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| **Agenda item:** | **8** |
| **Attachment:** | **B** |

**HRA BOARD COVER SHEET**

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| **Date of Meeting:** | 21st March 2018 |

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| **Title of Paper:** | Management response to 2017 Staff Survey |
| **Purpose of Paper:** | To present to the board the HRA Management response to the key findings of the survey, in terms of actions delivered; those planned and elicit further discussion from both the board and staff forum colleagues on any additional interventions that would be helpful. |
| **Reason for Submission:** | To offer the necessary assurance that actions have been and will be taken to address particular areas of concern. It also offers the opportunity for the Board and Staff Forum Reps (who will be in attendance) to engage in further discussion about the effectiveness of current and planned responses and potentially to offer further suggestions. |
| **Details:** | Covered in the report – **However the Board are particularly directed to the issue of workload which continues to be most challenging of the issues identified** |
| **Time required for item:** | 30 mins |

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| **Recommendation / Proposed Actions:** | **To Approve** | |  |
| **To Note** | |  |
| **For Discussion** | | **x** |
| **Comments** |  | |

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| **Name:** | Ian Cook |
| **Job Title:** | Director Transformation and Corporate Services |
| **Date:** | 15/04/2018 |

**HRA 2017 Staff Survey – Management Response**

1. **Introduction**
   1. This paper represents the management response to the findings of the 2017 staff survey and also incorporates comments and observations made by the staff forum at its meeting on the 7th March. It intends to offer the opportunity for the Board to discuss with staff forum reps the contributing factors to those results which indicated either the lowest level of satisfaction or where the trend was significantly negative (compared with 2016). Then to determine the effectiveness of activities that have been or will be put into place to improve them in 2018.
   2. **Workload:** In terms of the lowest scoring indicators in the research, only 38% of HRA employees agree that their workload rarely causes them to feel overworked, with 40% actively disagreeing that this is the case. This finding suggests that workload pressures are being experienced within the organisation.

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| **Management response** |
| Workload remains an issue and is probably of most concern out of all the survey findings. The programme of change remains significant and touches all and with the organisational commitment to work together on change this results in both individual and teams facing the challenge to balance the management of day to day work whilst effectively contributing to change activity. There is no easy answer. The situation is constantly monitored by senior management and more resource was made available in 17/18 and more support will be found in 18/19. Changes are managed in a phased way which intends to reduce the stress on the organisation and we continue to look at ways that we can take out unnecessary bureaucracy. We are also looking at how we can more effectively support the physical and mental health and well-being as well as developing a supportive L&D programme that helps individuals build their own personal resilience and coping strategies. |
| **Additional points from staff forum** |
| * Issues not all related to change * Multiple vacancies increased pressure. * Internal promotions also had an impact as the Rec Assistant role was unique and it was difficult to find time to train. * Could be reduced by a more proportionate approach to assessment * Suggestion that applications potentially would not require approval if there had been sign off by committee previously for similar/same studies. * Time spent in communication (with some) REC Chairs can add significantly to workload |

* 1. **Managing poor performance:** How line managers effectively deal with poor performance remains amongst the least positive scores in 2017. Two in five (40%) that agree that poor performance is managed effectively, which is 7% points lower than in 2016 and is significantly below the BMG benchmark (-9% points). However only 17% actively disagree with the statement.

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| **Management response** |
| This has been a constant theme through each staff survey and is always been difficult to determine the most effective approach to improving this score as responses are based on people’s perception which, anecdotally, seem to be linked to how an individual may see their performance in relation to others i.e. do more work at a higher quality than colleagues in the same or similar roles and not seeing any obvious intervention from their manager to address the situation. This does not necessarily mean that the perception is accurate however it remains an important indicator as it is likely to have an impact on morale. We therefore need to look at how we support our managers to demonstrate consistency of approach based on generally agreed standards of output – this is also may be an opportunity for teams to work together to look at those ‘standards’ |
| **Additional points from staff forum** |
| * Very difficult to determine ‘what needs to be done’ * Highlighted that only 17% actively disagreed * Suggested that question is changed to how the organisation (rather than just the line manager) deals with poor performance |

* 1. **Career Development:** Agreement that employees have opportunities to develop their careers has decreased significantly since 2016 (-16% points). As only 45% of staff agree that they have opportunities to develop their career with HRA, this means that this now features among the lowest scoring indicators overall.

