

Draft Report

SCRUTINY PROGRAMME 2014/15 – HUMAN RESOURCES: PART 1: ADVISORY AND TRANSACTIONAL SERVICES & PART 2: SUCCESSION PLANNING – FINAL REPORT

Recommendations

1. The committee is asked to approve the recommendations to the Authority as set out in paragraph 3 of this report.

Scrutiny Overview

2. As part of the Scrutiny Work Programme 2014/15 discussed at the Governance, Audit & Scrutiny Committee of 9 June 2014, it was agreed Human Resources would be a topic for scrutiny by the Committee. A scoping discussion took place at the Governance, Audit & Scrutiny Committee of 15 September 2014 and it was agreed two aspects should be scrutinised in more detail:
 - i) The Firewatch HR IT system
 - ii) Succession planning, including equality of opportunity

Scrutiny Outcomes and Recommendations

3. Scrutiny information was garnered from two presentations to the GAS Committee and accompanying public discussions with members of the HFRS management team present. Guidance was received that dialogue outside such fora would be outwith desirable parameters of transparent scrutiny.

The scrutiny provided assurance that HFRS is committed to modernising systems and developing staff to underpin service redesign and improve outcomes. There are a number of areas however, which HFA could consider with a view to further improving or bringing forward anticipated benefits.

3.1 Firewatch IT system

The HR module of the Firewatch IT system was purchased in 2012 and at the start of February 2015 is not yet accurately populated. Considerable effort has however been put into data validation recently. A requirement for a pre-planned progress review to HFA after all such project-based capital expenditure would flag up implementation issues in a more timely manner and provide assurance new assets are demonstrably providing value for money.

A review of the HR module and the process of implementation is recommended before additional modules are purchased.

3.2 Succession planning

HFRS management team should be commended on a thorough and proactive approach to succession planning. Development opportunities are available, there is comprehensive profiling and the integration of the coaching/mentoring programme follows principles of good practice. An evaluation of this programme is planned by managers in the autumn. The HFA may wish to receive this evaluation.

3.3 Expert HR advice

Contrary to the comments above on succession planning, it would appear a more ad hoc approach has been taken to secure temporary measures to receive expert HR advice from South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service. Any permanent move away from in-house provision of expert HR advice may be considered sufficiently strategic that the HFA, recognising the

organisation is a people-based service with 1100 employees, may wish to consider how to best meet its expert HR needs at a full meeting.

In such a large employer, it would generally be considered best practice to assess a range of potential providers to identify the best skills match and value for money offer. The HFA may like to also consider requesting, in due course, a review of the temporary arrangement, its scope (particularly with regard to HR strategy setting) and any future potential conflicts of interest.

3.4 Equality of opportunity

No barriers to equality of opportunity came to light. However as stated above information was only received from members of the senior management team, and that does not include any females or people of black or minority ethnic background. If HFRS as a major employer is to be reflective of the population of the area it serves at all levels, the HFA may wish to monitor progress in this area.

The current People Strategy document aims for “a positive approach to equality and diversity”. When the document is updated it is recommended this be more robustly phrased to state clearly there is equality of opportunity to all no matter what gender, race, religion, marital status etc.

3.5 Recruitment moratorium

It was reported that the nine year moratorium on recruitment of whole-time uniformed personnel is starting to impact on the number of people interested in / suitable for further career progression. The HFA may wish to consider setting triggers and timescales for when reviews should be held of continuing indefinitely the moratorium.

3.6 People Strategy 2020 Document

This is the most current HR strategy document and as such we have read it with reference to the topics scrutinised. HFRS management consider the document in need of revision and updating and as such we have not reviewed it in depth. One omission (pertinent to equality of opportunity) we note for future reference for the corporate management team is a commitment to a safe workplace environment eg. recognition that whistle-blowing is a valid and constructive form of feedback, zero tolerance of bullying.

4. Strategic Plan Compatibility

Delivery of the strategic plan rests entirely upon the service workforce, at all levels, working with maximum commitment.

5. Financial/Resource/Value For Money Implications

No financial or quantifiable information is submitted with this report. However, points 3.1 - 3.5 above have the potential to have implications in these areas.

6. Corporate Risk Management Implications

None arising directly at this time.

7. Legal Implications

None arising directly at this time.

8. Health and Safety Implications

None arising directly at this time.

CHAIRPERSON