

STAFF COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 10 JUNE 2019 - 2.00 PM



PRESENT: Councillor C Boden, Councillor A Bristow, Councillor J Clark, Councillor M Cornwell, Councillor Mrs J French, Councillor D Mason and Councillor F Yeulett

APOLOGIES: Councillor S Tierney

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE: Linda Albon (Member Services & Governance Officer), Sam Anthony (Head of HR and OD), David Bailey (Traveller & Diversity Manager) and Carol Pilson (Corporate Director and Monitoring Officer)

S1/19 APPOINTMENT OF THE CHAIRMAN FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR

Linda Albon requested a nomination for Chairman of the Staff Committee for the Municipal Year. It was proposed by Councillor Bristow, seconded by Councillor Clark and resolved that Councillor Mason be elected as Chairman of the Staff Committee for the Municipal Year.

Cllr Boden and the Monitoring Officer, Carol Pilson, joined the meeting.

S2/19 APPOINT A VICE-CHAIRMAN FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR

It was proposed by Councillor Boden, seconded by Councillor Clark and resolved that Councillor Bristow be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Staff Committee for the Municipal Year.

Cllr Mrs French joined the meeting.

S3/19 PREVIOUS MINUTES

As none of the members were part of Staff Committee in the previous municipal year, it had been questioned whether the minutes of the meeting of 25 May 2019 could be signed. The Monitoring Officer advised that there is no legal restriction on the minutes being agreed at this meeting.

Members were satisfied with the statement of the Monitoring Officer, thus Councillor Boden proposed that the minutes be adopted, and this was seconded by Councillor Clark. The minutes of the meeting of 25 May 2019 were therefore signed.

Councillor Boden raised that the Council has yet to adopt a protocol to allow confidential minutes to be approved. The Monitoring Officer advised that this is an issue that has been considered and the means to record and store confidential minutes securely are now available. However, consideration must be given to the different levels of confidentiality regarding decisions taken at all statutory meetings and training provided to ensure that decisions are minuted robustly but appropriately; and therefore this will be rolled-out shortly.

The Monitoring Officer left the meeting.

S4/19 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

Members considered the Equal Opportunities Policy 2019 presented by David Bailey.

Members made comments, asked questions and received responses as follows:

- Councillor Boden stated his concern that not all protected characteristics gain the same weight or attention, and he is mainly concerned about mental health and, particularly, individuals with learning disabilities. He therefore asked what quantitative information the Council has about learning disabilities among employees and whether it is actively encouraging individuals from the learning disability community to seek employment within this Council where appropriate. David Bailey responded that he works closely with the local Learning Disability Partnership and has undertaken a number of proactive engagements with people by providing volunteering opportunities to make them 'job ready'; they have looked at overcoming barriers to services in partnership with other agencies, particularly with the County Council and third sector. Good work is being done and is ongoing, although not yet an end product. Sam Anthony added that staff are encouraged to disclose any disabilities, be it learning, physical or otherwise and the Council provides a range of different approaches to learning and development. Some staff have literacy problems, such as dyslexia, and are provided with a targeted approach that suits their needs, such as E-learning, face to face or supported learning. Additionally, over 40 mental health first aiders have been trained in the workplace, so first-aid interaction is available for staff or customers facing a mental health crisis.
- Councillor Boden welcomed the comments made adding that as a society we are unsuccessful when examining the statistics nationally and within Cambridgeshire for the numbers of those learning disabled who could work not in full or part-time employment. He added that it is important for the Council to be a community leader by employing the learning disabled wherever appropriate to do so, which would be of a benefit to all.
- Councillor Yeulett asked if the Council is actively promoting employment of people with disabilities and how do we compare with other authorities. Sam Anthony advised that the Council is proactive but does not currently benchmark, and this is something that can be looked at for the future.
- Councillor Cornwell pointed out that the policy applies to members also and asked to what degree the Council investigates the needs of members with a disability. Sam Anthony advised that if an individual discloses this, then again discussion is held with the individual to action support in the most appropriate way. Member Services can also engage with individuals, but it is for the Member to disclose if they do not have an obvious disability so they can be given the required support.

Proposed by Cllr Boden and seconded by Cllr Mrs French, the Staff Committee approved the adoption of the new Equal Opportunities Policy.

David Bailey left the meeting.

S5/19 CORPORATE ANNUAL HEALTH & SAFETY REPORT 2018/19

Members considered the Corporate Annual Health & Safety Report 2018/19 presented by Sam Anthony.

Members made comments, asked questions and received responses as follows:

- Councillor Mason said that of the two main high risk areas, the Base and Wisbech Port, there is no specific mention of any marine training at the Port and asked for further information. Sam Anthony responded that Port Services have their own safety group with a port marine safety code. The panel meets quarterly and includes the Corporate Director, Harbour Master, key marine staff and an independent person to ensure health and safety compliance. This information can be incorporated into next year's report for clarity. Councillor Mason said this would be very useful.
- Councillor Mrs French asked why the report gave only an approximate number of employees.

Sam Anthony advised that the number fluctuates hence the approximation, although this figure would have been correct at the time of the report being printed.