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| **Management response** |
| This theme is generally consistent across the Directorates. It is disappointing that the trend is moving in the wrong direction and it is difficult to identify why there has been such a significant shift although there are a number of factors that may contribute to the response. The HRA is a relatively small organisation and therefore opportunities are not as numerous as in others, it also does experience less turnover in more senior bands than junior ones. However career development is not entirely about what the HRA can offer internally, it is how it can develop people in order that they can have a broad range of skills and knowledge which will leave them well placed to compete for roles in the wider health research system (and outside), hence the focus on offering all staff the chance to visit and experience other organisations as part of their personal development. This initiative is supplemented by ongoing opportunities within SIP to develop and encourage involvement in a variety of projects |
| **Additional points from staff forum** |
| * Staff may not consider that the support and training for skills development that would help with career development generally – not just explicit progress through the HRA. * Hoped that the L&D programme launched in September 2017 would further support opportunities for career development. * Suggested that partnerships with other organisations (e.g.pharma) to have reciprocating secondments opportunities to learn and develop could be explored |

* 1. **Governing Board;** only half of those aware of the Governing Board agree that the current Executive Directors are approachable (49%). However, it should be noted that only 10% disagree this is the case, whilst 42% neither agree nor disagree, which suggests that some staff may be aware of the Executive Directors, but do not have much contact with them.

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| **Management response** |
| Directors are fully aware of their responsibility to ensure a level of visibility throughout the organisation and have made significant efforts along with the Non-Execs to ensure that they have a regular presence across the offices as well as at All Staff VC’s. More recently Directors have produced a number of Blogs which focus on a more personalised view of specific issues and they are also very directly involved in a number of SIP projects working with staff from all grades and offices. Although those who actually disagreed with the statement around visibility was only 1 in 10 the Director team are fully committed to ensuring their level of visibility improves during 18/19 (this will also include with REC’s) |
| **Additional points from staff forum** |
| * Directors usually work out of London office therefore lower visibility in other offices * Some staff may feel when a director is present they are busy and so staff are reluctant to disturb them. * More opportunities be made available just to say “hello” |

* 1. **Staff Forum:** Satisfaction levels in how the forum communicates its news improved from 46% to 53%. There was an also an increase in staff knowing who their rep was. However ‘being happy’ with what the forum is achieving for staff had slightly dropped

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| **Management response** |
| A significant effort has been made over the last 12 months to increase the visibility of the forum and promote its work which appears to have resulted in an improved satisfaction rate in some areas. However work still to be done in improving the perception of its effectiveness. Management has a significant role in this by ensuring that actions agreed are carried out in timelier manner and publicised effectively. |
| **Additional points from staff forum** |
| * Staff are not familiar with what can go to the forum and there is some confusion over what can be fed back to staff. * Improvements/achievements of the forum were unknown and that feedback to staff could be improved. * Agreed actions ‘taking time’ for management to implement. * It was recognised that in London there is not a set meeting in which feedback on staff forum matters can be done |

* 1. **Use of skills and ability**: Staff agreeing that there job makes good use of their skills and abilty has decreased by 11% since 2016

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| **Management response** |
| This response suggests that as an organisation we are not making the best use of the potential capability of a significant minority of staff (1 in 5). To address this we have regularly offered secondment opportunities that give individuals practical experience of working in different parts of the organisation to develop new knowledge, skills and experience – also many have been part of project teams within SIP as well as a number securing acting up positions. However a number obviously feel that they have more to give. As part of the SIP we will be together looking at the nature and purpose of roles to explore whether a greater level of diversity and variety could both benefit the organisation and the individual. |

