**SCOTTISH FORESTRY EXECUTIVE TEAM**

**Minutes (Draft)**

**26 October 2022**

**SET Attendees:**

Dave Signorini (DS)

Zahid Deen (ZD)

Jonathan Taylor (JT)

Brendan Callaghan (BC)

Alan Hampson (AH)

James Aldred (JA) – minutes

**In Attendance:**

Helen McKay (HM)

Marelle Dalziel (MD) – for items 2, 3

**Apologies:**

Ross MacHardie (RM)

1. **Minutes and actions of previous meeting**

On post creations, it was clarified that the post of Professional Support to the Chief Forester was an existing full time post which had been offered to the current postholder as a development opportunity. The decision was to confirm the occupant as permanent in the post, and to review the post’s scope to align with the expiry of the current Chief Forester’s appointment in July 2023.

The minutes thus amended were agreed.

On outstanding actions:

* AP6/May 22, Health & Safety policy – BC noted that the Health & Safety policy statement would be brought to the next SET, together with a RAG assessment of associated challenges.
* AP3/Sep 22, estates decisions – noted as closed.
* AP4/Sep 22, Agricultural policy – AH undertook to report back to the November meeting.

**Workforce plan:**

MD presented the report, noting the recommendation from auditors that a workforce plan be developed, and the variety of work that was already underway regarding learning and skills, equality and diversity, and the upcoming development of SF’s new Corporate Plan.

In discussion, SET highlighted the importance of ensuring succession planning, particularly where singleton skills were in evidence. HM suggested that the Plan take consideration of trends not just within SF but in partners and external organisations, and that arrangements for monitoring and review should take into account staff survey feedback.

SET noted ongoing difficulties in sourcing the necessary data and monitoring information from the current HR management system, and requested that the Service Level Agreement with Forestry & Land Scotland be reviewed to confirm the agreed level of provision.

* **Action: ZD to review FLS SLA to confirm agreed service level**

DS noted that the audit recommendation was for a high-level Workforce Strategy, and noted the need to avoid duplication with existing strategies and action plans. HM noted the importance of addressing the intersectionality of those plans and strategies, including the Target Operating Model and Improvement Plan.

**It was agreed** that a high-level Workforce Strategy be developed using existing resources, for approval by SET by its April meeting.

* **Action: MD to develop draft Strategy for SET review**

**EDI update:**

MD reported on progress against agreed actions, including the delivery of further ‘engaging the bystander’ training sessions on bullying and harassment, and the production of a draft Skills Development Strategy. The planned implementation of an employee passport scheme had been delayed to January 2023.

MD noted the need to raise awareness around Equality Impact Assessments, particularly their timing and appropriate scale.

SET noted the report and that a video on EDI progress was due to be published shortly.

**Outstanding Audit recommendations**

DS introduced the issue, noting that SF’s non-executive advisors had reported concern regarding the large number of unprogressed audit recommendations. To address this concern and mitigate the associated risks of interventions or sanctions by auditors, DS had undertaken to produce and present an action plan to the 18th November SAG meeting for review and the 13th December Audit Committee for approval.

In discussion, SET members noted the time and resource investments required to fully address some recommendations as they stood, and it was agreed to provide progress reports, planned actions, and mitigation efforts where appropriate.

Where systems were to be reviewed or replaced, DS recommended that Internal Audit be consulted at the design stage, to ensure their requirements were incorporated.

* **Action:** **SET to update progress report; JT/RM to review and produce action plan** **for 18 November SAG meeting.**

**AOB**

JT reported that SF had been served notice by the Covid Inquiry and would be returning an inventory of related documents, including for example a small number of pieces of advice to Ministers on safe Covid working in forestry contexts.

BC noted that staff seeking to book external meeting rooms were being directed to Scottish Government Procurement and told to undertake quote-and-procure exercises. This raised questions of proportionality.

* **Action:** **JT to seek clarification from Procurement as to process and any associated thresholds.**

DS reported that pay negotiations had resulted in an offer being put to the unions for consideration. If agreed, the intention was for this to be paid in the November payroll, backdated to 1st April.