

Background Report Osborne Thomas for HTS Group

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1. Introduction

HTS commissioned Osborne Thomas to carry out a Policy Audit to support the development of their draft People Strategy. This work involved two key areas of activity:

- a) A review of Key documentation - Review of key policies/documents across governance and service delivery
- b) Working practice review- To include high level assessment of the employee experience across HTS.

The Consultant appointed to carry out this review and audit was Lynn Killick (the 'Consultant').

2. Methodology

2.1 Key documentation review

It was agreed that the Consultant would review key policy documents. Following a project initiation meeting Tim Page, HR, Payroll and Communications Manager, and Alex Morris, Finance Director and Company Secretary forwarded the key documents for review. A desk top analysis was carried out on these documents. While not part of the remit, if the Consultant noticed any obvious suggestions to improve format or content these were also captured in the analysis found in Section 3 below.

2.2 Working practice review

To inform this report the Consultant met with 4 focus groups on 17th May consisting of the following:

Focus Group 1 –Directors and Senior Managers

Focus Group 2 – Managers

Focus Group 3 – Commercial Team

Focus Group 4 - Environmental Services

All focus group meetings took place using MS Teams and lasted 90 minutes.

2.3 Findings

This report is laid out with two tables the first detailing the review of the policy documents and the second noting the key points from the focus groups. In each table we have provided commentary as well as a note of any suggested actions that should now be considered. Actions are coded to stress the importance/ risk attached to addressing a point. The coding which applies is as follows:

Quick Win (QW) – issue can/should be addressed immediately (Within 6 months) to have immediate impact

High (H) – issue to be addressed within 3-6 months but will require resource or is dependent on other activity.

Medium (M) – issue is to be addressed within 6-12 months.

Low (L)– no significant action has been suggested or the issue requires attention in 12-24 months and/or this is an area of good practice.

For the first part ('the key documentation') the findings, and recommendations are listed. It will be noted that several recommendations may mean a minimal change to some policies and for some policies, it is the same alteration that is being advised.

For the second part ('the working practice') the current practice and considerations are listed. HTS will need to decide if the considerations align with its direction of travel and then prioritise any viable continuous improvements.

We recommend that once this report has been reviewed, priority is given to the identified High priority areas and also potentially any 'quick wins' that HTS can take action on immediately.

3. Key Documentation review

Document Title	Findings and Recommendations	Action Level
ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION OF HTS (PROPERTY AND ENVIRONMENT) LIMITED	<p>The Articles of Association refer to the role of ‘Chairman’ throughout. This should be replaced with gender neutral language such as ‘Chairperson’.</p> <p>The Articles of Association stipulate a minimum number of members, specifically referencing the inclusion of 3 nominations from the Council.</p> <p>It does not appear that the Articles of Association prevent a broader range of members. In light to the need for increased oversight and the need to co-opt additional skills to support the delivery of the HTS Business Plan we recommend that action is put in place to attract and recruit a diverse range of talented non-executive members to the Board of HTS.</p>	QW
ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION OF HTS (HOUSING AND REGENERATION) LIMITED	<p>The Articles of Association refer to the role of ‘Chairman’ throughout. This should be replaced with gender neutral language such as ‘Chairperson’.</p> <p>The Articles of Association stipulate a minimum number of members, specifically referencing the inclusion of 3 nominations from the Council. If these articles have not yet been ratified consider the scope for expanding this section to stipulate scope for additional members.</p> <p>It does not appear that the Articles of Association prevent a broader range of members. In light to the need for increased oversight and the need to co-opt additional skills to support the delivery of the HTS Business Plan we recommend that action is put in place to attract and recruit a diverse range of talented non-executive members to the Board of HTS.</p>	QW
Scheme of Delegation(HTS H&R)	No observations relevant to People Strategy(noted however about recruitment and role of HDC)	L
Scheme of Delegation (HTS P&E)	No observations relevant to People Strategy (noted however about recruitment and role of HDC)	L
ACAS Feedback Survey	Themes noted. Suggest a new benchmark established once new structures and leadership in place. The pandemic may have affected some scores (most notably around communications	M

