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| HIGH LIFE HIGHLAND  REPORT TO BOARD OF DIRECTORS  27 August 2020 | AGENDA ITEM REPORT No HLH /20 |

## **HUMAN RESOURCES - Report by Chief Executive**

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| **Summary**  The purpose of this report is to update Directors on Human Resources activity for the period April to June 2020 which includes information relating to absence, disciplinary and grievance issues during this period.  It is recommended that Directors:   1. note and comment on the content of the quarterly HR report including the update on the staffing establishment and attendance management and union engagement; 2. note and comment on the content of the HR Covid-19 update including details of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, Status Review Group and Staff Consultation; and 3. note and comment on HLH’s attainment of the Armed Forces ERS Gold Award |

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| **1.** | **Business Plan Contribution** |
| 1.1 | This report supports the highlighted Business Outcomes from the High Life Highland (HLH) Business Plan:   1. Sustain a high standard of health and safety, and environmental performance 2. **Implement the Service Delivery Contract with THC** 3. **Improving customer engagement and satisfaction** 4. **Improving staff engagement and satisfaction** 5. **Enhance the positive charity image** 6. Be a trusted and effective partner 7. Achieve sustainable growth across the organisation 8. Develop health and wellbeing across Highland communities 9. **Develop and promote the High Life brand** |
| **2.** | **Background** |
| 2.1 | The Human Resources (HR) report is a summary of HR activity in the preceding quarter, offering an update on current staff numbers along with any change since previous reports. There is also an outline of the absence levels (which are sub-sectioned into short and long-term absence in this report); activity relating to any disciplinary, grievance and harassment issues; and an employee relations update. |
| 2.2 | Board members will be aware that the COVID-19 pandemic arrived in the UK just prior to the quarter featured in this report. The impact of COVID-19 on the information highlighted in Section 3 of this report (Q1-2020/21) is significant on the basis that the vast majority of staff were furloughed throughout this quarter. |
| **3.**  3.1  3.1.1 | **Human Resources Report: April-June 2020**  Staff Establishment Numbers  There has been no change to the establishment for the period in full-time equivalents (FTE), as follows:  Establishment at end of **Quarter 4 2019/20** (Jan 20 to Mar 20) = **703.95**  Establishment at end of **Quarter 1** **2020/21** (Apr 20 to Jun 20) = **703.95** |
| 3.2 | Attendance management |
| 3.2.1 | Reports show absence levels split between short-term absence (˂10 consecutive working days) and long-term absence (>10 consecutive working days). |
| 3.2.2 | The short-term absence rate % up to the end of Quarter 1 were as follows:   |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **%**  **Short term Absence Rates** | **Quarter 1**  **(Apr–Jun)** | **Quarter 2**  **(Jul–Sep)** | **Quarter 3**  **(Oct–Dec)** | **Quarter 4**  **(Jan–Mar)** | | **2018/19** | 0.99% | 0.99% | 1.32% | 1.42% | | **2019/20** | 0.90% | 1.00% | 1.58% | 1.33% | | **2020/21** | 0.01% |  |  |  | |
| 3.2.3 | Quarter 1 has shown a decrease of 1.32% in the short-term absence rate compared to Quarter 4 of 2019/20 but will obviously be influenced by the level of staff placed on furlough leave.  The long term absence rate % up to the end of Quarter 1 was as follows:   |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **%**  **Long term Absence Rates** | **Quarter 1**  **(Apr–Jun)** | **Quarter 2**  **(Jul–Sep)** | **Quarter 3**  **(Oct–Dec)** | **Quarter 4**  **(Jan–Mar)** | | **2018/19** | 2.12% | 2.37% | 2.70% | 2.73% | | **2019/20** | 3.37% | 2.55% | 1.27% | 1.64% | | **2020/21** | 0.05% |  |  |  | |
| 3.2.4  3.2.5  3.2.6  3.2.7 | Quarter 1 has shown a decrease of 1.59% in the long-term absence rate compared to Quarter 4 of 2019/20 but will obviously be influenced by the level of staff placed on furlough leave.    There was 1 long-term absence within the quarter (21 in Q4) which carried forward into Q2 2020/21.  At the beginning of April, a decision was taken to place all staff who had been on long term sick leave at the end of Quarter 4 and place them on furlough leave. Therefore, only one long term absence was recorded for a staff member returning to work in Quarter 1. As staff gradually return to work we would anticipate an increase in both the long and short-term absences recorded over the coming months.  There were no reported Covid-19 related absences during this quarter. |