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| **Additional points from staff forum** |
| * Would an organisational skills audit help (though some felt this might be considered intrusive) * Wider opportunities for staff to become involved in the SIP (risk that a divide may be created between those who ‘had’ and those who ‘hadn’t’) |

* 1. **Looking for job:** There was an 11% increase in those who agreed with the statement that they wilI be actively looking for a job outside the HRA in the next 12 months

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| **Management response** |
| It could reasonably be assumed that during periods of sustained change where there is a strong possibility of changes in structures, roles and responsibilities that people will feel uncertain about the future and will potentially look at opportunities elsewhere. From a management perspective our role is to communicate as openly and honestly as we can about the implications for staff on any planned changes so that colleagues can determine their own personal response. We hope in the vast majority of cases this will be to continue working together in making the HRA not only a great organisation but a great place to work. However for some it might be that the level of uncertainty means that they will feel more comfortable looking outside the organisation for their future employment and in this respect we would still see an important role for management in supporting those colleagues. |
| **Additional points from staff forum** |
| * It was noted that the HRA has a very ‘bright’ workforce many who are working at Bands 4&5 who are naturally keen to progress and may seem limited opportunities at the HRA |

* 1. **Learning and Development:** ‘I know where to find information on what learning and development opportunities are available to me’ is down by 9% on last year

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| **Management response** |
| This result from the staff survey was disappointing possibly due to the timing of the survey. The Staff L&D Programme and intranet pages were re-launched in early September 2017. Since this period, we have held 33 staff training days, some targeted at line managers, but the majority open to all staff to book on to with events held at the regional centres.  The Learning Zone page of the intranet is updated on a weekly basis. This is where new courses and resources are accessed, most weeks with a link from HRA News to the Learning Zone. This was the most visited page on the intranet in the last 90 days of 2017, after the landing pages. Latest figures will be available soon.  As we hit the 6-month point since the refreshed staff L&D programme was launched, we are intending to go out to staff with a short survey to find out what we can improve on, what we are doing well and any gaps. We hope that the feedback from the 2018 staff survey reflects this progress. |
| **Additional points from staff forum** |
| * It was agreed that the current L&D Programme was much improved on previous years and was being well received by staff and that the results were primarily impacted by the timing of the survey i.e. before the programme had gained traction in the organisation |

* 1. **IT.** I have the IT support I need to do my job effectively is down by3% since 2016 and 9% below the BMG Benchmark.

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| **Management response** |
| There has been a concerted effort to improve the IT Service for staff – with designated team having been set up so that now all day to day IT requirements have a clear process for being requested and managed, These include:   * All aspects of IT setup for starters and leavers * As a point of escalation with our ATOS, our IT service provider   The IT Service manager looks after the relationship with ATOS ensuring that we have a greater level of visibility within the system so that problems and issues can be dealt with more effectively  There are plans to implement an internal service desk system to help keep better track of the multiple requests received in order to log and prioritise and increase visibility of this work.  This will also help with keeping track of orders raised, requests for new kit and importantly managing technical investigation work required.  Future provision of IT Service is being shaped and scoped by the Future Services Programme, a programme being run by the Department of Health. As one of the consuming organisations, the HRA is a member of the programme board so has a voice and an influence on the decision-making. A weekly blog/info in HRA News called ITimes informs users of system downtime and other changes.  A further more detailed survey is due to be rolled out in the coming weeks to try and pinpoint the remaining major areas of concern. |
| **Additional points from staff forum** |
| * Still felt that staff are reluctant to report faults and therefore continue to manage with ‘workarounds’ so HRA never has full picture of issues * Also staff still possibly unaware of the much improved internal support that can be offered to help address problems * Suggested short IT workshops in each regional office may help |

1. **Conclusion**
   1. As has been previously noted overall the results were very positive however as an organisation that strives to continually improve as an employer then it is vital that its leadership endeavours to address those areas which may be having an impact on the morale, capacity and capability of its staff. The opportunity at this board meeting is to further understand, in discussion with staff forum reps, what could be usefully and practically done

**Ian Cook**

**Director of Transformation and Corporate Services**

**15 March 2018**