	and leadership visibility and perceptions of work load) so these should be areas of focussed attention ahead of future benchmarking exercises.	
HTS Values	See comments in working practice review. More to be done to embed these across organisation. HTS may wish to reflect if new values should be created by staff for new operating model.	QW/H
HTS Training Plan	The training plan will need reviewed to identify future skills needs of current staff. (This will be an output of workforce planning session). The training plan should be expanded to include non-cost training and development.	QW
HTS Succession Plan Report	Content noted. The workforce planning session will support a longer-term view of succession planning. (Beyond apprenticeship pipeline). HTS should work with HDC to explore step down/step up arrangements for staff exploring retirement and staff ready to move into these roles.	QW
Social Inclusion Strategy	Content noted. It is important that this commitment to social inclusion permeates the people strategy. Suggest expansion to support pre-employment	H
Succession & Promotion Tracker	Content noted. Consider scope for increased MI about promotions data. Consider how better use of appraisal will support identification of individuals who wish to explore upwards or sideways moves. Issues to consider relate to transparency and support for people looking for development if they are unsuccessful in a bid for a promotion or if suitable vacancies are not yet available. The people strategy can support HTS retain high performers.	QW
Draft Succession Plan 2019	Content noted. This will require updating considering covid and development of the Business Plan and new roles. The workforce planning process can support this activity.	H
Measuring & Monitoring Sickness Absence to March 2022	Content noted. HTS has put in place pro-active responses to support employee health and wellbeing (physical and mental). The people strategy needs to support HTS manage absence positively so that days lost are reduced and so that staff who need to take sick leave are appropriately supported and that staff coping with impact of reduced productivity are also supported. HTS must also consider need to foster good relations in relation to sickness absence and disability. The focus in the first instance will be ensuring that people managers and trade union representatives have a shared understanding of how sickness absence should and will be managed across HTS.	QW

Equality & Diversity Policy	Consider using hyperlinks to relevant policies. Consider referencing examples of behaviours that will not be tolerated so that people can easily name their harassment. Recommend that the policy explicitly references misogynistic behaviour as well as direct sexual harassment. The policy does not reference gender identities and HTS may wish to consider how it meets in obligations with regard to Gender Reassignment.	M
Performance Appraisal Policy and Procedure	Note that the forms are not included in the policy so no comment on the process is given. Suggest greater emphasis is given to regular contacts and that the assessment of performance should not be a surprise. HTS should ensure focus of the appraisal is to assess future development to support the employee in their ambitions across HTS and to ensure the future needs of HTS are met. The people strategy will include a focus on drawing the benefits of robust appraisal processes and increasing the number of appraisals conducted across the organisation and improving employee perspective of the process.	QW/H
Recruitment and Selection Policy	Recommend that this policy is revisited to reflect appropriate recruitment methods for different roles. For example, trades v call centre staff. Recommend including guides to appropriate assessment methods and interview capture methods. People managers across HTS should be aware of their own bias so that the processes can mitigate for these. The attraction strategies should do more to capitalise on the social inclusion ambitions of HTS and its place in the community so that external partners are advocating on behalf of HTS and driving applications from non-traditional recruits.	QW/H
Flexible Working Policy	Recommend that this policy is revisited to reflect the development of hybrid working solutions and flexibility for all. With specific reference to flexible working requests that require a change in hours consider if the right to request should be available from day one at HTS recognising that flexibility is a key tool for effective retention of staff. The people strategy should prioritise action to develop a hybrid working solution that supports flexible working with a view to increasing retention and improving customer service. Staff involvement will be key to developing the hybrid working solution that works for HTS.	QW

