

SAFETY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Safety Committee of Bolsover District Council held in Chamber Suite 1, The Arc, High Street, Clowne on Friday 30th August 2013 at 1000 hours.

PRESENT:-

Members:-

Councillors D. McGregor, C. Munks, B.R. Murray-Carr, K. Walker and G.O. Webster (left during Minute No. 0356).

Unison:-

K. Shillitto and J. Wilmot.

Officers:-

A. Grundy (Assistant Director of Human Resources and Payroll), P. Wilmot (Human Resources Manager), A. Bluff (Governance Officer).

K. Shillitto in the Chair

0350. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from R. Frisby (Unison) and S. Sambrooks (Unite).

0351. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business.

0352. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest submitted.

0353. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR

Moved by Councillor B.R. Murray-Carr, seconded by Councillor K.F. Walker

RESOLVED that Councillor D. McGregor be appointed Vice Chair of Safety Committee for the ensuing year.

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0354. MINUTES – 24TH MAY 2013

Moved by Councillor C. Munks, seconded by Councillor K. F. Walker

RESOLVED that the minutes of a Safety Committee meeting held on 24th May 2013 be approved as a correct record.

0355. SICKNESS ABSENCE/OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH STATISTICS APRIL TO JUNE 2013

Members considered a report which provided information in relation to sickness absence and occupational health statistics for the first quarter period, April to June 2013, with comparative data for the same period during 2012.

The sickness absence target for the first quarter period of 2013 was 2 days per full time employee with the outturn figure being 2.4 days. A breakdown of figures by department and by long term/short term absence was attached to the report.

For Members information, the outturn figure for the same quarter period in 2012 was 1.93 days.

The overall sickness absence figure was higher than for the same quarter of last year, due to an increase of 96 working days of long term sickness, whilst short term sickness had reduced by 55.5 days in the first quarter. It was noted that full time employee numbers had also reduced in the previous 12 months.

Occupational Health referrals for the first quarter of 2013 were as follows; 9 employees were rehabilitated 9 and 4 were continuing.

For the same period in 2012, the figures were reversed, i.e., 4 employees were rehabilitated and 9 were continuing.

A breakdown of the reasons for all long term sickness absence was included in the report.

A routine health surveillance clinic had been held on 20th June and covered topics such as hand arm vibration, blood tests and hepatitis B immunisation to 'at risk' groups.

Four employees had been undergoing counselling during this period.

Further to questions raised regarding how being over target on sickness absence was being addressed, the Assistant Director of Human Resources and Payroll advised the meeting that although the target of 8 days per year was looking unlikely to be achieved, it was felt the situation was not alarming. Monitoring was being carried out by HR who

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was also making sure that managers were following principles, e.g. return to work interviews.

Flu vaccinations had been offered for the first time in 2012 for employees who required it but priority groups would need to access it via their GP.

Stress levels relating to work were continually monitored. The Council is to take advantage as NEDDC, who had agreed some one off funding to provide training support for managers to manage their employees stress. Any spare places would be offered up to BDC employees

The Assistant Director of Human Resources and Payroll had been in discussions with the Head of Health Improvement's team, (Public Health Derbyshire), to see how health and well being could be revitalised at work. Additional support would also be sought during the autumn and volunteers were to be identified and trained as health champions.

Funding was available for health checks in the community, e.g., blood pressure and cholesterol; it had been noted that the wider community were not going to their GP's to have these checks, so Public Health Derbyshire will visit areas in the District to promote them. This could be piggy backed on for employees to come along to and have the checks also. Two sessions could be run each month.

These efforts would support employee health and wellbeing.

Following discussions on the method of calculation for the full time employee figure used for sickness absence average days, Councillor McGregor requested that all the joint senior management posts were posts included.

