HALIFAX

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TO: Chair and Members of Audit and Finance Standing Committee

SUBMITTED BY: **- Original Signed -**
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Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: February 3, 2023

SUBJECT: Action Plan on Management of Respectful Workplaces Audit Recommendations

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INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

On June 22, 2022, Regional Council passed the following motion:

1. Request a staff report on an action plan to address the recommendations within the Management of Respectful Workplaces Audit Report within six months.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter Section 50 (2), as follows:

(2) The Auditor General shall examine, in the manner and to the extent the Auditor General considers necessary, the accounts, procedures and programs of the Municipality and any municipal body of the Municipality, as that term is defined in Section 461 of the _Municipal Government Act_, or person or body corporate receiving a grant from the Municipality, to evaluate

(a)   whether the rules and procedures applied are sufficient to ensure an effective control of sums received and expended, adequate safeguarding and control of public property and appropriate records management;

(b)   if money authorized to be spent has been expended with due regard to economy and efficiency;

(c)   if money has been spent with proper authorization and according to an appropriation;

(d)   if applicable procedures and policies encourage efficient use of resources and discourage waste and inefficiency; and

(e)   whether programs, operations and activities have been effective.

BACKGROUND

The Management of Respectful Workplaces Audit – June 2022 was a performance audit to assess whether:

- HRM has systems to prevent, identify and address workplace behaviour incidents to ensure a respectful workplace; and
- Workplace behaviour complaints are managed to ensure a fair, effective and confidential process.

DISCUSSION

The Action Plan found in Attachment 1 identifies the approach and immediate steps to meet the 15 recommendations from the audit. A dedicated resource has been assigned to project to manage the completion of the recommendations. Priority has initially been placed on recommendation #2, allowing to develop detailed plans with timelines to implement the remaining recommendations from the ESR report in 2016 and KPMG report from 2019.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

No community engagement was required.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Action Plan Response to Respectful Workplaces Audit 2022

A copy of this report can be obtained online at halifax.ca or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

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Action Plan Response to Management of Respectful Workplaces Audit

Prepared by:

Kate Apestiguy
Human Resources and Corporate Communications
January 2023

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Summary Table

#	Status	Anticipated Completion
1	In Progress	December 31, 2023
2	In Progress	June 30, 2023
3	In Progress	June 30, 2023
4	Complete	N/A
5	In Progress	June 30, 2023
6	In Progress	June 30, 2023
7	In Progress	June 30, 2023
8	In Progress	June 30, 2023
9	In Progress	June 30, 2023
10	In Progress	June 30, 2023
11	Complete	N/A
12	Complete	N/A
13	Complete	N/A
14	Complete	N/A
15	Complete	N/A

Recommendation 1

HRCC should establish documented objectives with performance measures, detailing how to achieve the strategic initative of an enhanced workplace culture.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation. On behalf of leadership, HRCC will develop a plan of HR service it will provide to the organization to foster a respectful workplace at the business unit level.

Action Plan for Recommendation 1:

1. HRCC will implement a Respectful Workplace Program that will include updated, concise policies that clearly define offensive workplace behaviours including harassment, discrimination and violence; a toolkit for employees outlining the complaint process and identifying supports for employee; training opportunities for employees and leaders; and tools for leaders to promote respect and manage conflict in the workplace.
   - Current status: The various components of the Respectful Workplace Program are in draft form and under review in HRCC with broader consultation to follow (including the Diversity & Inclusion Office/ANSAIO D&I, Legal, unions). Anticipated completion of the content of the Respectful Workplace Program is June 30, 2023, with roll-out to follow in the 2023/24 fiscal year. The roll-out will be customized to the business units to ensure all employees have access to the materials.
2. HRCC will develop measures to assess the effectiveness of its Respectful Workplace Program at the BU level.
   - Current status: Not started. The development of the measures will commence when the various components of the Respectful Workplace Program are finalized. Measures are likely to include number of training opportunities provided, number of training attendees, number of workplace complaints by type, number of findings of offensive workplace behaviour, employee engagement scores, number of formal and informal resolutions completed, number of proactive workplace assessments conducted, and number of conflict coaching sessions conducted.   Anticipated completion is December 31, 2023.