Age profile (ANNEX A)	<p>We have visualised this data for HTS and each work area. As it stands the gender diversity of HTS will reduce considerably if there is not significant new recruitment of women to vacancies across HTS. As HTS are aware there is a significant issue regarding the ageing demographic of the workforce.</p> <p>HTS will need to consider how it can facilitate opportunities for new recruits and workers in younger age brackets. Suggestions to consider include phased retirement for staff who may be on the brink of retirement but do not wish to fully retire, taking into account HTS pension arrangements of the LPGS.</p> <p>HTS should also consider how workers likely to stay with HTS but nearing retirement can continue to supported to develop and fulfil new roles/increase productivity across HTS.</p>	H
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4. Working practice review

Document	Current practice	Considerations	Action Level
Customer Engagement: How do we engage with our customers			
How do you know you are doing a good job?	<p>Participants reported that HTS staff take a great deal of pride in their work.</p> <p>Complaints are monitored and acted upon.</p> <p>Participants reported issues with managing client expectations which could result in impacts on core HTS activity when HTS staff</p>	<p>Consider how the contribution of HTS staff can be celebrated.</p> <p>Consider how HTS is better able to capture the impact of responding to unexpected or immediate</p>	M

	are required to cover services outwith their core brief.	client demands. Can Board members act as an HTS advocate?	
How do you foster good relations across all local communities/other interest/voluntary groups/outside experts	Participants reported being aware of lots of communications about community engagement.	Consider how HTS can work with community groups to increase advocacy for HTS with a view to increasing referrals for apprenticeships and jobs with HTS.	M
Responsible Governance: fair leadership that role models appropriate behaviours and supports performance			
Do you know the profile of your Board members? Are they reflective of the communities you operate in? Do you have aspirational targets?	The profile is known to an extent (Age/Gender). No targets in place as membership is determined by nominations from the Local Authority.	Recognising that a diverse board brings benefits HTS should seek to appoint external members who bring diversity of lived experience as well as diversity of skill/experience.	H
Are your Board appraised? Require competencies?	Participants recognised that the non-executive and executive needs new skills and experience to deliver its ambitious Business Plan.	HTS must conduct a skills audit of its Board members so that it can formulate a plan to bring in the required skills to support the HTS executive deliver the business plan.	H

		<p>A first step will be to update the non-exec skills matrix and develop a recruitment and development plan for board members to ensure they are clear on their governance responsibilities and so that HTS has a succession plan in place for Non exec board recruitment.</p> <p>HTS should work with the Board Chair and Local Authority to ensure buy-in to this process.</p>	
<p>Fair Employment: A skilled and committed workforce</p>			
<p>How is flexible working supported?</p>	<p>Participants spoke about their experience of flexible working in the context of the pandemic. Varying experiences were reported.</p> <p>Some participants suggested that HTS or their own line managers did not 'trust' staff to work from</p>	<p>HTS should involve staff and staff side representatives in the development of a hybrid working solution that is consistent in its delivery and ensures hybrid benefits for staff unable to work</p>	<p>QW/H</p>

	<p>home. Others reported increases in productivity because of home working but that this had been unilaterally stopped when government guidance changed resulting in increased stress for staff and a reduction in productivity.</p> <p>Participants also reported a ‘two tier’ approach. On the one hand staff not able to work from home not being afforded that choice and on the other hand staff who were working from home having to use annual leave to address burnout issues due to the demands of home working and home schooling while other staff on furlough had their leave protected.</p> <p>Participants also reported that ad-hoc sickness absence has increased since home working stopped and that this is causing increased pressure on workload.</p>	<p>from alternate locations.</p> <p>To increase productivity and counter the reported increase in sickness absence HTS should prioritise action to implement hybrid working.</p> <p>Once decisions have been made HTS should work with its Trade Union Partners and mid-level managers to ensure the new hybrid model is communicated, understood, and implemented.</p> <p>HTS SMT should monitor update of hybrid working to ensure no staff group or work area, including front line staff, is prevented from accessing the solution appropriate to their work type and in accordance</p>	
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<p>Do you know the profile of your employees? Are they reflective of the communities you operate in? What do you do with the information? Do you have aspirational targets?</p>	<p>Participants reported gender segregation in certain areas of the workforce (women underrepresented in trades for example) and an ageing workforce.</p> <p>Participants reported that they were keeping expression of interest lists for new recruits and undertaking pre-employment activity but that more could be done to ensure there is a consistent approach and more effective translation into applications and appointments.</p>	<p>with business needs.</p> <p>Recommend a review of recruitment policy and practice, recognising that a one size fits all approach will not work for HTS in its current or future format.</p> <p>There is much to build on but HTS will benefit for more innovation in its approach to recruitment especially when pay is not a significant attraction factor.</p>	<p>H</p>
<p>Are the appropriate employment policies in place.</p>	<p>Staff recognised that there had been a drive to improve policies. However, staff also reported a sense that policies can ‘work against you’ and that on occasion the interpretation of policies differed from team to team and person to person .</p>	<p>Would suggest that clear one page flow charts are made available with clarity of support points.</p> <p>HTS may wish to consider how it supports its managers with routine people management as</p>	<p>M</p>

