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| **Agenda item:** | **5** |
| **Attachment:** | **B** |

**HRA BOARD COVER SHEET**

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| **Date of Meeting:** | 12th April 2017 |

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| **Title of Paper:** | Executive Response to 2016 Staff Survey |
| **Purpose of Paper:** | To present to the board the HRA Executive’s 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 – where it was felt helpful the Board have been signposted (through the use of emboldened text) to particular areas in which some focussed discussion would be helpful |
| **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 Corporate Services |
| **Date:** | 05/04/2017 |

1. **Introduction**
	1. This paper represents the management response to the 2016 HRA Staff Survey. It intends to present to the board the HRA Executive’s 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.
	2. (Please note, the paper will not include further analysis of the data and the Board members are asked to refer to the presentation made to the Board in February as the key reference point)
2. **Summary**
	1. Results were generally positive (comparing well to benchmark data scoring above in 41 out of 45 areas) however results had weakened (all be it marginally). Although there were some more significant variations according to the respondents directorate, office, banding and length of service.
	2. In simple terms if you had been with the HRA (or predecessor organisation) for 5 years or longer, were a member of the operations directorate and were paid at Band 3-5 your response was likely to be less positive than those who worked at a senior level, had started within the last 1-2 years and were based in other Directorates.
	3. In summary the **broad themes** emerging from the survey were;
		* Concerns over ability to manage change
		* Manageable workload
		* Confidence to speak up
		* Living our values – Inspiring Leadership/Empowerment
	4. There were also a number of **specific areas of concern;**
* Visibility/Effectiveness of Staff Forum
* Learning and Development (inc. Career development)
* Reliability of IT
* Appraisals (drop in completion rate and format)
* Concern about survey confidentiality
	1. All of these would have contributed to an overall drop in morale in which, as has been mentioned previously, was more pronounced within certain groups of colleagues in certain geographical locations.
1. **Addressing the Broad themes**
	1. The Executive are clear that actively addressing these areas of concern will be vital to ensure that the organisation continues to deliver both an effective ‘day to day’ service and the challenging programme of change proposed within the Service Improvement Programme
	2. Apart from the survey we have been able to gather further feedback through a number of focus groups that were carried out in January 2017 and meetings carried out with operations staff in each of the regional offices.
	3. **Managing change** – There were very positive results related to the question around ‘understanding the need for change’ however there was a more negative outcome regarding the organisations ability to manage change well.
	4. Subsequent discussions with colleagues at a number of local offices and through the focus groups suggest that one of the key factors which contributed to this perception was the inability of the organisation to offer the necessary clarity and explanation of the need for change. An example that has regularly been used by operations colleagues was the implementation of the process to address the amendments backlog
	5. As a result of these findings the Executive has made a concerted effort to ensure, that not only are colleagues informed about why there is a need for change, but that they actively engaged from the start in developing ‘solutions’.
	6. Much of the focus has been in improving the quality of engagement and communication with colleagues around the Service Improvement Programme (SIP) as well as supporting our managers and leaders in developing the skills to help support their teams through change. The Leadership team itself has also taken part in a development session which aimed to provide an opportunity for it to develop a sense of shared purpose and an agreed approach to change management.
	7. Practically this has seen the delivery of the following activities
		* **Dec 2016** – colleagues from bands 3-6 involved in visioning exercise at each office
		* **Jan 2016** – four focus groups with colleagues from all bands was independently facilitated and they considered what changes were needed and why as well as what the HRA needed to be put in place to deliver them effectively
		* **Feb 2017** – four day process design workshop which involved colleagues from all levels
		* **Mar/Apr 2017** – Managing change workshops for middle and junior managers/leaders across the organisation
		* **Mar/Apr 2017** – All colleagues meetings, delivered personally by Directors in each of the offices
		* **Ongoing** – A comprehensive Q&A Bank that is available to all and captures responses to all questions that have been received
	8. **Managing Workload -** Since the survey and through discussions with staff the concern about workload remains an issue, particularly in relation to balancing the very real desire amongst colleagues to positively contribute to the SIP and still being able to meet the demands of their job.
	9. For the first time during the business planning process for 17/18 a concerted effort was made to quantify the resource requirement for the proposed programme of work. Although not an exact science the results showed a significant additional requirement of around 5000 days (of which 3000 would be needed for the SIP) to deliver mandatory services and the HRA’s development programme
	10. These are days which then can’t be used to do the ‘day job’. Colleagues remain worried about how they can be expected to deliver effectively on both fronts. **This represents an area where further discussion at the board would be helpful**, to investigate areas where perhaps pressure could be relieved e.g. the relaxing of some current targets in Operations and pushing forward early on measuring different targets for a different purpose which will achieve both the intended release of pressure to meet timelines and work towards new ways of working.
	11. **Confidence to Speak Up –** A significant minority of colleagues recorded their uncertainty around the ability to speak up (once again the level of this concern varied according to the respondent characteristics described previously)
	12. It is difficult to ascertain precisely what the specific barriers are. Therefore the approach has been to both re-enforce, through consistently strong messaging, the desire of the organisation in encouraging colleagues to speak up (whether its ideas or concerns) and to create the environment where it is safe to do so e.g. after ‘All staff’ meetings when the presentations have been concluded, Directors leave the room and staff reps facilitate a follow up discussion and then pose questions that arise to the Director on their return (anonymously if required)
	13. Colleagues have also been reminded about the HRA’s Freedom to Speak policy which outlines the process by which concerns can be escalated.
	14. It’s appreciated that this does not address the whole issue and there are likely to specific local circumstances and particular team and management relationships that may contribute to this reluctance to ‘speak up’. **This also represents an area where further discussion at the board would be helpful**
	15. **Values –** There was strong general support for the HRA's values, however there were weaker scores for agreeing that the HRA was working in a way that demonstrated **‘Inspiring Leadership’** and ‘**Empowerment’.**

