

Appendix 1 - Strategic HR Action Plan Progress

Issue from Internal Audit Report	Strategic HR Action Identified	Action No.	Strategic HR Progress Update	Comments
<p>Data held on the Trent system is not always accurate, as it is not always updated promptly, e.g. vacant posts are not always closed off. Despite previous work undertaken, e.g. data quality monitoring, there is a risk of poor data quality, objectives not being met, inaccurate reporting, and ineffective decision-making.</p>	<p>We are currently undertaking a data cleansing exercise to ensure that all employee data is correct. This requires printing out the employee information held on Trent and asking employees to verify or change the information.</p>	1	<p>There was a low return rate of forms from employees. In addition, not all employees had received a copy of the form detailing their employee information to check for data accuracy. HR undertook a further data cleansing exercise during August 2013 and is also looking at building this into the performance appraisal process so that employees verify that their information is accurate. HR and Payroll are currently working on a paper for CET for the end of September 2013 that will recommend an integrated system for payroll and HR, which would specify data owners for specific information.</p>	<p>Although Strategic HR undertook a data cleansing exercise, this was not fully successful in addressing the issue.</p> <p>However, the subsequent actions identified should hopefully address the issue of inaccurate data in future.</p> <p>Internal Audit will review the effectiveness of the new actions in April 2014, although progress may depend on the cycle of performance appraisals and how long an integrated HR/payroll system would take to implement if approved.</p>
	<p>Unclosed and open vacancies to be discussed as part of the workforce planning exercise being undertaken with services in October 2012.</p>	2	<p>Internal Audit confirmed this action as complete during its follow up review in February 2013.</p>	
	<p>Vacancy control discussions to form part of monthly reviews with services.</p>	3	<p>Internal Audit confirmed this action as complete during its follow up review in February 2013.</p>	
	<p>This will be subject to the Systems Thinking Review commencing 17/08/12.</p>	4	<p>The Head of Internal Audit facilitated a process review of several HR functions during August 2012. Actions were identified and are being addressed, with new processes and policies being implemented.</p>	

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<p>There is no robust mechanism in place to determine accurately the future number of employees required within the Council to help identify shortages and competency gaps. This is due to a lack of system integration that links a post to the budget, which results in HR having to interpret the effects of budget savings on posts.</p>	<p>Arrangements are already in place for a Workforce Planning Exercise undertaken annually with services to facilitate services to determine the future number of employees required by their service.</p>	5	<p>Internal Audit confirmed this action as complete during its follow up review in February 2013.</p>	<p>The issue is being addressed through workforce planning.</p>
	<p>Work has been undertaken with Finance and ICT to combine financial information with HR reports.</p>	6	<p>Internal Audit confirmed this action as complete during its follow up review in February 2013.</p>	
<p>Although the new structure sees HR in a supportive role, as opposed to a 'policing' role, there is a lack of quality assurance checking to ensure that employees and managers are complying with HR policies and procedures. This increases the risk of the Council not complying with relevant legislation and it increases further if HR employees and service managers receive inadequate training and are unclear of their responsibilities.</p>	<p>Monitoring of Employee Relation cases, settlements, and Employee Tribunal claims - part of Employee Relation Report discussed with Heads of Service on a monthly basis.</p>	7	<p>Internal Audit confirmed this action as complete during its follow up review in February 2013.</p>	<p>The Head of Internal Audit agreed a new approach to quality assurance with the Head of Strategic HR that will address service non-compliance during the Service Challenge Process without having a significant impact on HR capacity.</p> <p>Internal Audit will review effectiveness of new processes in April 2014.</p>
	<p>This will be subject to the Systems Thinking Review commencing 17/08/12.</p>	8	<p>The Head of Internal Audit facilitated a process review of several HR functions during August 2012. Actions were identified and are being addressed, with new processes and policies being implemented.</p>	
	<p>Explore a quality assurance framework to check processes to ensure that managers are complying with policies and procedures. It will establish where the organisation is doing well and where it is not. This will need to be scoped out as a project and agreed by SLT, as there is currently no HR resource allocated to this.</p>	9	<p>Internal Audit confirmed this action as complete during its follow up review in July 2013.</p>	

