Human Resources Strategy

Scottish Information Commissioner

Contents

Glossary and abbreviations

Term used	Explanation
The Commissioner	The Scottish Information Commissioner
HR	Human Resources

Introduction

1. This document sets out the Commissioner's vision of how the organisation manages HR in support of their strategic aims:

> **The Strategic Plan 2020-24 states that the Commissioner's office will:**
>
> 1. increase knowledge and understanding of FOI rights
> 2. enable and support high standards of FOI policy and practice
> 3. develop Scottish public sector culture and practice where the proactive disclosure of information is routine and valued
> 4. influence and support the development and strengthening of Scottish FOI law and practice
> 5. contribute to Scotland being respected as a world-leader in openness and transparency
> 6. be recognised as an organisation of independent and trusted experts that is run efficiently, governed effectively and is open and transparent

2. The HR Strategy sets out what the Commissioner aims to achieve with, and for, staff at all levels and in doing so provides a framework for the focus and setting of operational objectives and activity to develop people and talent.

3. The development areas identified in this document form the basis of an activity list, which will be prioritised and delivered through the operational plan in each financial year.

Vision

4. Freedom of Information law sits at the heart of what we do: staff sit at the heart of who we are and how we deliver what we do.

5. The Commissioner is committed to their staff and to providing them with a challenging but motivating and enjoyable work setting. The Commissioner seeks to challenge and support every individual to achieve their personal goals and organisational objectives in an environment of mutual openness, consideration and co-operation.

6. The Commissioner and the Senior Management Team will do this through the organisation's HR systems and practices, under the strategic themes of:

    *   leadership

    *   developing and managing talent

    *   promoting workplace diversity and equality

    *   active and effective workforce and resource planning

    *   communication - talking and listening to each other

    *   performance management and accountability

Human Resources – Strategic Themes

Leadership

7. We aim to inspire and motivate the organisation to achieve excellence and push the boundaries. We want to create an environment in which we are open to well-managed risk.

8. We recognise the need for strategy and vision which defines who we are as an organisational team and where we are going, but also focus on operational management. We manage our operational objectives, plans and targets which have explicit links to strategic and operational plans. To achieve our leadership aims we:

    - ensure our leaders have the skills, knowledge and experience to be excellent leaders and managers

    - expect our leaders to have clear objectives that can be defined and measured to show effective leadership

    - lead by example

    - review, monitor and report on our achievements positively, critically and fairly, learning from practice, and recognising and acknowledging success

Developing and managing talent

9. We have talented teams and individuals.   Our aim is to develop the individual and our teams so they contribute to the achievement of both team and personal aims and feel empowered to do so.   As an organisation we will create opportunities to enable learning and development, working in partnership with staff at all levels. We aim to have a workforce whose expertise is recognised and acknowledged widely.

10. We will provide training to a high standard and seize opportunities to do what Is possible with little resource and in doing so we aim to:

    - ensure we have a comprehensive learning and development plan that incorporates:

        o individual learning and development (L and D) objectives from personal development plans (which include professional CPD),

        o team development

        o management development

        o statutory and mandatory annual training

        o other organisation-wide training (as appropriate)

- define both performance and quality standards and targets, and ensure staff have the skills to deliver them and measure against them.

- ensure we have a consistent approach to training and induction of new staff or staff changing roles within the organisation.

- monitor the effectiveness of L and D activity.

11. To achieve our L and D aims we need to:

- understand what our L and D needs are at both individual and team level, for example, through such approaches as an organisation-wide training needs analysis and/ or skills audit to identify strengths and areas for development.

- continue to develop and refine our approach to setting performance and quality standards and targets and to ensuring staff have the skills to deliver them and measure against them

- ensure our communications strategy includes the sharing and dissemination of good practice and learning.

Promoting workplace diversity and equality

12. We aim to promote diversity and equality actively in everything we do, say and publish, and be recognised for our culture and commitment to the dignity of the individual and best HR practice.

13. In line with the C1 Equality Policy, the Commissioner's workplace and practices will be accessible, flexible, fair and inclusive. The diversity, skills, backgrounds and experience of their staff are valued by the Commissioner who will seek to enable them to perform to their best in a welcoming and supportive environment.

14. All of the Commissioner's staff are entitled to be treated with respect and dignity and the Commissioner will not tolerate any less favourable treatment of any person on the grounds of the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010 and which are:

- age

- disability

- gender reassignment

- marital or civil partnership status

- pregnancy or maternity

- race (which includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins)

- religion or belief

- sex

- sexual orientation

15. We are proud of our inclusive work place culture which is reflected in our HR policies and procedures and approach. We aim to foster a culture of equality which recognises the positive contribution that each individual can make and we can demonstrate recognised good practice in critical areas such as recruitment and in providing equalities training.