	<p>There was a view that ‘HR’ or Management could cut across line manager autonomy at the end stage of decision making rendering the process pointless and to an extent damaging for all involved. (examples given mainly linked to grievance or managing absence and performance).</p> <p>Participants reported that the sickness absence policy was not workable.</p> <p>Participants also shared concerns about data sharing (or the lack thereof) which hampered appropriate management of sickness absence.</p> <p>Participants also cited frustrations linked to cover of sickness and potentially views about staff who are on frequent or long term sickness absence. This could cut across HTS’ ambitions about</p>	<p>participants expressed frustration with the current system.</p> <p>HTS may wish to consider how it could utilise AI as part of its digital strategy to embed consistency and reduce the burden of routine enquiries to HR staff.</p>	
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	<p>disability inclusion.</p> <p>However, participants highlighted that policies were easy to access and available on 'SharePoint'.</p>		
<p>Do staff understand their responsibilities and their expected of standard behaviour</p>	<p>Overall participants reported that there was good standard of behaviour and that induction sets out expectations. There was a feeling that issues did not get brushed under the carpet but that old habits had to change and that this would require some work and a shift in attitudes.</p> <p>Participants were not able to recall involvement in the setting of the HTS values.</p>	<p>We would recommend asking each team from the bottom up to consider how the values should be demonstrated in their work area. Identifying what good looks like and what unacceptable behaviours look like. This will increase ownership of the values and will ensure there is clear understanding of acceptable and unacceptable behaviours.</p>	<p>QW</p>
<p>Do staff use appropriate inclusive language in their daily interactions?</p>	<p>Participants generally found that the workplace was inclusive but reported some longstanding behaviours (nicknames etc) that could be interpreted as being exclusive or could be replicated by new people and cause offence.</p>	<p>See suggestions about embedding values in each team so there is co-creation of acceptable behaviours.</p>	<p>M</p>

<p>How do you look after the physical and mental wellbeing of staff</p>	<p>Participants reports a focus on mental health and wellbeing with many instances of pro-active and very human centred approaches to ensure staff wellbeing, particularly during the pandemic. However, participants reported varying attitudes to support from different line managers.</p> <p>Participants advised that HTS colleagues had been trained as Mental Health First Aiders and that there was a new Mental Health Policy.</p> <p>Participants also highlighted various types of support including employee assistance as sessions including massage and yoga.</p> <p>Participants also mentioned the opt-in Health Assessments that were seen as a positive measure to catch underlying health issues. However, participants reported that in some areas staff were</p>	<p>Take action to ensure consistency of approach with regard to access to health screening and preventative measures. Consider how time can be protected to support staff participate in wellbeing activities.</p>	<p>M</p>
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	<p>actively prevented from participating in these screening sessions as time was not made available to them.</p>		
<p>How do you keep staff updated?</p>	<p>Participants at the focus group sessions all reported issues with communications. With some participants describing themselves as ‘mushrooms’ as they are kept in the dark. There seemed to be a sense that there were blockages to information compounded with disinterest in information coming down the organisation.</p> <p>Toolbox talks were cited as an effective way to engage with staff and participants reported that in many instances they were expanding the scope of these conversations so that they were more like mini team meetings. There was a feeling that staff were more likely to speak up in these small groups.</p>	<p>A communications plan needs to be put in place. Improved visibility of SMT instead of reliance on emails/texts will be required.</p> <p>Consider if small group chats such as TBT can be replicated as an efficient method of communication in addition to traditional team or staff briefs.</p>	<p>QW/H</p>