- Councillor Boden stated that this is a good report but it is important to note that there were three RIDDOR reportable accidents. Although all three were correctly reported to the HSE, who subsequently took no further action, he felt it needed to be recorded that this Committee is aware of them and although these incidents were regrettable, it would be hoped that this figure will be zero this year. We must be alert to any trends which exist and to any messages that there may be within these reports.
- Councillor Bristow asked how frequently play areas are inspected, and are these visual checks or by means of testing the equipment? Sam Anthony advised she would check and confirm this information.
- Councillor Yeulett asked if we differentiate between accidents and incidents. Sam Anthony confirmed that we do and that all accidents and near misses are recorded and investigated to identify trends and training needs. The Health & Safety Panel meets quarterly and reviews all accidents and near misses.
- Councillor Yeulett asked if there was a common thread to the 15 accidents recorded for the Communities, Environment and Leisure Team. Sam Anthony confirmed these were mainly slips and trips relating to the Refuse and Cleansing teams. Although these teams have the correct PPE and footwear, they are out on the Highway in all weathers, often walking on uneven or slippery pavements.
- Councillor Bristow asked if we receive reports of accident reports from our contracted services, particularly the leisure centres. Sam Anthony responded that we do not receive reports in the same way that we used to when staff were employed by the Council, but as part of the leisure contract arrangements we have asked for an annual summary of staff training and accidents. However there is no data available yet, as it has not been a full year since the transfer.
- Councillor Cornwell asked if we receive any data in relation to the grounds maintenance contractors, as even though we are not responsible for them, they are primarily working on our property. Sam Anthony advised that she understands we not receive this information currently but will request that going forward and ensure that process is followed through our Parks and Open Spaces Team. Sam Anthony also stated that any contractor working on our premises, for example Fenland Hall, who had an accident, would be required to report it.
- Councillor Clark asked if the leisure centres were obliged to provide us with their accident data. Sam Anthony confirmed that although we could request it, they were not obliged to supply it. Councillor Clark pointed out that he was sure the general public would hold the Council partly responsible if we did not show due diligence in taking care of contractors' health and safety. Sam Anthony advised she would pass that on to the Contracts Manager, however in terms of detail it will not be our data to request so some of the information may be subject to GDPR restriction. Councillor Clark added that he would assume somewhere in the contract, they would be held responsible to provide a safe service but if we have not made that request it is probably too late.
- Councillor Cornwell added that as an ex-contractor, working to contract terms, it was a requirement within his contract to issue such data and suggested our contract conditions either need revisiting or the request needs to be built into the system post-contract. Sam Anthony advised that she will consult the Contracts Manager and come back to the Committee regarding this.
- Councillor Yeulett added that it is important that we find out where the liability lies here so that contracts are clear who is responsible in the case of an accident.
- Councillor Mason asked if the emergency services are always called if an employee loses consciousness. Sam Anthony confirmed this was generally correct, but would be at the discretion of the trained first-aiders.
- Councillor Bristow stated that, presumably, the buildings such as the leisure centres are still under the control of the Council, and if so how do we know they are fit for purpose? Sam Anthony confirmed the buildings are still owned by the Council and they are inspected by our own engineering team to ensure they remain fit for purpose.

Proposed by Cllr Boden and seconded by Cllr Bristow, the Staff Committee noted the Corporate Annual Health & Safety Report 2018/19.

S6/19 CORPORATE HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY 2019

Members considered the revised Corporate Health & Safety Policy 2019 presented by Sam Anthony.

Members made comments, asked questions and received responses as follows:

- Councillor Boden asked how many Near Miss reports there were last year. Sam Anthony advised she will consult with the Health and Safety Manager for this information and report back. However as a guide, when the Health & Safety Panel meets on a quarterly basis, they tend to look at three or four accidents and around two near misses. These are investigated and followed through to ensure there are no trends, and the value of a near miss is that accidents can be prevented the next time. Councillor Boden thanked Sam Anthony for an extremely helpful answer. However, he did wonder if the number of near miss reports is not being reported as frequently as they should be. Sam Anthony advised that the reporting of near misses is promoted to staff at intervals to ensure that this information is captured and future accidents prevented from happening.
- Councillor Clark asked if, going forward, revisions to policies could be shown with track changes so that committees could see exactly what has changed. Sam Anthony agreed that was a very valid point and will pass that request on. Councillor Boden advised that if track changes are not provided, then at least a report of what the significant changes are would be most useful.

Proposed by Cllr Boden and seconded by Cllr Mrs French, the Staff Committee approved the Corporate Health & Safety Policy 2019.

S7/19 ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN HAS UNDER ITEM 5 DEEMED URGENT

- The Chairman advised members of the Committee that it was Councillor Clark's intention to stand down from Staff Committee following today's meeting and that Councillor Mrs Maureen Davis would be filling the position on the Committee going forward.
- Sam Anthony requested an exceptional meeting to be arranged for 29 July 2019 to discuss a confidential item regarding a restructure proposal. Cllr Clark asked the Chairman if he could be present at the meeting because, as Chairman of Corporate Governance, he would like to gain an understanding of the proposal and the Chairman confirmed this was acceptable.

3.07 pm

Chairman