

## **SAFETY COMMITTEE**

Minutes of a meeting of the Safety Committee of the Bolsover District Council held in the Council Chamber, The Arc, Clowne on Thursday, 9<sup>th</sup> May 2024 at 10:00 hours.

### **PRESENT:-**

Members:-

Councillor Jane Yates in the Chair

Councillors Rowan Clarke, Donna Hales and Deborah Watson.

UNISON: Chris McKinney (Vice Chair), Liz Robinson (UNISON Convenor).

Officers:- Steve Brunt (Strategic Director of Services), Wayne Carter (Leisure Facility Manager), Ian Clay (Health and Safety Advisor), Oliver Fishburn (HR and Payroll Manager), Bronwen MacArthur-Williams (Health & Safety Manager), Jayne Stokes (Health and Safety Adviser) and Matthew Kerry (Governance and Civic Officer).

Also in attendance at the meeting, observing, was Councillor Jeanne Raspin.

### **SAF44-23/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Violet Parker (UNISON).

### **SAF45-23/24 URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS**

There were no urgent items of business to be considered.

### **SAF46-23/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations made at the meeting.

### **SAF47-23/24 MINUTES – 8<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2024**

Moved by Councillor Rowan Clarke and seconded by Councillor Donna Hales  
**RESOLVED** that the minutes of a meeting of the Safety Committee held on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2024 be approved as a true and correct record.

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### SAF48-23/24      QUARTER 4 HEALTH & SAFETY UPDATE: 1<sup>ST</sup> JANUARY 2024 – 31<sup>ST</sup> MARCH 2024

The Health and Safety Manager stated the total number of BDC employee accidents in Quarter 4 2023/24 was 8; this was fewer than Quarter 4 of 2022/23. For the types of incidents involved, none of these were RIDDOR reportable. It was noted that a near miss had taken place in Quarter 4 of 2023/24 when a fire alarm had been set off by a breaking motor on a tenant's machine, resulting in smoke being emitted.

The Committee were referred to the table of the report which listed a resume of incidents logged and where they had occurred. One of these incidents, which took place on the 19<sup>th</sup> January 2024, resulted in the loss of up to 7 days; this remained not RIDDOR reportable.

The average quarterly footfall into Go!Active was 85,958 people; this related to all users of the service, including outreach sessions. This was in addition to approximately 5,000 footfall per quarter to customer services.

The total number of accidents reported by members of the public was 37, which the Health and Safety Manager informed the Committee was lower than the figures reported in Quarter 4 2022/23. 1 of the accidents from Quarter 4 2023-2024 had been serious enough to be RIDDOR reportable; this had occurred in Leisure Services.

For Dragonfly Development Ltd., in Quarter 4 2023/24 there had been 3 incidents, with a total of 21 days lost.

During Quarter 4 2023/24, 1 Council employee had received further training in Health and Safety (Corporate Induction), and 13 Dragonfly Development Ltd. employees had been trained in Asbestos Awareness and the same Health and Safety (Corporate Induction).

5 formal biannual BDC inspections had occurred in Quarter 4 2023/24 at the following locations:

- Pleasley Vale Mill 1;
- Pleasley Vale Mill 2 and The Dye House;
- Pleasley Vale Mill 3;
- Pleasley Vale Outdoor Activity Centre and Boat House; and,
- The Tangent.

Additionally, regular joint informal walk-arounds of The Arc and the Riverside Depot had continued. Unite and UNISON safety representatives received copies of all inspections, and these were available on the Council's intranet.

For Dragonfly Development Ltd., 7 inspections had occurred at the following locations:

- Bersahill – Doncaster – 1 visit;
- Market Close – Shirebrook – 2 visits;
- Moorfield Lane - Langwith – 2 visits; and,
- Crematorium – 2 visits.

The Leisure Facility Manager reiterated that for the 85,958, this included all Leisure

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Services including Pleasley Vale, Extreme Wheels and others. As for the incident that was serious enough to be RIDDOR reportable, the Leisure Facility Manager stated the injured party had submitted a claim, but the insurance consultant had recommended the Council deny any responsibility; this was an accident.

The Chair thanked the Health and Safety team for their work.

Moved by Chris McKinney (UNISON) and seconded by Liz Robinson (UNISON)

**RESOLVED** that: 1) the Safety Committee noted the Health and Safety update;

2) that the Safety Committee were assured that good Health and Safety management remained a key performance priority for the Council.

### **SAF49-23/24      SICKNESS ABSENCE - QUARTER 4 (JANUARY - MARCH 2024)**

The HR and Payroll Manager highlighted the average number of days lost per employee for Quarter 4 2023/24 was 2.44 days; this was an increase from Quarter 3 2023/24 and was the highest quarter of the year in terms of average days lost. However, the 2.44 days lost per employee for Quarter 4 2023/24 was lower than the same quarter for 2022/23.

