

8 July 2014

HR UPDATE

Purpose

1. This paper is being presented to update the Board on current strategic HR issues.

Corporate HR matters

Pay 2014 - 2015

2. Treasury Pay Guidance has been received and the HRSS are engaging with the unions on the preparation of the remit. Pay remit options will be presented to the main FC Board before being submitted for ministerial approval.

Pension changes 2015

3. Work is underway to prepare for the 2015 pension arrangements. Plans include the development of pension update workshops to be delivered to staff via the Country HR teams during Autumn/Winter 2014.

Payroll System Review

4. The current Payroll system is not compliant with the 2015 pension interface. A central Working Group set up by the HRSS has been established to review and recommend actions to introduce a new payroll system by April 2015. The Working Group will ensure that the new system will support any future changes to the Forestry Commission structure.

Facility Time

5. The new Facility Time arrangements were introduced in April 2014 and take into account the principles of the Cabinet Office Central Framework.

Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Leave

6. In April 2014, the HRMB agreed that Public/Privilege/Additional (PPA)s should accrue during maternity, paternity and adoption leave to ensure compliance with statutory legislation.

This decision was taken in response to a 2008 HR Directors' Bulletin, which was only recently brought to the FC's attention. The Bulletin highlighted amendments to the Sex Discrimination Act in April 2008 stating that employees on maternity/paternity and adoption leave should benefit from all their contractual terms (excluding remuneration) throughout the whole of their leave. Benchmarking against seven other Government Departments showed that they all allowed accrual of PPAs in this situation.

The HRMB agreed that from now on staff will be required to use any accrued PPAs prior to their return from leave as this would be less disruptive for the business.

Given that these changes should have been implemented in 2008, the HRMB agreed that payment for those affected should be backdated to 2008 and that those currently on leave should be given the option of taking the PPAs or being paid for them. The estimated cost of paying the backdated accrued leave for England is £58,420.

FC Values

7. The refreshed FC Values have been launched. Posters will be sent to all cost centres and a personal leaflet issued to all members of staff in due course.

Recruitment

8. A set of e-learning modules on recruitment will be launched in the next few weeks which will provide refresher training for experienced interviewers as well as guidance and support for staff applying for jobs.

FCE HR Matters

Competency Framework

9. The Civil Service Competency Framework was launched at the beginning of April and training has been rolled out across England by L&D and your HR Team. The final wash-up sessions for anyone that missed the training will be concluded by 22 July and smaller bespoke sessions are being handled locally where requested.

Further work is being carried out on how we can improve the way we use the framework to draw up person specifications for recruitment. Our experience to date has confirmed that we should select no more than six competencies for any one post, otherwise the application and recruitment process becomes too onerous.

WPEP

10. The team are continuing to support the work of the programme. Recent activity has included:

- FEE Plus, supporting the role of the Staff Engagement Workshops and supporting the recruitment of three new senior posts;
- EU Payments, including engagement with HR colleagues in RPA, NE & Defra via the HR Workstream and linkages with our own HRSS colleagues;
- Work on National Office scenarios via the National Office workstream and contribution to the SLA.

Business Strategy Working Group (BSWG)

11. Following an initial joint paper to the BSWG at the end of April from Director HR and the HRPB - England, the business case to transfer the resourcing service from the HRSS into the Countries is progressing. The business case needs to be agreed by FC Scotland, FR & Central Service and FC England before it can be formally made to the BSWG.

Volunteers

12. HR has been asked to provide support for FEE with regards to the regulations and processes surrounding disclosure checks for those working with vulnerable adults and/or children. This work originated from an audit and HR England and colleagues in HR Shared Services have been working on this to support the work of Helen Conor Walton. This is proving to be a fairly complex piece of work and clarity is currently being sought from the Disclosure and Barring Service around the regulations governing disclosure checks for volunteers.

Review of Casework Process in England

13. The HR Team is currently reviewing how the management of sickness absence performance, discipline and grievance can be improved from an England perspective. This piece of work will involve HR colleagues in both the Country and the HR Shared services.

Postfilling

14. The issues arising from both our last Staff Survey and the survey undertaken on behalf of HR by FR over the perceived lack of fairness and transparency our staff have over our post filling procedures is being covered in a separate paper the Board.

Risk Assessment

15. Risks identified as a result of this paper -

- Not replacing the payroll system will mean the FC is unable to interface with, and therefore process correctly, the 2015 pension changes i.e. the payroll system will not be fit for purpose
- Failure to process PPAs as outlined above will mean that the FC is not compliant with the wider civil service and therefore vulnerable to discrimination claims;
- The ongoing delays over decisions re EU payments and the impact on staff affected will impact on staff morale;
- There is a current cost and inefficiency issue in the way that volunteers are managed around disclosure checks until current arrangement are clarified and streamlined.

Case Management Information

16. A table showing the current break down of cases being managed is shown in Annex 1.

Equality Impact Assessment

17. Not required for this paper.

Communications

18. The Board is asked to communicate the key messages from this paper through their managers.

Recommendations

19. The Board is asked to note the contents of this paper.

Sarah England
HR Business Partner - England
2 July 2014

Annex 1

HR Case Management figures

Data on number of cases being managed via Case Manager/HR Operations Managers as at end of April 2014:

Issue	Number of Cases
Grievance	1
Disciplinary	0
Performance	4
Compulsory Redundancy	0
Persistent Short-term Sickness	4
Long-term Sickness (in excess of six months)	5
DDA adjustments at work required	0