* 1. **Inspiring Leadership -** Directors appreciate their responsibility to ‘walk the talk’ and have played a more direct and active role in personally delivering key information across the office network and actively encouraging colleagues in discussion and feedback.
	2. Concerted efforts to collectively plan for Director led sessions and begin to develop a consistent message and approach will also aid the change process and staff engagement. This visibility will be further enhanced by moving the leadership team meetings around the offices, not just to ‘do the meeting’ but as an additional chance to meet and listen to colleagues.
	3. The investment in our managers and leaders at all levels will also be an important aspect of developing a strong well led organisation. To some extent previous practice had seen the Executive deliver key messages to ‘all’ without creating the opportunity to share with managers first, offering the necessary insight and support that they would need to act as key advocates and champions of change. Feedback from the sessions run for managers have reaffirmed this will be an ongoing priority.
	4. **Empowerment** – Once again difficult to ascertain precise reasons, though recent discussions have given some indication of the possible causes, which are likely to be shared at varying levels across the HRA. These include; being ‘done to’ by senior management with sometimes little time to influence changes that are to being made; simply not having the time to offer anything over and above their job; feeling that its always ‘others’ who get the chance or not being senior enough.
	5. This feedback has been fully taken into account and hopefully this has been demonstrated by the approach that has been taken in delivering the SIP and evidenced by the actions and activities described earlier.
	6. It is intended to have a further discussion around this area at the next Staff Forum, particularly in relation to SIP. The outcome of those discussions can be fed back verbally to the board.
1. **Specific areas of concern**
	1. **Visibility/Effectiveness of Staff Forum -** Since the survey new elections have been held and all posts were filled, which in itself is an encouraging sign. At its meeting in December detailed discussion took place in looking at how the role of the rep could become more effective and what support was needed from the organisation was needed to achieve this. Since then the following activities have been delivered:
* Enhanced intranet presence
* Increased level of communications via HRA News
* Standing item at office centre meetings
* Bespoke development day for staff reps
* Using the staff reps to facilitate discussions around the staff survey and in the all staff VC
	1. This board meeting also acts as another opportunity for the forum to increase its visibility.
	2. However consistent with the theme around workload previously discussed, staff reps are concerned about the growing responsibility that they have for acting as the link between their colleagues and the SIP programme and whether they have sufficient time to do this effectively (currently reps have nominal allocation of around one day a month for ‘forum business’) . **This along with other issues identified by the forum (short paper to follow) offers a useful discussion framework over lunch and to be continued during the board meeting itself.**
	3. **Learning and Development (inc. Career development) -** The function was affected by a number of significant events to its senior management team which resulted in a reduced capacity to deliver the programme of work that was originally intended. The team has now been restructured to provide more integration across our learning, development and training activities and the development of 17/18 L&D plan is nearing completion.
	4. One of its primary objectives is to ensure that there is an equality of opportunity so that colleagues at all grades feel valued and invested in. This also links to the desire to manage our talent more effectively. An update from the Head of L&D will be given at the staff forum meeting which would have taken place the day before the board, so forum colleagues will be able to share their views on progress.
	5. **Reliability of IT -** This has continued to be an issue for most colleagues and significant steps have been taken to build capacity in the organisation to address the problems. As part of the prioritisation process during business planning the appointment of a fixed term IT Service Manager (supported by the Technical Support Officer and IT facilitators in each office) was agreed. However as an immediate response a short-term contractor was engaged to start scoping the role and to ensure a greater level of visibility with ATOS of the difficulties the organisation is facing.
