

Deputy Sam Mézec
Chair
Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel

By email

30th August 2023

Dear Chair,

People and Culture Follow-up Review Response.

Thank you for your letter on the 2nd August. The Minister for External Relations has asked me to respond on this matter in my capacity as Assistant Minister for External Relations.

You asked a number of questions which I answer below.

- 1. The internal processes and procedures in your department which can be used by employees to address complaints and grievances including for inappropriate behaviour, bullying and harassment. We are aware that there are set States of Jersey policies relating to these matters, however we would like to know the specific process that would be followed by employees within your department.**

Employees are encouraged to report complaints or grievances to their immediate line-manager.

If the complaint involves the line-manager, employees should contact the Business Performance and Planning Manager who will support the employee through the complaints procedure by providing guidance and referring them, as appropriate, to External Relations' HR Business Partner.

If the matter cannot be resolved an investigation may be required and the Government of Jersey policies and procedures relating to the specific matter would be followed.

The department has three grant-funded overseas offices – London, Brussels (CIBO) and Caen (BIAN). Staff in the London Office and BIAN follow similar procedures as those outlined above. CIBO operates in Belgium as a Private Foundation, and details in relation to staff grievances are covered by the office's 'Work Regulation'. In addition, CIBO work with an external provider, Mensura, when internal policies and procedures are due for review (every three years).

- 2. Whether any internal employee processes and procedures followed in your department differ from those within other departments and, if so, how and why. For example, we note that there is a Freedom to Speak Up Guardian in the Health and Community Services Department to ensure that the voices and concerns of staff are heard and acted upon.**

The Ministry of External Relations aims to ensure that matters relating to internal employee processes and procedures follow policy as directed. However, the department welcomes new initiatives and the sharing of good practice across the organisation that would support employee engagement.

Overseas offices must comply with local regulations, and CIBO and BIAN are also jointly funded with Guernsey. While all the offices endeavour to follow the spirit of GoJ processes and procedures, there will in some instances be diversion from central GoJ policy.

3. The relevant officer(s) in your department available to employees as a first point of contact to raise concerns or grievances.

The employee's line-manager in the first instance, followed by the Business Performance and Planning Manager.

Should the employee not wish to raise the matter with these two points of contact, they may raise an issue with the line manager's manager or a member of People and Corporate Services, the Case Management Team or utilise the dedicated speak-up line.

As above, the overseas offices must follow local regulation and the joint nature of CIBO and BIAN mean Guernsey process and procedure must also be considered. Nonetheless, the offices endeavour to follow the spirit of GoJ policy, as overseen by their respective Boards (Chief Officer of External Relations is a member of all three Boards, and also chairs the London Office Board).

4. What management information is available to your senior leadership team to enable you to gauge or measure the numbers of informal or formal concerns, grievances or disciplinary actions and how your management information is gathered and recorded.

Formal grievances will follow appropriate internal process, and individuals will have the support and guidance of the department's HR Business Partner.

Line managers have monthly catch-ups with their direct reports (in line with Connect Performance) at which point issues or concerns can be raised. Line managers must act swiftly to resolve any informal concerns, or to escalate as appropriate.

Formal concerns relating to Disciplinary and Grievance matters are recorded by the Case Management Team. The HR Business Partner group reviews this case list with the Case Management Team on a regular basis and provides management information to Senior Leadership Teams to allow for consideration and response.

In addition, detail as to why employees leave GoJ is provided via operational dashboards. Fortnightly Senior Management meetings, chaired by the Chief Officer, provide an opportunity to discuss any general concerns or common themes arising from colleagues across the department, so appropriate responses and mitigations can be developed.

5. The challenges, if any, within your department in improving and maintaining a satisfactory workplace culture.

The Ministry of External Relations operates across four different offices (Jersey, London, Caen and Brussels). Two of these are joint with Guernsey and with this in mind, each office has an individual workplace and organisational culture, although all members of the department work to exemplify GoJ values.

The differences between the offices can mean there are varying priorities in considering how to improve workplace culture and experience. As a small department with limited resources, this has presented challenges for External Relations to manage. However, the establishment of a People and Culture working group, following the BeHeard Survey in 2020, has assisted here, given it includes a representative from all areas of External Relations, including the overseas offices.