	<p>Some participants reported a perception that staff communications had been stopped during the pandemic. Giving weight to the perception that staff communications, including the quarterly briefings, could become blocked.</p> <p>Participants reported that posters were used to communicate information and raise awareness, for example information about the Health Committee.</p>		
<p>How do you listen to staff?</p>	<p>Participants were not able to report ways in which ideas/suggestions/concerns could be relayed from the front line to the senior management. As such participants reported that they would not be inclined to share ideas for improvement.</p> <p>Good relations were reported with Trades Unions but this</p>	<p>We would recommend that SMT visibility increases at the front line of the organisation. This could take place as a reinstatement of the 'Ask the Governor' sessions and/or as part of a commitment for senior managers and middle managers to take the</p>	<p>QW</p>

	relationship is perhaps not used to its full advantage.	opportunity to work shadow at the frontline and to provide work shadow opportunities for front line staff at SMT level.	
How is performance assessed?	<p>Participants did not speak favourably about the appraisal process. In most cases participants reported that appraisal did not take place and when it did it was viewed as a ‘tick box exercise’.</p> <p>Appraisal was not viewed as a mechanism to support development.</p> <p>However, participants reported that in some areas that there was a culture of ongoing and frequent 1-2-1’s but this varied from team to team.</p> <p>Participants reported that it was difficult to see the benefit of appraisals.</p>	<p>HTS needs to invest in efforts to improve the perception of appraisal with a view to increasing appraisal rates to 100%. This will require activity to ensure middle and front line management buy-in.</p> <p>HTS should use appraisal as a tool to inform business planning/delivery as well as its succession planning activity.</p>	H
How is succession planned?	Participants had mixed awareness levels with regard to the HTS	Refer to comments about	

	<p>approach to succession. There was a general consensus that the succession plan is only operating at a certain level and for certain types of people.</p> <p>Participants cited the challenge of an ageing workforce across HTS and difficulties in attracting and retaining young people and people new to the organisation.</p> <p>Participants suggested that from their perspective there was a lack of planning for the short term and long-term resulting in a lack of cover and increased pressure on existing roles.</p> <p>Participants suggested more could be done to support transitions across HTS</p>	<p>appraisal.</p> <p>HTS needs to ensure transparency and fairness are key to ‘talent spotting’ and consider how high potential staff can be developed and retained.</p> <p>HTS May wish to consider internal shadowing and external secondments.</p>	<p>H</p>
<p>How are staff rewarded?</p>	<p>Participants reported the challenges of the pay structures. Participants suggested that historic pay anomalies continue</p>	<p>Can HTS consider share in growth reward structures? As a priority HTS should</p>	<p>M</p>

	<p>even when staff have left post. (Examples given of grade 4 & 5 drivers).</p> <p>Participants queried how performance (and attendance) could be incentivised.</p> <p>HTS operates various recognition/incentive programmes (Driver of the month/H&Safety Red Letter day rewards)</p> <p>Staff are also able to participate in a staff lottery with benefits for charity and staff winners.</p>	<p>review reported pay anomalies so that staff can be put on protection where necessary and new appointments can be made at correct levels/ and or staff on wrong levels can be paid according to their correct evaluation point.</p>	
<p>Do you have the resources required to do your job?</p>	<p>Participants highlighted issues with differences in access to resources. PPE/Clothing was noted as an issue where there</p>	<p>Suggest further staff involvement to identify quick wins with regard to access to PPE/Clothing.</p>	<p>QW</p>

