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| HIGH LIFE HIGHLAND  REPORT TO BOARD OF DIRECTORS  23 JUNE 2021 | AGENDA ITEM REPORT No HLH/ /21 |

## **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 January to March 2021 which includes information relating to absence, disciplinary and grievance issues during this period as well as information on the pandemic’s impact on staffing related matters.  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. |

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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. |
| **3.**  3.1  3.1.1  3.1.2 | **Human Resources Report: Jan - Mar 21**  Staff Establishment Numbers  The changes to the establishment for the period in full-time equivalents (FTE) are as follows:  Establishment at end of **Quarter 3 2020/21** (Oct to Dec 20) =**739.55** Establishment at end of **Quarter 4 2020/21** (Jan to Mar 21) = **750.89**  Quarter 3 has seen an increase to the establishment of 11.34 FTE and these changes are detailed in **Appendix A.** |
| 3.1.3 | In considering the above, the main reasons for these changes are:   1. newly created posts for the Inverness Castle project 2. the provision of contracts to workers carrying out fixed term, grant funded projects as part of the recovery programme, primarily in Youth Work and Adult Learning; 3. the provision of seasonal contracts to workers previously employed on a casual basis. 4. small amendments to existing establishment FTE in facilities to ensure efficient service delivery. |
| 3.1.4 | Directors are reminded of the Charity’s partnership commitment with the Unions during the lockdown period, whereby a review of all non-contracted posts would be undertaken by the “new” Status Review Group with a view to assessing the need, and where necessary creating employee contracts (albeit these may be fixed-term). |
| 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 4 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 | 0.15 | 0.42 | 0.11 |   Q4 has shown a decrease of 0.31% in the short-term absence rate from the previous quarter. It should be noted that Q4 rates reflect the high level of staff placed on furlough leave through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) and therefore low absence levels recorded. |
| 3.2.3 | The long-term absence % rate up to the end of Quarter4 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 | 0.78 | 2.22 | 1.13 | |
| 3.2.4  3.2.5 | Q4 has shown a decrease of 1.09% in the long-term absence rate compared to the previous quarter and similarly with the short-term absence decrease. The reduction is as a result of staff being placed on furlough during this quarter.    There were four long-term absences within the quarter which carried forward into Q1 2021/22. |
| 3.2.6 | The average sick days per employee up to the end of Quarter 4 were as follows:   |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **AVERAGE SICKNESS ABSENCE 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 | 0.64 | 1.64 | 0.78 | |
| 3.2.7 | The average sick days/FTE per employee in Q4 shows a decrease of 0.86% days compared to Q3. |
| 3.2.8  3.2.9 | As outlined in previous reports, HR continues to work with all managers and employees to find opportunities to encourage earlier returns to work. The COVID-19 situation has meant that many staff returned to furlough leave during quarter 4, but managers have remained committed to keeping in contact with all staff, regularly checking in on their general health, wellbeing and welfare and highlighting to the HR Manager any concerns they have regarding staff health and wellbeing during this time.  In addition, as staff have returned to work and health concerns have been raised, HR and service managers have been pro-active in supporting those staff through early intervention including OH referrals and Counselling services. |
| 3.2.10  3.2.11  3.2.12 | Prior to facilities reopening in April 2021 the HR Manager facilitated a number of ‘Return to Work’ workshops for managers, including the Senior Management Team, Area Officers and facility managers. The purpose of the workshops were to address any issues, concerns and queries that managers and staff may encounter as their staff/colleagues returned to work.  Areas covered included:   * The importance of clear and timely staff communication; * Re-induction into workplaces eg. safety measures, training requirements; * How to address and deal with specific health, caring, welfare concerns; * Vaccination concerns; * Absence management; and * Annual Leave Deductions.   Since facilities and services started to reopen in April managers have continued to support staff in the organisation’s return to business as usual. At the time of writing this report there had been no significant or unusual increase in absences or refusals to return to work. Staff have been co-operating and working with management to establish their “new normal”. |
| 3.3  3.3.1 | Staff Turnover  The number of resignations per month as a percentage of posts in Q4 was:  January = 0.24%  February = 0.16%  March = 0.47% |
| 3.3.2 | Staff turnover therefore sits as ‘green’ RAG-rated status in terms of the Charity’s performance reporting. |
| 3.4  3.4.1  3.5  3.5.1  3.5.2  3.6  3.6.1  3.6.2  3.7  3.7.1  3.8  3.8.1 | Use of the charity disciplinary processes  There was one issue considered under the Charity’s disciplinary process in Q4.  Use of the charity grievance processes  There were no new matters received under the charity’s grievance procedure in Q4.  Directors should note that the Charity’s grievance process is currently under review and following review by the Executive Team; Senior Management Team and the Unions, will be presented to a future Board meeting.  Harassment  There were no harassment issues raised during Q4.  Directors should note that the Charity’s Harassment process is currently under review and following review by the Executive Team; Senior Management Team and the Unions, will be presented to a future Board meeting.  Whistleblowing  There were no instances of the Charity’s Whistleblowing policy being invoked in Q4.  Employment Tribunal  There remains one Employment Tribunal case lodged against the Charity. This case has been a long-standing lodgement and if it progresses to full hearing, it is scheduled to be heard in August 2021. |
| 3.9  3.9.1  3.9.2 | 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 met on 31 March 2021  Discussions included:   1. Update on furlough position; 2. Mental Health Representatives; 3. Return to work support for Managers; |
| 3.9.3  3.9.4 | In addition, the above Trade Unions are invited to meet with the Principal Estates Manager in the current absence of the staff Health and Safety Group.  It is envisaged that the Staff Health and Safety Group will be reconvened in August 2021, therefore offering a further opportunity to the Unions to contribute to the health and welfare of employees. |
| 3.9.5 | Management and representatives of HR also discuss with the Trade Unions individual issues as and when required – such communications with the Trade Unions has occurred more regularly throughout the pandemic period. |
| **4.** | **Status Review Group** |
| 4.1. | The Status Review Group (SRG) continues to meet on a weekly basis to provide a platform to review:   * any claims from relief staff regarding their employment status with HLH; * internal and external vacancy recruitment; and * changes to the establishment. |
| 4.2 | The SRG consists of the Director of Corporate Services (Sponsor), HR Manager, Principal Business Support Manager, Finance Manager and all Principal Managers for services. Other senior managers attend on an ad-hoc basis where necessary. |
| 4.3 | In Q4 the SRG considered 71 requests falling within the categories listed above and of that, recommended for approval to WBM:   * 27 changes to contract status (i.e. relief to contracted hours) or the creation/deletion of posts (as detailed in **Appendix A**) * 44 vacancies to be advertised. |
| 4.4 | The positions adopted by the SRG are in line with the spirit of agreement with Unions during discussions around the management of the pandemic and the temporary collective agreement put in place at the original lockdown. The processes and considerations by the SRG continue to be welcomed by the Trade Unions. |
| 4.5 | Directors will be aware that the SRG was set up during the pandemic, as outlined in 4.4. of this report. It is clear that the role of the group has been viewed positively by both HLH Management and the Unions associated with the Charity. For this reason, the terms of reference for the SRG are current under review and will be updated to allow the group to continue to function post-pandemic. |
| **5.** | **Employee health, wellbeing and welfare** |
| 5.1 | During the period referred to in this report, the health, wellbeing and welfare of staff has remained a focus as the Charity returned staff to furlough leave at the end of December and then prepared for staff to return to work in April. |
| 5.1.1 | For the vast majority of staff, the changes have been accepted and self-managed; however, for a small number of staff, the changes, lack of routine, the lack of colleague contact and isolation has clearly been challenging. |
| 5.2 | It should be noted that there has been no increase in the number of counselling referrals in the year up to 31 March 2021 and managers have not reported any significant issues with staff returning to work. |
| 5.2.1  5.2.2  5.2.3 | In the period April 19 – March 20 there were 22 counselling referrals made to the Scottish Counselling Service for mental health related issues  In the period April 20 – March 21 there were 20 counselling referrals made to the Scottish Counselling Service for mental health related issues  Of those 20 referrals made in 20/21, 10 (50 %) were directly attributed to concerns about COVID-19; home working & isolation; and/or being placed on furlough or those returning to work after a long period of furlough.  Other referrals were for personal and/or work-related issues. |
| 5.3 | Ongoing general updates on staff health, wellbeing and welfare will be given where necessary/appropriate to the Health and Safety and Environmental Compliance Committee. |
| 5.4 | The Health and Wellbeing Manager will make a presentation at the Board Meeting focussing on the charity’s proactive efforts for the staff’s health and wellbeing. |
| **6.** | **Policies update** |
| 6.1 | The following policies have been considered in line with the review schedule and have had minor amendments in terms of senior staff post titles and referencing to HLH as a Charity where required:   * Trade Unions * Volunteering Policy * Payment of Professional Fees * Acting Up * Job Evaluation * Social Media * Sponsorship |
| **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. |
| Recommendations:  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. | |