| 3.2.8 | The average sick days per employee up to the end of Quarter 1 were as follows:   |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **Average sick days per employee** | **Quarter 1**  **(Apr–Jun)** | **Quarter 2**  **(Jul–Sep)** | **Quarter 3**  **(Oct–Dec)** | **Quarter 4**  **(Jan–Mar)** | | **2017/18** | 2.30 | 2.17 | 2.39 | 2.53 | | **2018/19** | 2.02 | 2.18 | 2.45 | 2.57 | | **2019/20** | 2.82 | 2.34 | 1.74 | 1.81 | | **2020/21** | 0.04 |  |  |  | |
| 3.2.9 | The average sick days/FTE per employee has shown a decrease of 1.77% days compared to Quarter 4 of 2019/20. |
| 3.2.10  3.2.11 | As outlined in previous reports, HR continues to work closely with all managers and employees to find opportunities to encourage earlier returns to work. The current COVID-19 situation has meant that a large proportion of staff remain on furlough leave, despite this, managers have remained committed to keeping in contact with all staff, regularly checking in on their health and wellbeing and highlighting to the HR Manager any concerns they have regarding staff health and wellbeing during this time.  Two staff were identified as requiring ongoing welfare support throughout the lockdown/furlough period. Regular contact measures were set up and remain in place to date. |
| 3.3  3.3.1 | Staff Turnover  Resignations in Quarter 1 as a percentage of the number of posts and resignations was 0.62% equating to an average of 2.5 resignations a month across the whole organisation. |
| 3.3.2 | Staff turnover remains in a ‘**green**’ RAG-rated status in terms of the Charity’s performance reporting and therefore does not present any current ongoing concerns for HLH. |
| 3.4  3.4.1  3.5  3.5.1  3.6  3.6.1 | Use of the charity disciplinary processes  There were no issues considered under the Charity’s disciplinary process in Q1-2020/21.  Use of the charity grievance processes  There was one new matter received under the charity’s grievance procedure in Q1-2020/21. Due to the current COVID-19 situation, and with the consent of the employee who submitted the grievance, the submission is currently on hold until all parties can participate in a hearing.  Harassment  There were no harassment issues raised during Q1-2020/21. |
| 3.7  3.7.1  3.7.2 | Employee relations  The Charity has engaged with the four Trade Unions (TUs) representing members within the organisation, namely Unison, Unite, GMB and EIS. The Charity deals with the TUs formally through the Joint Consultation Forum (JCF) which normally meets quarterly. Due to the current COVID-19 situation the meeting due to take place in June was cancelled.  However, HLH has continued to consult and update all four unions throughout Quarter 1; including:   1. The successful negotiation of a Collective Agreement between HLH and Unison, Unite and GMB for the proposed changes to contracts, necessitated by the COVID-19 situation and Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS); 2. The provision of regular updates regarding the changes to the Job Retention Scheme and reduction in payments to all staff on furlough leave; 3. Notification of changes to the payment of relief staff and their removal from the CJRS at the end of July; 4. Details of the review process for contract queries and recruitment process during this time through the Status Review Group; and 5. Responding to individual and group queries relating to returning to work and health and safety concerns raised by union members. |
| 3.7.3 | In addition, the above Trade Unions are invited to be represented on the staff Health and Safety Committee. |
| 3.7.4 | Management and representatives of HR also discuss with the Trade Unions individual issues as and when required. |
| **4.** | **COVID-19** |
| 4.1 | **Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CRJS)** |
| 4.1.1 | Following the Government’s announcement of full lockdown on 22 March 2020, the Chancellor announced the introduction of the CRJS for an initial period from 23 March 2020 to 31 May 2020. Therefore, following the closure of all HLH facilities a decision was taken to maximise HLH’s utilisation of the CJRS as far as practicable and in line with the scheme guidelines. |