	<p>was no consistency and a 'computer says no' approach.</p>		
<p>What are the best things about working at HTS?</p>	<p>Participants were united in their belief that HTS provided a work family, a place of support and safety.</p> <p>Participants advised that the working hours and pension package were valuable and aided retention for those staff who valued those things.</p> <p>Participants noted that they were proud of the work that they did and were proud to work for HTS.</p> <p>Participants reported that the Health and Wellbeing support was good.</p> <p>Participants reported that frontline staff are, and are seen to be, helpful.</p> <p>Participants reported that HTS is recognised externally by the local</p>	<p>Consider how HTS can develop a 'human library' capturing the stories of the HTS family.</p> <p>Consider how HTS staff can be used to promote HTS as a great place to work</p>	<p>L/QW</p>

	<p>media and community as a good employer.</p>		
<p>What would make working at HTS better?</p>	<p>Participants noted that the constraints of the benefits package (pay) made it hard to attract and retain 'fresh blood'.</p> <p>Participants advised that progression routes are not clear and there is no scope for sideways development even on an informal basis to counter silo working or to improve knowledge of own role.</p> <p>Participants noted that better planning could ease the pressure of absences caused by holidays, vacancies and sickness absence.</p> <p>Participants expressed concern about fairness and access to opportunities.</p> <p>Participants expressed concern about consistency of approach,</p>	<p>See recommended people strategy</p>	<p>H</p>

	<p>for example inconsistent approach to return to work conversations and inconsistent approach to feedback on performance.</p> <p>Participants suggested they would like to see more recognition of the discretionary effort put into delivering a good service.</p>		
<p>How do you access training for your job?</p>	<p>Participants reported that training was predominantly focussed on regulatory requirements. Participants reported that SHEC held the training budget. There was a sense that the training programme was not able to respond to changing job roles and as a result staff were not being equipped to the jobs they will need to perform in the near future.</p> <p>Participants also suggested that there was a need to know 'how to work the system' to access training that is not focussed on</p>	<p>Consider what training for the future will look like and update the training plan accordingly. (Workforce planning day)</p> <p>Consider how no and low-cost training and development can be captured in the training plan. For example, reverse mentoring. Back to floor, and work shadowing opportunities.</p>	<p>H</p>

	regulatory or health and safety requirements.		
Responsible procurement: skilled and committed contractors			
What processes are in place to ensure your suppliers/contractors uphold your values and commitments to social inclusion? E.g., equal opp policy or adhere to yours.	Participants suggested that the procurement process was robust and that suppliers expected to mirror or exceed your policy positions.	Continue to test and probe suppliers on their commitment to your values (for example social inclusion)	L

5. Summary of findings

Thank you for providing us with the information requested. Our review has highlighted that there are several areas for attention that will enable HTS to make quick progress on some of the people challenges that it needs to address to ensure that there is a good foundation in place to support the delivery of the HTS Business Plan.

In addition, the consultant was aware that not all policies/documents were reviewed and therefore, recommends that HTS considers the principles and findings from the policies reviewed are considered in relation to any other appropriate policies/documents.

In terms of qualitative feedback, the Consultant asked some of those interviewed in the focus group to describe (ideally in one word) what it is like to work at HTS, the feedback provided was as follows:

- Challenging
- No two days are the same
- Family
- Supportive
- Caring
- Friendly
- Good fun
- No support
- Evolving
- Two tier workforce
- Staff kept in the dark

The Consultant found that overall, the staff feedback about working as part of the HTS team was incredibly positive. However, there was also a correct recognition that there was still work to be done with a focus on communication and involvement of staff both in the development of the action plans to support the people strategy and the delivery of the Business Plan. Respondents seemed to welcome the opportunity to take part in the discussion and were glad of the opportunity to be heard. More work will be required to involve staff in scenario planning for the future of HTS. The planned workforce development session will support HTS with this activity

There are a lot of considerations listed but HTS should view these as a menu to which they review and identify areas they can realistically focus on over an agreed set period.