This working group has sought to introduce initiatives to improve the organisational culture across the whole department, not just from a Jersey perspective, which is understandably the focus of GoJ-lead initiatives.

A follow-up Pulse survey was undertaken earlier in 2023, and together with the recent BeHeard survey (in which officials from the London, Caen and Brussels offices were able to take part for the first time), the department has a rich source of data and feedback from which to further develop its People and Culture plans.

6. Whether your department has any trade union shop stewards or representatives and, if so, the type of relationship held with those people to assist with resolving employee matters that are brought to the department's attention.

External Relations is aware of the regular Trade Union meetings facilitated by People & Corporate Services. Advice as what items are to be raised with this forum is provided by the P&CS Business Partner.

7. Specific actions taken within your department to improve staff wellbeing and morale.

Following the 2020 BeHeard survey, External Relations established a People and Culture working group to develop and implement initiatives to improve staff wellbeing and morale. These included:

Jersey 101 sessions

- A series of lunch and learn sessions for all External Relations colleagues on a wide variety of topics. All colleagues were encouraged to suggest topics of discussion / presentation.

Department / Organisation-wide Organigram

- In response to comments, particularly from the overseas offices, relating to contact points and ability to engage with wider parts of GoJ, the team worked with other departments to produce an organisation-wide and up to date list of accessible contact points.

External Relations School Engagement Programme

- A key theme emerging from the 2020 survey was that colleagues would like more opportunities for giving something back to the community. A school engagement programme was therefore launched, and 5 seminars were held at schools in Jersey.

8. The creation or improvements of strategy, policy, and procedures in your department for the benefit of employee welfare and workplace culture implemented since the start of the new States Assembly term.

Following the 2023, BeHeard survey, the External Relations People and Culture working group is preparing a strategy to build on improvements to employee welfare and workplace culture. The proposals are currently with colleagues for consideration and aim to be finalised in Q4.

9. Whether any routine internal department-specific surveys or polls are undertaken regarding people and workplace culture and the frequency and impact thereof.

As above, following the 2020 BeHeard Survey, a cross-departmental People and Culture working group was established to develop and implement an action plan in response to staff feedback. This was discussed at department team meetings and several helpful recommendations were taken forward.

In February 2023, External Relations completed a Pulse staff survey to check on progress made since the 2020 BeHeard survey. This feedback, combined with the 2023 BeHeard data, has provided a rich suite of data on which to take forward further planning in respect of External Relations' people and culture work programme.

10. Whether when an employee leaves the department, they are automatically offered an exit interview and, if not, why.

For staff engaged by the GoJ, the Leavers' Survey is emailed to all employees by People Hub. Where requested, a Leavers' interview is undertaken.

This process is currently under review by the People and Corporate Services Policy Team.

11. Whether there are any emerging themes that can be taken from previous exit interviews?

External Relations has had three staff members leave from employment with the GoJ for the period August 22 to July 23. Reasons for leaving include: returning to higher education, leaving the island to travel, conclusion of a secondment. No emerging or common themes have therefore been identified.

Exit interviews, where conducted, are reviewed by the People and Corporate Services Policy Team. Any emerging themes and or concerns are escalated to the department's HR Business Partner and/or escalated to the relevant Chief Officer.

12. Whether the Minister or Chief Officer works with the HR Business Partner to resolve concerns, the process that is followed and whether you have identified any challenges or concerns with the process that you have identified.

The Chief Officer works with the P&CS Business partner and the specialist P&CS functions where appropriate. The Business Partner will also flag items to the CO and the SMT for action and consideration.

Where matters are flagged, GoJ policy and P&CS advice will guide the actions to be taken.

13. Any historic concerns or issues in relation to any of the above within your department.

There are no historic concerns or issues in relation to any of the above within my department.

14. Any other issues that the Panel should consider as part of its review in line with the Terms of Reference for the review, which can be found on the review page.

No further comment here.

Kind regards,



Deputy Ian Gorst
Assistant Minister for External Relations

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