Recommendation 2

HRCC should develop detailed plans, with timelines, to implement the remaining recommendations from the 2016 and 2019 consultant reports. If management does not plan to implement certain recommendations, this should be documented and communicated to Regional Council as appropriate.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation. This work is a priority for the HRCC business unit and is part of its business plan objectives for 22/23, already approved by Regional Council. A dedicated resource will be assigned to this work. As some recommendations are not the responsibility of the HRCC business unit, HRCC will work with those business units to support the development of plans to implement the recommendations that are accepted by management.

Action Plan for Recommendation 2:

1. Designate a resource within HRCC to review the recommendations in detail and lead the implementation of the remaining recommendations.
   - Current Status: In progress. A designated resource was put in place in June 2022 to lead the implementation of the recommendations. Of the 89 accepted ESR recommendations, 77 are complete. Of the 26 accepted KPMG recommendations, 23

are complete. There is supporting documentation for each completed recommendation. Regional Council will receive a report on the remaining recommendations early in fiscal 2023/24.

Recommendation 3

HRCC should update the Workplace Rights Harassment Prevention Policy and the Workplace Violence Prevention Corporate Procedure to address issues identified by external consultants, and this audit. Additionally, timelines should be established.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation. The Workplace Rights Harassment Prevention Policy and the Workplace Violence Prevention Corporate Procedure are both in the process of being revised and had been prior to the audit. A plan for completing this work, including timelines for implementation, will be developed.

Action Plan for Recommendation 3

1. Assign the Corporate Safety team to update the Workplace Violence Prevention Corporate Procedure.
   - Current Status: The Workplace Violence Prevention Corporate Procedure was turned into a policy. The policy is in draft form and is under review internally in HRCC with broader consultation to follow. Anticipated completion is June 30, 2023, with roll-out to follow by the end of the 2023/24 fiscal year, as part of the Respectful Workplace Program referenced in Recommendation 1.

2. Assign the Conflict Resolution team to update the Workplace Rights Harassment Prevention Policy.
   - Current Status: The Policy is in draft form and is under review internally in HRCC with broader consultation to follow. Anticipated completion is June 30, 2023, with roll-out to follow by the end of the 2023/24 fiscal year, as part of the Respectful Workplace Program referenced in Recommendation 1.

Recommendation 4

HRCC should work with business units to ensure the Workplace Rights Harassment Prevention Policy is accessible to those without computers, such as posting it in common areas.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation. HRCC will work with business units to ensure the policy is accessible to all employees. HRCC will communicate with business units through established channels and send out quarterly reminders to business units to confirm that policy remains posted.

Action Plan for Recommendation 4

1. HRCC will communicate with business units through Coordinators and send out quarterly reminders to business units to confirm the policy remains posted.
   - Current Status: The Workplace Rights Harassment Prevention Policy was sent to business units in January 2023 with a request to post the policy in all work areas. HRCC will send quarterly reminders to business units to ensure the policy remains posted and accessible to all employees.

Recommendation 5

HRM should assign responsibility to centrally track business unit employee engagement initiatives. The responsibility should include requiring business units to develop formal action plans, ensuring the plans address survey results, and monitoring progress.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation. An external consultant has already been engaged to develop business unit action plans based on pending employee engagement survey results. HRCC will support business units in executing these plans and monitoring progress.

Action Plan for Recommendation 5

1. HRCC will create an employee engagement toolkit for leaders using best practice research. The toolkit is for leaders to use in developing and implementing the action plans provided by the external consultant and employee engagement strategies specific to their survey results and unique business unit composition. A position in HRCC will be designated to focus on employee engagement. The Human Resources Business Partners will support their assigned business units in developing and executing the engagement plans for their assigned business units.
   - Current Status: Best practice research is underway. Anticipated completion is June 30, 2023.