A Union representative queried if there was any indication as to what the reasons were for the sickness absence figures rising. He also referred back to an earlier discussion regarding stress and suggested that free provision for employees to the gym at the Arc could help with this and also ease sickness absence figures. It was also noted there was extra workload on officers due to joint working etc and queried if any other monitoring was carried out. In response to the questions raised, the Assistant Director of Human Resources and Payroll advised the meeting that although there were no particular hotspots or trends, some staff had very serious illnesses. There had also been a number of hospitalisations. The Committee's attention was drawn to a table in the report which provided a breakdown of the reasons for long term sickness absence in the first quarter. The highest number of absences was due to muscular/skeleton problems. HR was working with these employees to help, by providing lighter duties, phased return to work etc. It was acknowledged that there had been an increase in stress but the majority affected were due to outside work circumstances. Free gym membership for staff was currently being considered with a report being prepared for Members. Managers were also supported by HR to help the employees affected.

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Members were also reminded that the Council's Employee Survey was due to be carried out in November and trends could be picked up from this, although only a 50% response rate was received from the last Employee Survey. The higher the response rate, a better perspective. HR was also working with the Unions as they are on the ground and can see things first hand as well with elected Members.

A Unison representative reported that with regard to return to work interviews, the perception was that the procedure was punitive and made most employees very defensive in causes and reasons. The Assistant Director of Human Resources and Payroll stated that this piece of information was helpful and the sickness monitoring policy was on a list to be reviewed.

Moved by Councillor D. McGregor, seconded by Councillor B.R. Murray-Carr
RESOLVED that the report be received.

0356. HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT

Committee considered a report in relation to various Health and Safety matters of the Council.

SHE System Update

The Council was moving away from shared health and safety arrangements with Mansfield and Bassetlaw District councils.

Although the SHE system formed part of the shared service arrangements with Bassetlaw and Mansfield District Councils, there was the possibility that the Authority could still benefit from the system under a separate arrangement. However, this would need to be explored more fully with Bassetlaw District Council and the SHE software company.

The system was still to be fully implemented across the Authority; in particular within the Neighbourhoods directorate, due to concerns regarding data protection and the system's effectiveness. A new updated version of SHE was launched on 14th May 2013 and could be rolled out to Bolsover in November this year. The Human Resources Manager had been advised that when the system was fully reconfigured to the latest version, a more user friendly system would result, which will hopefully overcome the current data protection problems and allow much better information sharing and a management overview.

In response to Members questions, the Assistant Director of Human Resources and Payroll explained that the cost of the SHE system would be contained with the HR budget. Money saved from ceasing the shared service arrangements would help recruit a health and safety advisor post at Bolsover. A decision was made by Members in 2011

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to trial the Bassetlaw and Mansfield arrangement as expertise was needed at that time and there was no option to have arrangements with NEDDC.

Staying Alive – Community Save a Life Scheme

Strategic Alliance Management Team had agreed to run a trial session for 'Community Save a Life' training across both authorities. No dates had yet been agreed but it was envisaged that these would take place in the autumn. The Assistant Director of Leisure Services was also planning a 'record breaking' event in June 2014 where there would be an attempt to break the World Record for training the largest number of people in life saving in one session.

Fire Evacuation Procedure – Sherwood Lodge

By 23rd August 2013, the Regeneration section was to issue new clear guidelines to the various remaining occupiers of Sherwood Lodge which would make them responsible for their own evacuation in the event of a fire.

The Assistant Director of Human Resources and Payroll reported that reassurance had been given to BDC staff based at Sherwood Lodge that they did not need to carry out a sweep of the building in the event of a fire, only themselves and their colleagues who work in the contact centre. Written guidelines/instructions had been given to other occupiers of the building, i.e., the police.

Members raised concern that no representative from Regeneration was in attendance at the meeting. Members requested to see sight of the guidelines and written confirmation of who was responsible for Sherwood Lodge. The Assistant Director of Human Resources and Payroll shared Members concerns and would expedite this after the meeting.

Members further requested that a report be presented to the next Safety Committee meeting.

Fire Evacuation Assistance for Mobility Impaired Persons

The Health and Safety Adviser from NEDDC had been liaising with representatives from BDC's Regeneration section and volunteers had now been identified to undertake appropriate training in the use of the emergency mats/sledges.

The emergency mats/sledges are currently on the middle of each stair case in the Arc but the Regeneration section would be changing the location of some of these to a fixed location.

The meeting was advised that confirmation of training dates was to be confirmed.