	6. This appears to be making a difference with a greater level of responsiveness from Atos and feedback from colleagues suggests that problems are being resolved (in some areas) a little quicker.
	7. Following an extension of her role to include organisational IT, the Deputy Director Research Systems is also now fully participating in discussions around the re-procurement of the Open Service contract due in around 18 months’ time. However she is also exploring other potential supply options e.g. from larger ALBs.
	8. Governance of our ICT has been improved by broadening the remit of our estates strategy project board to include information and communications technology. The board members are drawn from across all activities and have a staff forum representative included in the membership. This will provide better governance and management of our ICT infrastructure.
	9. **Appraisals (drop in completion rate and format) -** Although satisfaction had improved since 2015 it was noticeable that completion rates had dropped to 79%. There were particular issues in the operations team in one office which became evident as a result of the staff survey and which has now been addressed.
	10. The HR team are addressing this issue as well as questions around format and a proposal will be shared with the leadership team and then the staff forum at its next meeting. There is also a commitment by all directors to 100% appraisal target for 2017
	11. **Concern about survey confidentiality -** Although not a specific question in the survey it was obvious by the seeming reluctance for people to either complete the survey or if they did, not complete the office base, directorate and banding questions that it remains an important area for consideration.
	12. It does appear that there remains a real concern amongst a number of colleagues that the survey is not anonymous, as by cross referencing certain data, it was felt that individuals could be identified. However the point has also been made by some that the lack of ‘anything happening’ as a result of the survey also played a part in colleagues’ decision not to complete.
	13. It’s important to reiterate that management have no access to the raw data and even on request no results that had a cell of less than ten would be made available. However as it has been a recurring theme on this and previous surveys **it would be a further area that it would help to have a discussion at the board about possible approaches to address the situation**
1. **Monitoring**
	1. This paper represents a description of the approach that has been taken so far and related activities that have been delivered. There is not at present an intention to develop a formal action plan as such but more to put in place, as part of future performance dashboard approach, a series of measures that will endeavour to capture on a more regular basis the satisfaction/morale/engagement levels of our colleagues.
	2. Work on this will be led by Director of Finance and Director of Corporate Services, however in the continuing spirit of engagement, the nature of these measures and the methods by which the information will be captured will be done in collaboration with the staff forum and potentially a wider group of colleagues from across the HRA. As an initial suggestion it is proposed that we perhaps look to run an organisational ‘temperature test’ around the end of Qtr 1 (June/July 2017)
2. **Conclusion**
	1. Considerable efforts have been made since the staff survey to address the key issues raised both at an executive and team level. Recent conversations, particularly from discussions that have been held in a number of offices would appear to indicate that the initiatives described previously have had a positive impact, and colleagues are feeling more positive and morale has improved.
	2. Obviously it is still relatively early days to draw any significant conclusions around the ‘success’ of the approach so far, though initial indications are positive. The continuation of this positive trend will be tested by amongst other things; the perception of colleagues of how well they feel they are involved and engaged in SIP and other development initiatives; successful implementation of the L&D plan; a noticeable improvement in IT Service provision and the perceived strength of leadership at all levels across the organisation (not just the Executive)
	3. The purpose of this paper was to inform the board of the Executive’s response to those areas in the 2016 Staff Survey that were considered areas of concern, however it is important to re-iterate that overall, the results demonstrated that the organisation remains a good employer that engages very effectively with its people.