2. A designated resource in HRCC will create and manage a central tracking process to track employee engagement initiatives across the organization. This would include identifying key performance indicators, collecting and collating feedback and data through a variety of means, such as the formal engagement survey, pulse surveys, focus groups and exit interview data.
   - Current Status: Tracking process is under development. Anticipated completion is June 30, 2023.

Recommendation 6

HRM should implement a whistleblower policy that includes steps on how whistleblowers will be protected and an anonymous reporting tool. The policy and tool should be communicated to all HRM employees and accessible through HRM communication channels.

Management Response

Management agrees with this recommendation. HRCC will conduct best practice research to determine if a separate whistleblower policy is needed in order to implement the recommendation or if the current Code of Conduct should be renamed and updated to include these requirements.

Action Plan for Recommendation

1. HRCC will conduct best practice research to determine if a separate whistleblower policy is needed in order to implement the recommendation or if the current Code of Conduct should be renamed and updated to include these requirements.
    *   Current status: A review is currently underway. Anticipated completion is June 30, 2023. Once the determination is made, the policy updates will be completed, with roll-out by the end of the 2023/24 fiscal year, as part of the Respectful Workplace Program referenced in Recommendation 1.

Recommendation 7

HRM should implement a process to ensure information received through the confidential reporting tool is appropriately reviewed and investigated. This should include detailed roles and responsibilities, and appropriate record keeping.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation. HRCC will work with the CAO's office to review and document the current process.

Action Plan for Recommendation 7

1. HRCC will work with the CAO's office to review the current confidential hotline procedure and update as required.
    *   Current Status: A review of the current process is underway. Anticipated completion of the updated procedure is June 30, 2023, with roll-out to follow by the end of the 2023/24 fiscal year, as part of the Respectful Workplace Program referenced in Recommendation 1.

Recommendation 8

HRCC should implement a process to assess identified workplace issues which fall outside of the scope of an investigation. This should include working with business units to ensure issues are addressed as appropriate.

Management Response

Management agrees in part with the recommendation. HRCC currently offers options such as workplace assessments, development of customized training for business units, and additional communication tools and support. HRCC will develop and implement a process to assess which of these options may best address issues that do not warrant a formal investigation.

Action Plan for Recommendation 8

1. Update the current process to include options to best address issues that do not warrant a formal investigation and a centralized tracking system.
   - Current Status: Development of internal guidelines and tracking system are in progress; anticipated completion is June 30, 2023. The current Worplace Rights Harassment Prevention Policy contains a number of informal resolution options. Details and support for implemtnation of these options will be addressed in the Respectful Workplace Program referenced in Recommendation 1.

Recommendation 9

HRCC should implement a process to periodically assess whether HRM employees have taken key respectful workplace courses. This should include taking steps to ensure those who have not completed training take it and considering whether the number of course offerings is sufficient.

Management Response

Management agrees in part with the recommendation. Tracking and reporting is limited by the absence of an organization wide Learning Management System. HRCC will review our current tracking tool and process to determine opportunities to improve within these confines.

Action Plan for Recommendation 9

1. HRCC will circulate a list to each business unit of employees who have attended the applicable training courses on an annual basis.
   - Current Status: In the absence of the LMS implementation, HR is using the functionality within the Employee Central system to track training attendance. Reporting and first communication to business units will occur in April 2023 with annual reminders to follow. It is anticipated that the LMS project will commence in 2023/24 and this implementation will further improve the frequency of reporting.
2. HRCC will evaluate its course offerings and adjust the frequency as required.

- Current Status: Anticipated completion June 30, 2023, with roll-out to follow by the end of the 2023/24 fiscal year, as part of the Respectful Workplace Program referenced in Recommendation 1. The Respectful Workplace Program will include a suite of training resources that will be delivered through a combination of in-person training, virtual training and online videos, and will include full training programs and refresher programs, with a recommended frequency for employees and leaders to attend these programs. Attendance at the training programs will be tracked by HRCC.