Designation: Chief Executive

Date: 7 June 2021

**Appendix A**

**CHANGES TO STAFFING ESTABLISHMENT IN QUARTER 4**

**(January - March 2021)**

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| **Post Title** | **Location** | **FTE** | **Comment** |
| Engagement & Communications Officer (Castle Project) | Inverness | 1 | Fixed term 23 months |
| Digital Project Officer (Castle Project) | Inverness | 1 | Fixed term 23 months |
| Leisure Assistant | ECCF | 0.25 |  |
| Adult Learning Tutor Coach | Caithness | 0.14 | Fixed term 18 weeks |
| Adult Learning Tutor Coach | Portree | 0.09 | Fixed term 12 weeks |
| Assistant Youth Workers x 4 | Ullapool | 0.72 | Fixed term 16 weeks |
| Assistant Youth Worker | Black Isle | 0.2 | Fixed term 16 weeks |
| Assistant Youth Worker | Broadford | 0.14 | Fixed term 12 weeks |
| Assistant Youth Worker x 2 | Ardnamurchan | 0.22 | Fixed term 8 weeks |
| Assistant Youth Worker x 2 | Fort William | 0.43 | Fixed term 12 weeks |
| Youth Support Officer | Wick | 0.9 | Fixed term 44 weeks |
| Youth Support Officer | Thurso | 0.9 | Fixed term 44 weeks |
| Youth Support Officer | Kinlochbervie | 0.2 | Fixed term 44 weeks |
| Youth Support Officer | Dornoch | 0.4 | Fixed term 44 weeks |
| Youth Support Officer | Golspie | 0.4 | Fixed term 44 weeks |
| Area Youth Officer | Caithness & Sutherland | 0.2 | Fixed term 44 weeks |
| Project Officer – Collections | Highland Folk Museum | 1 | Fixed term 7 months |
| Museum Assistant | IMAG | 1 | Fixed term 12 months |
| Visitor Centre Assistants x 4 | Ben Nevis VC, Fort William | 2.15 | Seasonal until 31.10.21 |
| Total |  | 11.34 |  |