps may be taken to improve them. The Committee also

suggested inclusion of information from exit interviews as part of the narrative provided, which may identify themes which are not evident from data. The Committee also commented that there may be a distinction between diversity and inclusion in some instances, and suggested that it may be useful to distinguish between this in reporting. For example, some measures may demonstrate good diversity but not necessarily demonstrate good inclusion.

- 6.4. The Committee also requested that in future reports the links between the KPIs and the various strategies are more explicit. The Committee was particularly interested to receive further information from the People Services team on the areas which are of most concern as performance progresses.

ACTION: Vikki West to ensure future People-related KPI reports reflect the Committee's comments. Due date: 1/2/24

7. [ICO pay strategy](#)

- 7.1. Mark Graves presented a report summarising the EDI implications of the pay review process, including career banding, promotions and overall pay increases.
- 7.2. The Committee provided guidance on the future direction of the strategy, emphasising the importance of focusing the strategy on the desired ICO 25 outcomes, to ensure that it would be effective in attracting and retaining the right quality of staff to achieve these. The Committee highlighted that there were some key skill areas that were highly valued in the market, and alternative approaches to reward in these areas may need to be considered. The Committee commented that it may be useful to make a distinction between "equal" and "fair" in these circumstances.
- 7.3. The Committee also suggested reviewing the pay offer of organisations the ICO was "competing" against for staff to ensure that market forces were accounted for, particularly for highly valued skills. The Committee suggested it will be important to draw the links between pay measures and key variables such as attraction and turnover or retention.
- 7.4. The Committee commented on the potential to gather information from exit interviews or successful applicants who chose not to join the ICO, to understand the degree to which pay was a motivator in their decisions.

- 7.5. The Committee discussed the potential benefits of spot awards and annual bonuses to reward high performance, whilst recognising the potential adverse consequences of individual bonuses and incentives. The Committee also highlighted the importance of continuing with a strong non-pay offer to attract and retain high quality staff.
- 7.6. The Committee thought the work to date on the strategy provided good foundations, and urged boldness in continuing development of the strategy to ensure that key outcomes are delivered. Jen Green noted that while there is Executive Team agreement with the need to be bold, we do need to balance the requirements across all staff groups. The Committee agreed that it would continue to receive updates on the development of this work at the appropriate time.

ACTION: Vikki West and Mark Graves to bring a further report to the Committee on development of the pay strategy at the next appropriate stage. Due date: update on date for next report to be provided by 1/2/24; date for substantive next report TBC.

John Edwards joined the meeting.

8. [Workforce Plan](#)

- 8.1. Jen Green provided an oral update on the Workforce Plan. The approach has been refreshed to provide horizontal alignment across the ICO, with three key elements of a framework.
- 8.2. A strategic workforce plan would consider internal and external drivers which will shape the organisation, as well as how resources can be reallocated to prepare for the future. The medium-term plan will consider activities driven by Directors in the next 12-18 months and will take account of the current headcount and known changes. An immediate resource allocation plan will help the Establishment Committee to prioritise requests for recruitment, backfilling of posts, and filling gaps.
- 8.3. The Committee noted that the framework will be in place by February and that a further update will be brought to the February meeting.

ACTION: Corporate Governance to update the work programme to include an update on the Workforce Plan at the February meeting. Due date: 16/11/23

- 8.4. The Committee discussed the need for the ICO to invest to save, which will be driven by digital transformation, and to analyse skills gaps rather than recruiting like-for-like posts which become available.
- 8.5. The Committee agreed that the new approach to workforce planning addressed a number of concerns and previous feedback from the Committee, and aligned with the desired approach.

9. [People Committee work programme](#)

- 9.1. Louise Byers presented a report setting out the Committee's work programme for future meetings.
- 9.2. The Committee noted that additional items would be added as a result of discussions at this meeting, including on the pay strategy, the overarching culture programme and workforce development.
- 9.3. The Committee requested the work programme includes more detail about the type of conversation or input which is envisaged for each of item. The Committee's preference was to prioritise issues for advice and question from Committee members, rather than updates.

ACTION: Corporate Governance to work with People Services to update the purpose of future agenda items to include the types of conversation and input envisaged from People Committee attendees. Due date: 1/2/24

ACTION: Andy Laing and Vikki West to bring an overview of the Doing it Differently programme to the Committee, including success measures. Due date: 1/2/24

- 9.4. The Committee also discussed undertaking an effectiveness review of their work, along the lines of the "light touch" review recently successfully undertaken by the Audit and Risk Committee.

ACTION: Corporate Governance to bring a report on the Committee's effectiveness, based on the questionnaire circulated to Audit and Risk Committee members. Due date: 1/2/24

10. [Any other business](#)

- 10.1. The Committee discussed the ongoing recruitment process for an independent member of the People Committee (similar to that in place for the Audit and Risk Committee and the Regulatory

Committee), noting that advertisements need to be as inclusive as possible. Interviews were expected to take place in early 2024.

- 10.2. The Committee discussed the background papers.

Policies

- 10.3. The Committee agreed that the policies were of very high quality. The Committee commented that the policies were thoughtful, detailed and bespoke to the ICO.

Nolan Principles

- 10.4. The Committee asked whether reference was made to the Nolan Principles in recruitment offer letters and it was confirmed that this was not the case.

ACTION: Vikki West to consider including reference to the Nolan principles in offer letters to new staff. Due date: 1/2/24

- 10.5. The Committee asked about the number of previous conflicts of interests and was informed that there have been occasions when there could have been a perception of conflict. The Committee discussed whether there should be a more proactive process for declaring potential conflicts of interest, noting that the Audit and Risk Committee has asked for future internal audit work to consider how well consideration of conflicts of interests was embedded with all ICO staff.
- 10.6. The Committee also discussed the social media policy, which sets out expected standards for all staff. The Committee agreed that people should be able to express opinions, but need to bear in mind any potential reputational impact on the ICO when doing so.

11. Messages for Management Board

- 11.1. The Committee agreed that the key messages for Management Board were:
- The overarching Doing It Differently programme (and the different strands of work included) which links to ICO 25. The Committee agrees that this is a cohesive plan.
 - The Committee looked in detail at staff wellbeing and the EDI plan.
 - The Committee discussed the pay strategy and will consider this area again once the strategy has been further developed.

Attendance

Members

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

Attendees

Louise Byers	Director of Risk & Governance
Mark Graves	Head of Reward and Performance (for item 7)
Jen Green	Executive Director, Strategy and Resources
David McKeever	Senior Data Analyst (for item 6)
Naheed Mirza	Head of Organisational Development and Capability (for items 4.2 and 5)
Fiona Simkiss	Private Secretary to Jen Green
Victoria West	Interim Director of People Services
Margaret Wilson-Savage	Group Manager, People and Strategy (for item 6)

Secretariat

Chris Braithwaite	Corporate Governance Manager
Fiona Wilcock	Corporate Governance Officer

Observer

Julia Christie	Next-Generation NEDs programme
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