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Housing (Health and Safety) Training

Chesterfield College had been awarded the tender for training in the following areas:

Underground CAT scan - 24th and 25th September 2013.

Abrasive Wheels - 1st 3rd and 10th October 2013

Asbestos Awareness will be booked in for October/early November 2013.

Scaffold Awareness and Inspection will be booked in for October/early November 2013.

Further to a question raised, it was confirmed that the CAT scan would include service pipes and cables.

Lighting at the Arc

Further to issues raised regarding the lighting in the offices at the Arc, it was agreed at the last meeting that a survey be carried out. However, subsequent advice received from the Shared Health and Safety Manager and the Health and Safety Advisor at NEDDC, was that a survey could create more problems than it would solve, particularly as the offices were mainly open plan and to make changes to a section of lighting is likely then to have implications on other areas and what may be ideal for one employee, may not be for another.

The Human Resources Manager suggested that as the Regeneration section had brought in lighting system engineers a few months ago, who subsequently made alterations to the lights, which improved matters, the situation could be monitored on an ongoing basis rather than carrying out a survey. Issues could be responded to on a case by case basis and an article placed on Eric informing employees on how they could raise concerns, if any, regarding the lighting in their location.

The Assistant Director of Human Resources and Payroll added that although it was agreed at the last meeting to carry out a lighting survey, upon reflection and after advice had been sought, it was felt that it was better to respond to individual situations. As there is currently no Health and Safety Advisor on site, the Human Resources Manager was dealing with this issue. The Council had a health and safety duty to respond to employees concerns.

A discussion took place.

It was suggested that a report regarding any office environmental issues raised by employees and the resolution be brought back to the next meeting.

Tangent Inspection

The Commercial Property and Development Manager was working with the Health and Safety Adviser from NEDDC to put processes in place to ensure that key health and safety requirements were fully implemented.

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Inspections

The Human Resources Manager gave a further update to the information provided in the report.

Pleasley Vale Mills – an inspection had taken place and an update report would be provided by Democratic Services at the next meeting.

Group Dwellings – inspections had taken place by the previous Health and Safety Officer but reports were currently unavailable. The Health and Safety Advisor from NEDDC would follow up future inspections.

It was noted that Shirebrook Model Village Pavilion was no longer under the ownership of the Council. The Assistant Director of Human Resources and Payroll would check this with the Legal section but noted that information for the content of the report was received from departments.

Concerns were raised regarding the unavailability of health and safety reports from the last inspection carried out by the previous Health and Safety Officer and Members asked what the process was. The Assistant Director of Human Resources and Payroll replied that the onus was on the section Manager, e.g. for Group Dwellings, the onus was on the Head of Housing to carry out any issues arising from the inspections and the production of inspection reports.

A discussion took place and it was agreed that revisits would need to be carried out.

Workplace Inspection Policy

The Human Resources Manager reported that whilst updating the inspection schedule it was found that the required frequency of inspections was not in accordance with the Council's Workplace Inspection Policy. Whilst the frequencies appeared to be reasonable, they had been reduced from three to six months but not in line with policy – this was a matter which needed addressing.

A discussion took place.

Members agreed that the policy be reviewed.

New Items

Since the last Safety Committee meeting, a decision had been taken not to extend the fixed term contract of the Health and Safety Officer as the current shared health and safety arrangements were due for review. Whilst the review takes place, the Authority was receiving support from the Health and Safety Adviser at North East Derbyshire District Council.

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At a Strategic Alliance Joint Committee meeting held on 11th July 2013, the Assistant Director of Human Resources and Payroll submitted a report regarding the future of the health and safety provision for the Authority. It was agreed that subject to the respective council's approval, the Assistant Director of Human Resources and Payroll pursue the prospect of a joint health and safety provision across Bolsover and North East Derbyshire District Councils.

A further report would be submitted to Council on 4th September 2013 to make the final decision on the change to the establishment.

It was noted that an agreement had been made that until the end of September 2013, the Shared Service Manager from Bassetlaw District Council would continue to deliver this role.