In summary the Consultant found that the main areas of focus were:

1. Communication— ensure that you have mechanisms in place that support consistency of message and enable two-way communication.
2. People Management – Sickness absence is a key area of concern. Immediate focus should be given to ensure that people managers, particularly those at middle and front line management positions, are equipped to confidently deal with sickness absence – both in terms of managing the individual as well as the impact on broader teams.
3. Succession Planning – HTS is working in a challenging, competitive market and is faced with recruitment challenges and an ageing workforce. HTS needs to focus on effective recruitment solutions to address current vacancy rates. However, it needs to shift its

succession planning activity to look at future recruitment challenges. The planned workforce planning session will be an important first step.

4. Board Development – HTS requires a strong board equipped to support and direct the executive implement the Business Plan. Immediate action should be taken to diversify the board both in terms of skills and lived experience.
5. Reward and Recognition – commit to a plan to re-shape the reward and recognition package, focussing on areas within HTS control such as hybrid working and recognition and reward for high performance.

These areas of focus, although directed by the feedback from HTS staff and a review of HTS documentation, are common across a range of organisations; -

New ways of working and increased pressures brought about by the pandemic and its impact have affected the way in which people and teams communicate. Increased focus on this area by HTS will provide strong foundations for the implementation of the aims of the Business Plan.

Further, the pandemic has contributed to changing patterns of sickness absence and we know that organisations with a higher proportion of workers in older age groups and/or manual roles are at more likely to lose days worked due to sicking absence¹. By focussing on this area HTS will be positioned to cut costs and increase productivity.

A changing world of work, increased recognition of the balance of life inside and outside of work, combined with ambitions around sustainability and technological advancements are driving organisations in many sectors to consider not only how to attract the best talent, but also to give greater thought to the future skills required for success. The HTS Business Plan has identified the need to for the organisation to be agile and to plan for, rather than respond to, changing needs.

Board, and broader workforce diversity, remains a challenge across a range of sectors. Recent analysis suggests that the rate of change of gender diversity at senior levels remains glacially slow.² However, the prevailing evidence illustrates the business benefits that a diverse leadership team and board level membership brings. Although not unique in its make-up the HTS Board as it stands offers little visible diversity and may be missing out on the competitive edge that a more diverse Board can bring.

Finally, it is not unusual for organisations, particularly those that have inherited staff through mergers and TUPE arrangements, to have historical anomalies in pay. Further, pay constraint and set terms and conditions require a creative look at reward and recognition structures so that equal pay is assured and so that staff are motivated to join, and perform well across, HTS.

¹ [Sickness absence in the UK labour market - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk)

² [https://www.womenonboards.net/womenonboards-AU/media/UK-PDFs-Research-Reports/WoB_The-Hidden-Truth-22\(1\).pdf](https://www.womenonboards.net/womenonboards-AU/media/UK-PDFs-Research-Reports/WoB_The-Hidden-Truth-22(1).pdf)

6. Next steps

We found many examples of work to be proud of across HTS, and we were struck by the open and curious nature of the staff who contributed to the working practice review. We recommend that you take action to harness the interest of staff and importantly take time to capture and promote the many examples of good practice that are prevalent across HTS so that you can showcase HTS as a great place to work.

We have also identified some areas for attention, most notably around communication, appraisal, values, recruitment, and Board make-up. We have also identified areas where HTS can most likely make some quick gains (for example in relation to PPE).

We have used our findings to inform the development of a draft people strategy for HTS. We would recommend that you consider the findings of this report alongside the draft people strategy. In this connection, we would strongly encourage you to consider the resource requirements, whether that might relate to staffing, systems or procurement that will be required to deliver the different elements of the people strategy so that resourced action plans can be developed.

We hope that you find this report helpful. If you would like to discuss this further, please contact us.

The Consultant would like to thank all those involved for their full co-operation and time during this review.