Recommendation 10

HRCC should establish timelines for complaint intake and investigation, and monitor files that go beyond the standard timeline to determine if additional steps are needed.

Management Response

Management agrees in part with the recommendation. Internal case management will be established based on the scope and complexity of the individual file and regularly monitored to address any timeliness concerns.

Action Plan for Recommendation 10

1. HRCC will conduct best practice research and develop internal guidelines for complaint response timelines and expectations.
    - Current Status: Best practice research completed. Development of internal guidelines is in progress. Bi-weekly case review meetings are being held to ensure files are progressing in a timely fashion. Anticipated completion of timelines is June 30, 2023.

Recommendation 11

HRCC should implement file documentation requirements, to help ensure key steps are documented and any investigation and resolution are supported.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation. A file management system will be created and implemented.

Action Plan for Recommendation 11

1. HRCC will create an internal file management process.
    - Current Status: Complete and implemented. A Case Management Form is being used with all conflict files. The Form contains a list of all key steps in the conflict resolution process including intake, resolution and conclusion and requires the Conflict Resolution Specialist to record the dates of each of these processes and any other pertinent case management notes.

Recommendation 12

HRCC should implement quality control checks on harassment complaint files.   This should be done by a second person to ensure all necessary documents are filed. A file completion checklist may assist with this.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation. This will be part of the file management system created as outlined in Recommendation 11.

Action Plan for Recommendation 12

1. HRCC will create a complaint file management checklist and combine with #11 in file management process.
    * Current Status: Complete and implemented. A Conflict Complaint File Documentation Checklist is being used with all conflict files. The checklist contains a list of all documents that are required to be in a conflict file, including the Case Management Form referenced in Recommendation 11, and requires a second reviewer to confirm and sign off that the file is complete.

Recommendation 13

HRCC should monitor violence incidents in health and safety system to ensure an appropriate investigation is completed and documented.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation. HRCC will monitor all violence incidents reported in EHSM and follow-up with business units to ensure the Corporate Procedure is followed. HRCC will also maintain a log of incidents reported, including (but not limited to) date reported, reporing person, date complete, and findings.

Action Plan for Recommendation 13

1. Corporate Safety will monitor all violence incidents reported in EHSM and follow up with business units to ensure corporate procedure is followed and properly documented.
    * Current Status Complete and implemented. Incident log has been created and is being updated on a regular basis; files are incidents in EHSM are being reviewed on a biweekly basis and the Corporate Safety team is following up with business units to offer support and assistance as required.

Recommendation 14

HRCC should implement a process to ensure access to confidential information (physical and electronic files) is updated when individuals change positions or leave HRM.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation. A process will be established to ensure access is updated when staffing changes occur. HRCC will also conduct a review quarterly of access to confidential physical and electronic files to ensure there is no improper access.

Action Plan for Recommendation 14

1.   HRCC will create a process to ensure access is updated when staffing changes occur. HRCC will also conduct a quarterly review of access to confidential and electronic files to ensure there is no improper access.
     - Current Status: Complete. IT implemented automation which is tied to an employee's active directory account. Access changes occur when employee is offboarded, transferred, etc. Offboarding of employees is assigned to the Administrative Assistant for each team in HRCC.

Recommendation 15

HRCC should implement a process to ensure access to the health and safety information system is updated when employees change positions or leave HRM.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation. A process will be established to ensure access is updated when staffing changes occur. HRCC will also conduct a review quarterly of access to confidential physical and electronic files to ensure there is no improper access.

Action Plan for Recommendation 15

1.   Role-based permissions to be established for EHSM access.
     - Current Status: Complete and implemented. Access to EHSM is set up in the system based on the position requirements and not the individual employee. As employees change positions within the organization, their access to the EHSM system automatically changes to reflect the access that is granted to their new position. This ensures that when an employee leaves a position, they no longer have access associated with their former position. The exception is certain employees within Halifax Transit who have two system ID's. This requires a manual process, which has been implemented in the offboarding process within Halifax Transit.