Heat wave

Unusually high temperatures in July made working conditions uncomfortable for many employees and measures were introduced to try and minimise the impact on staff which were itemised in the report.

A discussion took place regarding ongoing issues with ventilation in the building and the possibility of air conditioning being installed.

The Assistant Director of Human Resources and Payroll advised the meeting that it would not have been possible to have had air conditioning installed in time for the heat wave but costings could now be looked at.

It was agreed that a physical survey be carried out by the Regeneration section with a view to identifying the heat and ventilation issues at the Arc and looking at all options to address these with a report provided to Safety Committee.

Employee Protection Register

A review of the Employee Protection Register was currently underway to ensure it was managed effectively. The Register was last reviewed in January this year. Outcomes from the review would be reported to the next Committee.

Further to Members questions, the Human Resources Manager explained that Members did not have access to information on the Register under data protection.

Members felt that it would be reasonable for them to know if someone was contactable or not and options needed to be explored to see where Members stood on this issue.

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Representation from Directorates

Many issues raised and discussed at Safety Committee can relate to operational issues in specific service areas but Safety Committee had not been attended by officers from directorates who may be able to resolve and respond to issues at the meeting, as opposed to Committee having to wait to receive second hand information from the Safety Officer at the next meeting. It was suggested that future Safety Committees' attendance included representation from the Regeneration section and the Neighbourhoods directorate and perhaps on an annual basis the Assistant Director of Leisure Services or nominated substitute. These three directorates had been identified as having the most raised issues in their sections.

Councillor Webster left the meeting at this point.

A discussion took place.

It was suggested that invitations to the three directorates be sent in the first instance from the Chair and that the word 'annual' be taken out of the recommendation.

Moved by Councillor B.R. Murray-Carr, seconded by Councillor C. Munks
RESOLVED that (1) the report be received,

Moved and seconded

RESOLVED that (2) a report be presented to the next Safety Committee regarding the guidelines and confirmation of who was responsible for Sherwood Lodge fire evacuation,

Moved by Councillor B.R. Murray-Carr, seconded by Councillor C. Munks

RESOLVED that (3) with regard to the lighting issues at the Arc, the situation be monitored on an ongoing basis instead of a survey being carried out. Issues to be responded to on a case by case basis and an article placed on Eric informing employees on how they could raise any concerns regarding the lighting in their location.

Moved by Councillor C. Munks, seconded by Councillor D. McGregor

RESOLVED that (4) to recommend to Council that the Work Place Inspection policy be reviewed,

Moved by J. Wilmot (Unison), seconded by Councillor B.R. Murray-Carr

RESOLVED that (5) a physical survey be carried out by the Regeneration section with a view to identifying the heat and ventilation issues at the Arc and to look at all options to address these issues with a report provided to Safety Committee.

Moved by Councillor D. McGregor, seconded by Councillor B.R. Murray-Carr

RESOLVED that (6) options be explored to see if Members could have access to information on the Employee Protection Register.

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Moved by Councillor C. Munks, seconded by Councillor B.R. Murray-Carr

RESOLVED that (7) the invitations be sent from the Chair to the Regeneration section, the Neighbourhoods directorate and the Assistant Director of Leisure Services or nominated substitute to attend future Safety Committee meetings.

(Governance Manager)

0357. THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Moved by Councillor B. R. Murray-Carr, seconded by Councillor D. McGregor

RESOLVED that under Section 100(A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it may involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the stated Paragraph of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act and it is not in the public interest for that to be revealed.

0358. ACCIDENT AND STRESS STATISTICS JANUARY TO MARCH 2013 EXEMPT – PARAGRAPH 2

Members considered a report in relation to the Council's accident and stress statistics for the period April to June 2013, with comparative figures for the same period in 2012.

The statistics had been compiled from figures supplied as at 30th June 2013 and were reproduced in a graph and table format in the report.

A question was raised in relation to an incident at Creswell Leisure Centre. The Human Resources Manager advised that nothing further had been reported but this would be followed up on future inspections.

Moved by Councillor D. McGregor, seconded by Councillor B.R. Murray-Carr

RESOLVED that the report be received.

The meeting concluded at 1230 hours.