| 4.1.2 | A collective agreement was negotiated with the unions whereby staff that were placed on furlough leave would receive 100% of their average salaries, subject to change should the CJRS be stopped or amended by the Government. Furloughed staff would include all contracted staff and relief (non-contracted) staff that had been paid in the three months running up to 23 March. |
| 4.1.3 | A total of 1,290 staff were placed on furlough leave between April and June 2020 with 160 staff retained to manage the organisation; including property maintenance; prepare for recovery; and provide online services where possible, including music tuition, archives, book bug and fitness classes. |
| 4.1.4 | Staff who were not placed on furlough leave have been working from home, wherever possible. |
| 4.1.5 | Following the announcement of changes to the CJRS effective from 1 July 2020, the Board of Directors agreed that the following changes would be implemented to HLH’s furlough payment to staff:   * Staff could be asked to return to work on a part time basis for which they would be paid 100% of their salary; * Staff on furlough leave would no longer receive the ‘top up’ element of CJRS payments and whilst on furlough leave would receive 80% of their normal salary; and * Effective from 1 August all staff holding non-contractual posts would be taken off furlough leave and only paid for actual hours worked. |
| 4.2 | **Status Review Group** |
| 4.2.1 | Following the changes to the CJRS and the removal of all relief/casual staff  from furlough, the Status Review Group (SRG) was set up by the Director of Corporate Services in July 2020 to provide a platform to review:   * any claims from relief staff regarding their employment status with HLH; * internal vacancy recruitment; and * changes to the establishment. |
| 4.2.2 | The SRG consist of the Director of Corporate Services (Sponsor), HR Manager, Principal Business Support Manager, Finance Manager and all Principal Managers for services. |
| 5. | **Staff engagement and consultation** |
| 5.1 | At the start of lockdown, managers were tasked with providing contact details i.e. personal email addresses, for all staff to ensure any communications from the management team were accessible to all staff whether they were on furlough leave or not. |
| 5.2 | A Single Point of Reference (SPOR) website was set up and, along with regular emails to staff, all information and updates relating to Covid 19, CJRS, Health and Wellbeing, Recovery Plans and returning to Work Guidance are available on this site. |
| 5.3 | Staff Consultation Survey and Focus Groups  As part of the Recovery Action Plan for HLH, all employees have been given the opportunity to share their views about returning to the workplace or returning to work following furlough.  A Staff Consultation Survey was sent to all staff at the beginning of July and a number of focus groups held, via MS Teams and facilitated by the Health and Wellbeing Manager and HR Manager.  A summary presentation of the results will be given at the Board meeting with full results made available to Board members. |
| 5.3.1 | Findings from focus groups  In the focus groups employees were asked the following questions:   1. Please tell us about your experience of working/being on furlough leave since lockdown commenced in March 2020? 2. What matters most to you, with regards to getting back into your place of work or getting back to working following furlough leave? 3. Do you have any specific concerns about returning to work or returning to your place of work that you’d like to share with the group? 4. Do you have any queries or concerns about the notification of changes to furlough pay and non-contracted hours?   Do you have any suggestions/ideas about what HLH could/should do to support you/wider team(s)? |
| 5.3.2 | Some very in-depth and detailed responses were given to the questions asked in the focus groups with four common themes emerging from the discussion:   1. Safe working environment; 2. Flexibility (e.g. working from home when appropriate) & caring responsibilities; 3. Information desired about when employees can expect to return to work; and 4. Communication about and opportunity to contribute to plans for resuming services. |
| 5.3.3 | In addition to the themes above a significant number of employees expressed, in the focus groups, their appreciation and support of decisions which have been taken regarding furlough payments – many specifically expressing gratitude to HLH for topping up pay to 100% for as long as was possible. |