16. To achieve our diversity and equality aims for HR we:

- review and update as needed the systems (including policies and procedures) by which we manage HR, to ensure we give a positive message about how we promote and deliver diversity and equality

- ensure that all strategic decisions, and policies impacting HR are equality impact assessed, where required

- review the systems in place for monitoring, reporting on and promoting equality and diversity to ensure they are proactive rather than reactive.

Workforce and resource planning

17. We aim to monitor and plan resources actively, embedding a risk-based approach to forward planning and contingency management.

18. We monitor and plan HR in a structured, forward-looking way. We ensure we are well-informed by taking into account projections of business volumes, budgets, contingencies and the need for business continuity. As part of this approach we:

- review staffing structures and levels regularly in light of current and forecast workloads bearing in mind the budget restrictions imposed on us by the SPCB and that the level of allocated funding is not totally within our control.

- have an effective management reporting system to enable the SMT to monitor and review key workforce statistics such as staff in post (headcount and FTE), absence and sickness levels and staff turnover

- have contingency plans for business continuity

- review the Employee Handbook and HR policies annually to ensure they remain fit for purpose and compliant with legislation

- take a risk-based approach that ensures we have in place adequate arrangements to mitigate the risk arising from funding arrangements taking account of the relationships with external stakeholders, the size and make up of our work-force and our ability to resource statutory, mandatory and strategically important functions

- ensure our approach automatically considers the impact of decisions, policies and business development on human resources and workloads.

Workforce Plan

19. Following the audit of the Annual Report 2020-21, the auditor recommended that the Commissioner should develop a formal stand-alone Workforce Plan, in addition to the work

force planning that is undertaken under the HRS. The auditor was of the view that this may assist in the Commissioner in delivering their functions over the medium to long term. A project relating to the development of a Workforce Plan this was included in the Operational Plan 2022-23, with the aim of such a plan being in place from 2023-24. The auditor repeated this recommendation following the audit of the Annual Report 2021-22.

20. Following the implementation project in 2022-23, a Workforce Plan is due to be put in place in 2023-24 to help to:

- monitor and plan resources

- align the needs and priorities of our organisation as regards its workforce

- meet statutory and service requirements

- as far as possible, reduce costs by helping management to anticipate shortages or surpluses of human resources

- provide a basis for planning employee development

- assist the overall business planning process

- take account of relevant equality and diversity matters in future growth and strategic plans

21. The Workforce Plan will take account of the numbers of employees and the kinds of skills and training needed to achieve the Strategic Plan objectives. As our budget planning is carried out on an annual basis, it is difficult to plan long term for workforce variations. However, it would be appropriate for the Workforce Plan to align with the time period of the Strategic Plan and, whenever the Strategic Plan is reviewed, the Workforce Plan should also be reviewed and updated.

22. The impact of any extension or relaxation of exclusions or exemptions of FOI law will also need to be taken into account in the Workforce Plan so that human resources requirements can be reviewed.

Communication – talking and listening to each other

23. We aim to work in an organisation where regular, open and constructive communication is used and encouraged and embed this in our policies and practices where possible. We will listen with empathy and speak with respect, encourage openness and try to consult with the whole organisation at the appropriate time and in the appropriate way on a range of issues that affect us.

24. We have quarterly All Staff Meetings where updates from each department are provided, short training sessions can take place and any members of staff can ask the Senior Management Team (SMT) questions. Each team takes it in turn to chair the meeting, there is a standing agenda which can be added to and minutes are prepared and circulated to all staff following the meeting.

25. The agendas, the agreed minutes of SMT meetings and any related Committee reports are published on the Commissioner's website, redacted as appropriate in line with data protection requirements or in line with exemptions that would apply to the withholding of

information under freedom of information legislation. All members of staff also have access to these minutes and related papers in our records management system.

Performance management and accountability

26. We aim to be in a position where we set all staff and managers challenging but realistic objectives, derived from personal and corporate aims, which contribute demonstrably to the success of the organisation.

27. We have a proportionate and effective performance management system which covers:

- what the business is trying to achieve

- individuals' roles in helping the business achieve its goals

- the skill and competencies individuals need to fulfil their role

- the standards of performance required

- how individuals can develop their performance and contribute to development of the organisation

- how individuals are doing

- identifying when there are performance problems and what to do about them.

28. We have robust staff governance and management policies and systems in place that ensure the performance and development framework is applied consistently and to all levels in the organisation.

29. To achieve our HR performance management aims, we will:

- regularly review the performance and development framework, monitor and report on outcomes

- ensure we have the competencies to do our jobs efficiently, effectively and economically

- encourage and try to ensure every individual is able to dedicate time and resource to operating the performance and development framework to the standards required

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