When the previous 3 quarters were taken into consideration, the actual outturn figure for the average number of days lost per employee for 2023-2024 was 8.98 days; this was above the annual target for the Local Performance Indicator to the end of March 2024 (8.5 days).

3 Services experienced zero sickness in Quarter 4 2023-2024 and a further 4 Services experienced less than 1 day per full-time equivalent employee.

The HR and Payroll Manager referred to table 1 of the report which stated the total loss from sickness absence was £333,509.52 for 2023/24. This was lower than the previous two years, though higher than 2020/21. Table 2 represented the percentages of both short and long term days lost for each quarter of 2023/24, with the previous 3 years listed for comparison.

Table 3 provided the top three reasons for absence per quarter, with Stress/Depression remaining in the top three reasons of every quarter since 2019-2020; 6 were work related and 7 were outside work related.

The UNISON Convenor noted it had been previously stated in previous Safety Committees that Stress/Depression remained a key issue in the figures presented. She informed the Committee that an Engagement Officer had now been employed and both of them had been looking into this issue; one of the first things being done was a mental health awareness campaign taking place mid-May 2024 – information on this would be provided to staff to attempt high levels of engagement. The Engagement Officer would also be looking into team events and other mental health promotional campaigns for 2024/25.

The Chair asked about the take up rates of the mental health assistance measures/schemes already in place. The HR and Payroll Manager answered that 35

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employees had undertaken mental health awareness training, 2 had accessed the Cycle2Work scheme, and there were other schemes in place like subsidised Leisure Services, which 63 staff members currently accessed.

There was an employee assistance programme, a service shared with North East Derbyshire District Council, though only 5 employees had accessed this service in 2023/24; reiterating that the recent employment of the Engagement Officer would be investigating alternative programmes.

The HR and Payroll Manager explained the Council had also inherited a difficult relationship with the current occupational health provider, and the Council had gone out to tender a new provider; this procurement exercise ended 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2024 with 3 applications received – this would be investigated moving forward.

For the 2023/24 occupational health figures, the HR and Payroll Manager listed the following: 5 employees had accessed counselling over 25 sessions; 1 had participated in 6 sessions of cognitive behavioural therapy; 3 had received 18 sessions of physiotherapy; 1 had received 4 sessions of chiropractic therapy; and 27 staff members had accessed 37 appointments of the occupational health provider's services.

The Chair asked if the Engagement Officer would be promoting what is already provided. The HR and Payroll Manager explained the HR and Payroll team was still relatively new, and while there were staff to carry out the work, there was no capacity to promote the services already provided by the Council; this was why the Engagement Officer had been employed, to promote the provisions already in place. A staff survey would also take place to enable the Engagement Officer to focus on the areas where employees felt a shortfall of assistance existed.

A Member noted that in any large organisation, some employees were always going to be reluctant to use the mental health programmes provided. However, for the Stress/Depression figures and those with work related reasons, the staff survey would be an excellent method to identify what issues employees were encountering. The Member asked if there were any Mental Health Champions at the Council or those who could promote the support already available.

The UNISON Convenor explained there were mental health first aiders available – they themselves were one – but admitted it had not been well promoted. In response, the Engagement Officer had recently put up posters in discreet locations (like bathrooms), which provided contact tabs that employees could tear off and keep. A Member stated it was right to enable employees to seek assistance, even outside the Council.

The Strategic Director of Services noted that the COVID-19 Global Pandemic and the ongoing Cost of Living Crisis had caused numerous breakdowns of relationships in recent years nationally, and Stress/Depression was likely a result which would manifest in the workplace. While the Council's preference was for staff members to speak first to their General Practitioners for help on their mental health, it was still right and necessary for the Council to help those who needed/asked for it and raise awareness of such programmes.

The Chair asked if any managers were being supported with further training and how to manage staff who were struggling. The HR and Payroll Manager stated the Council trained managers to handle sickness absences, and generally if there were serious cases

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this would be handled by the occupational health provider, who would direct the Council on the appropriate approach to take.

The UNISON Convenor had spoken to the HR Business Partner about providing free mental health training courses for all staff, with possibly all managers being trained on mental health first aid as well as a small number of anonymous members of staff who could be trained if people did not wish to speak to their managers. The Strategic Director of Services added the Council was identifying issues of Stress/Depression which may result from the workplace, and the Health and Safety Executive Standard Stress Risk Assessment was used for this. The results of the assessment may be temporary work arrangements such as a change in start and finish times. In short, where staff members needed help, the Council would try to provide it.

The Chair commented the total loss from sickness absence – £333,509.52 for 2023-2024 – was nearly £50,000 lower than 2022/23; a positive step in the right direction.

Moved by Councillor Donna Hales and seconded by Liz Robinson (UNISON)  
**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

The meeting concluded at 10:25 hours.