| 5.4  5.4.1 | Working from Home Survey  In addition to the Staff Consultation survey detailed above, a Working from Home Survey was issued to 225 staff currently employed in posts that would allow them to work from home i.e. non-customer facing.  189 staff completed the survey, highlighting the following:   * Only 26% of respondents indicated that they wanted to return to an office environment as soon as possible * Once restrictions are lifted, over 60% of respondents would prefer blended working i.e. between office and home * 60% of respondents felt that working at home made no difference to how they carried out their job functions, with 14% stating that they worked better at home * 87% said that they had missed social interaction with colleagues since working from home.   Some staff also commented that:   * Working from home had opened their eyes to new ways of working and communicating, in a positive way * Caring responsibilities for children and/or other family members had made working from home difficult * Work/life balance had improved with a greater opportunity to be flexible with working times * Their mental health had suffered through isolation from human contact whilst working and on furlough * Work/life balance had been affected negatively as expectations on staff not furloughed was far greater than normal. |
| 5.4.2 | As lockdown eases and facilities start to reopen, HLH will monitor and evaluate whether there is a requirement for office-based staff to be in offices full time or whether a greater degree of flexibility can be achieved with more home working. |
| 5.4.3 | A summary presentation of the results will be given at the Board meeting with full results made available to Board members. |
| **6.** | **Armed Forces Employment recognition Scheme Gold Award** |
| 6.1 | HLH has recently received the Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award in recognition of its support of the Armed Forces Covenant in the Highland area. |
| 6.2 | HLH is one of only 10 Scottish organisations to be awarded Gold status this  year, bringing the overall total in Scotland to 33. It should also be noted that HLH is the only organisation in the Highland region to achieve Gold status. |
| 6.3 | HLH has demonstrated its support for the Armed Forces, Reservists and Cadet Force Adult Volunteers (CFAV) through, amongst other things:   * the provision of an additional ten days, paid, leave a year for Reservists and Cadet Force Adult Volunteers (CFAV) to attend training camps; * favourable discount on High Life membership for Armed Forces, Reservists and CFAV families; * advocacy and encouragement of other organisations to sign up to the AF Covenant and ERS; * the Chief Executive’s work as a mentor for the Officers Association of Scotland, assisting service personnel transition in to civilian life; * the Charity’s recognition that the skills Armed Forces veterans have gained during service are highly transferrable into the organisation’s areas of work. |
| 6.4 | HLH currently employs, at least, 12 Veterans and Reservists in the following roles:   * Chief Executive * Corporate Programme Manager * Leisure Assistants, Supervisors and Personal Trainers in Leisure facilities; * Youth Development Officer; * Outdoor Activities instructors * Music Instructors in schools. |
| 6.5 | The achievement will be subject to positive press/media coverage when the gold award is received. |
| **7.**  7.1  7.2  7.3  7.4 | **Implications**  Resource Implications – there are no new resource implications arising from the recommendations of this report.  Legal Implications – there are no new legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report.  Equality Implications – there are no new equality implications arising from the recommendations of this report.  Risk Implications – there are no new risks arising from the recommendations of this report. |
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| It is recommended that Directors:   1. note and comment on the content of the quarterly HR report including the update on the staffing establishment and attendance management and union engagement; 2. note and comment on the content of the HR Covid-19 update including details of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, Status Review Group and Staff Consultation; and 3. note and comment on HLH’s attainment of the Armed Forces ERS Gold Award. | |

Designation: Chief Executive

Date: 18 August 2020