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<p>There is an increased risk of inaccurate payments to employees, as HR does not always submit documentation to Payroll promptly or accurately, as we identified in our previous annual reviews of the Payroll system. This creates additional pressure on the Payroll team in scrutinising and amending forms to prevent inaccurate payments while still meeting strict deadlines.</p>	<p>Standard Operating Procedures to set out clear deadlines for managers and schools on when information is required.</p>	<p>10</p>	<p>Internal Audit confirmed this action as complete during its follow up review in July 2013.</p>	<p>Actions are being taken to address the accuracy of data submitted to Payroll. The meetings between HR and Payroll will discuss these and continue to monitor error rates, which should now decrease with the additional controls being implemented.</p>
	<p>There is a Business and Finance Manager forum, where SLA issues are discussed and we can raise any issues with inaccurate or late documentation at this forum.</p>	<p>11</p>	<p>Internal Audit confirmed this action as complete during its follow up review in February 2013.</p>	
	<p>Meetings have been set up with the team managers and Payroll to discuss any issues.</p>	<p>12</p>	<p>These were initially set up but, due to staff absences, did not continue. These are now scheduled between the HR Services Manager and the Payroll Manager up to the end of the financial year. The Head of Internal Audit attended the first meeting.</p>	
	<p>Returns to be sent directly to Team Managers not HRAs.</p>	<p>13</p>	<p>Internal Audit confirmed this action as complete during its follow up review in February 2013.</p>	
	<p>Monitoring system in place to monitor error rates and ensure corrective action is taken.</p>	<p>14</p>	<p>A monitoring system is in place; however, errors are still occurring. Standard template letters have been developed that will be automatically populated from Trent and will address a number of errors that are being made. These will be in the system by early September 2013.</p>	
	<p>This will be subject to the Systems Thinking Review commencing 17/08/12.</p>	<p>15</p>	<p>The Head of Internal Audit facilitated a process review of several HR functions during August 2012. Actions were identified and are being addressed, with new processes and policies being implemented.</p>	

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<p>Overall, from consultation throughout our review, we received negative feedback on the new HR service, particularly with HR Direct. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • comments on poor communication; • a lack of continuity and inconsistent responses; and • important HR documentation, such as job application forms, going missing <p>Additionally, HR Direct does not have a robust mechanism for ensuring that it logs all queries, refers them to the most appropriate person for answering, and ensuring that HR deals with issues promptly. There is also no prompt for HR Assistants to pursue outstanding essential documentation, such as appointment references.</p>	Introduction of Civica Help Desk (CRM)	16	Civica Help Desk Introduced	<p>While the CRM system has been implemented, development of the system is at an early stage, i.e. limited performance monitoring in place. Therefore, Internal Audit has been unable to establish the effectiveness of the system, and will review this, along with improvements to the HR Intranet pages, during its review in April 2014.</p>
	Implementation of Standard Operating Procedures	17	Internal Audit confirmed this action as complete during its follow up review in July 2013.	
	Introduction of Customer Service Standards	18	Internal Audit confirmed this action as complete during its follow up review in July 2013.	
	Introduction of HR Competencies for all levels	19	Internal Audit confirmed this action as complete during its follow up review in July 2013.	
	Implementation of Web recruitment application, which will negate the need for paper copies	20	Internal Audit confirmed this action as complete during its follow up review in February 2013.	
	Project management scoping will be carried out to re launch new HR processes and procedures, and we will revise the HR content of the intranet.	21	HR content on the Intranet needs to be revised. This is currently underway with a draft page ready and will be completed by early September 2013.	
	HR team managers' are quality assurance checking a sample of calls to HR Direct.	22	Internal Audit confirmed this action as complete during its follow up review in February 2013.	
	We will prepare checklists, and scripts for HRAs to follow for the top ten queries.	23	This action is partly complete but still requires completion of the scripts and checklists relating to the HR assistants. This is due for completion in December 2013.	

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<p>The Council's recruitment and selection procedure is out-of-date and some employees have not received the necessary recruitment training prior to being a member of a recruitment panel. Insufficient guidance, monitoring and a lack of clarity of responsibilities could lead to non-compliance with legislation, and may lead to financial costs from re-appointment or tribunals if applicants consider that they are being unfairly treated.</p>	<p>Power hours training on Recruitment.</p>	<p>24</p>	<p>Internal Audit confirmed this action as complete during its follow up review in February 2013.</p>	<p>Although a new recruitment framework will soon be in place, there is still some work to do to roll the framework out.</p>
	<p>New Recruitment Framework developed and under consultation. This policy stipulates that at least one member of a recruitment panel has to have received recruitment training.</p>	<p>25</p>	<p>The framework has been developed and agreed. HR is currently discussing with heads of service about how they want to launch the framework within their services. The roll-out of the framework could take up to six months.</p>	<p>Internal Audit will review the effectiveness of the new framework in April 2014</p>
	<p>This will be subject to the Systems Thinking Review commencing 17/08/12</p>	<p>26</p>	<p>The Head of Internal Audit facilitated a process review of several HR functions during August 2012. Actions were identified and are being addressed, with new processes and policies being implemented.</p>	

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<p>There is a lack of evidence to support the justification and authorisation for filling a post. We identified instances where there was a lack of documentation held on new starters' HR files, including vacancy control forms and interview notes. This may be linked to our concerns over managers' training and awareness of their responsibilities mentioned above and increases the risk of the Council being unable to challenge any accusation of unfair treatment in the recruitment process, incurring tribunal costs.</p>	<p>A new vacancy control form will be introduced and we will ensure that all vacancy control forms are on file.</p>	<p>27</p>	<p>Internal Audit confirmed this action as complete during its follow up review in February 2013.</p>	<p>The actions taken and the decision on retention of interview notes should address the issues that Internal Audit raised.</p>
	<p>Covered in power hours on recruitment</p>	<p>28</p>	<p>Internal Audit confirmed this action as complete during its follow up review in February 2013.</p>	
	<p>Managers to send through interview notes as requested.</p>	<p>29</p>	<p>Strategic HR and Internal Audit have agreed that this is no longer necessary and that managers should retain interview notes for a specified period in case they are challenged by an interviewee.</p>	
	<p>This will be subject to the Systems Thinking Review commencing 17/08/12</p>	<p>30</p>	<p>The Head of Internal Audit facilitated a process review of several HR functions during August 2012. Actions were identified and are being addressed, with new processes and policies being implemented.</p>	
<p>There is insufficient vetting of new starters to verify the authenticity of qualifications specific to the post applied for and references are not always received prior to the employee starting work with the Council. This increases the risk of inappropriate appointments and the resulting reputational damage and financial impact of terminating the contract or the cost of re-appointment.</p>	<p>Power hours training on Recruitment</p>	<p>31</p>	<p>Internal Audit confirmed this action as complete during its follow up review in February 2013.</p>	<p>Although a new recruitment framework will soon be in place, there is still some work to do to roll the framework out.</p> <p>Internal Audit will review the effectiveness of the new framework in April 2014</p>
	<p>New Recruitment Framework developed and under consultation</p>	<p>32</p>	<p>See action 25</p>	
	<p>Dedicated HRA for references to address backlog</p>	<p>33</p>	<p>Internal Audit confirmed this action as complete during its follow up review in February 2013.</p>	
	<p>Review of references procedure and input of workflows in Civica. Team managers will carry out quality assurance checking to ensure that the procedure is followed.</p>	<p>34</p>	<p>The reference procedure has been reviewed and agreed. HR is currently working on the implementation of workflows within Civica/Trent for completion by September 2013.</p>	

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	All new starters to sign consent form for us to verify qualifications if needed.	35	Internal Audit confirmed this action as complete during its follow up review in July 2013.	
	This will be subject to the Systems Thinking Review commencing 17/08/12	36	The Head of Internal Audit facilitated a process review of several HR functions during August 2012. Actions were identified and are being addressed, with new processes and policies being implemented.	
There is inadequate decision-making, business continuity and succession planning arrangements within the Council. In some cases, this has resulted in the employment of ex-employees temporarily to provide cover. There is a risk that such arrangements are not cost effective, are insufficiently authorised and used inconsistently. This could result in reputational damage for the Council, particularly if the arrangement is not open and transparent.	Engagement of ex-employees included in Pay Policy which goes to Full Council in September	37	Internal Audit confirmed this action as complete during its follow up review in July 2013.	The actions taken and on-going succession planning should address the issues that Internal Audit raised. Internal Audit will establish the development of the succession plans during its review in April 2014.
	Succession Planning part of Workforce Planning principles	38	Succession planning is now part of the annual workforce planning exercise.	
	Business Partners involved in review and expected to challenge decisions made	39		
	Reviewing key roles within the Council and ensure that there are sufficient business continuity and succession plans in place.	40		

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<p>Business Partners provide support to line managers for grievances and disciplinary cases but, while they maintain their own records, there is no computerised central record to show progress with each case. This would assist with business continuity in the event of another Business Partner becoming involved. There is also no robust mechanism for ensuring that all grievances and disciplinary cases are recorded and dealt with promptly by the most appropriate person. This could lead to grievance cases not being handled effectively, leading to disputes and employment tribunals.</p>	<p>All cases to be logged on current CRM helpdesk.</p>	<p>41</p>	<p>Internal Audit confirmed this action as complete during its follow up review in July 2013.</p>	<p>The actions taken should address the issues that Internal Audit raised.</p>
	<p>New system will provide a simpler system to capture information although case logs are held in a shared drive. We need to promote to HR staff its location.</p>	<p>42</p>	<p>Internal Audit confirmed this action as complete during its follow up review in July 2013.</p>	
	<p>This will be subject to the Systems Thinking Review commencing 17/08/12</p>	<p>43</p>	<p>The Head of Internal Audit facilitated a process review of several HR functions during August 2012. Actions were identified and are being addressed, with new processes and policies being implemented.</p>	

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<p>There is a risk of non-compliance with legislation and inconsistent treatment of employees leading to financial loss from tribunal costs and reputational damage as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> there is a lack of documentation held on redeployees' files and no robust system to record the actions taken to prevent redundancy payments and ensure that each redeployee has had equal opportunity to be considered for vacant posts; and the redeployment files are kept in a lockable cabinet, but this is not locked, increasing the risk of unauthorised access to personal details and data protection breach. 	Cabinets to be locked	44	Internal Audit confirmed this action as complete during its follow up review in February 2013.	The actions taken should address the issues that Internal Audit raised.
	This will be subject to the Systems Thinking Review commencing 17/08/12	45	The Head of Internal Audit facilitated a process review of several HR functions during August 2012. Actions were identified and are being addressed, with new processes and policies being implemented.	