

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

**THURSDAY, 12 SEPTEMBER 2024 - 4.00
PM**



PRESENT: Councillor G Christy (Chairman), Councillor Dr H Nawaz (Vice-Chairman), Councillor I Benney, Councillor J Clark, Councillor Mrs M Davis and Councillor A Gowler

Officers in attendance: Sam Anthony (Head of HR and OD), Aarron Locks (Shared Service CCTV Manager) and Jo Goodrum (Member Services & Governance Officer)

EC1/24 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR

It was proposed by Councillor Nawaz, seconded by Councillor Mrs Davis and resolved that Councillor Gary Christy be elected as the Chairman of the Employment Committee for the Municipal Year 2024/25.

EC2/24 PREVIOUS MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting of 7 August 2024 were agreed and signed.

Sam Anthony stated that at the previous meeting the committee had asked for an update to be provided with regards to the recruitment situation in the Planning department. She advised that, since last October, there has been quite a successful recruitment process with no further resignations from the planning team, with the following posts now being filled and officers have taken up their role:

- Head of Planning
- Two Senior Planning Officers
- Planning Policy Manager
- Planning Policy Officer
- Section 106 Officer
- Enforcement Officer

Sam Anthony explained that there are still four vacancies, which are being pursued, as follows:

- Senior Planning Enforcement Officer
- Senior Planning Officer
- Principal Planning Officer
- Tree Officer

She explained that the adverts for the vacancies remain live on the Council's website and on the social media channels along with the Municipal Journal publication who are supporting the council's recruitment adverts.

Sam Anthony added that the new Head of Planning, Matthew Leigh, is currently reviewing working practices to incorporate some emerging ideas and practices on the reduction of contract staff within the planning service.

It was proposed by Councillor Christy, seconded by Councillor Gowler and resolved that Councillor Nawaz be elected as the Vice-Chairman of the Employment Committee for the Municipal Year 2024/25.

Members considered the Health and Safety Annual report presented by Sam Anthony.

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

- Councillor Nawaz asked what the prognosis was for the 2 members of staff who fell from height? Sam Anthony explained that they were not injuries sustained as a result from a fall from a great height but were injuries as a result of staff not using the 3 points of contact system as they exited a works vehicle and that is classed as a fall from height. She added that one member of staff had an absence which was longer than 7 days and, therefore, that was then reportable.
- Councillor Dr Nawaz referred to the increase in accidents which has occurred over the last year rising from 18 to 26 which is an increase of 44% which is a quite significant increase. He asked for an explanation with regards to what preventative steps have been taken to reduce those numbers? Sam Anthony explained that every accident is fully investigated by the individuals Line Manager where the cause of the accident is identified and decided whether it could have been prevented and where there is a need for remedial training or guidance or coaching then that is delivered. She added that in some cases staff members will be retrained or readvised dependent on the circumstances and cause of the accident or incident. Sam Anthony explained that any accidents such as the road traffic accident caused by the sinkhole or potholes are reported to the County Council and all staff are advised to be aware of their surroundings as and when they are out on the highway.
- Councillor Nawaz asked for clarity with regards to whether that procedure has been followed and is it documented? Sam Anthony confirmed that it has been documented as part of the accident investigation and attached to the accident report. She added that every single action is documented and delivered at the time and checks maybe undertaken following a three-month period to ensure that the learning has been transferred and the staff member is continuing to demonstrate the required behaviours. Sam Anthony explained that health and safety issues are also considered at the toolbox talks that the Operations Manager delivers to those who work in the refuse and cleansing environment.
- Councillor Nawaz stated that he has noticed in the Business Centre that there is only one qualified first aider and he asked how that is covered if that individual is on holiday or is absent through sickness? Sam Anthony stated that the staff members are emergency first aid trained and there is no requirement to have a first aider on site. She explained that if the member of staff is not on site there are first aid facilities and anybody who is operating the business centre would be required to call the emergency services if there is the need to.
- Councillor Benney stated that, as much as the figures have increased, a lot of the accidents are unavoidable. He made the point that a sink hole is a rare occurrence and accidents involving potholes can happen to anybody and as much as the figures are raised, whilst it is not what ideal, accidents are being reported. Councillor Benney expressed the view that the mitigation measures that are in place are being carried out very well and include the investigation, training and checking that the knowledge has been imparted to the staff.
- Councillor Benney stated that the RAG register is green and, in his view, the procedures and policies that are in place are working. He expressed the view that in a perfect world it would be nice to have no accidents or trips, however, they do happen.
- Councillor Christy stated that when the report was reviewed last year it was highlighted that a lot of the near misses were not being recorded. He added that it is not good that the figures have increased but it is providing valuable data to be able to identify where mitigations can be put in place. Councillor Christy added that it is a very good report and the

effort that the team makes to ensure that the employees are all safe and looked after should in his view be applauded.

- Councillor Gowler stated that with regards to near misses according to the data there is only one near miss, and he added that he has raised this previously that staff members need to be encouraged to report near misses. Sam Anthony stated that reporting of near misses is very important, and this was raised by the Health and Safety Panel at a recent meeting where all team members have been asked to promote the reporting of them. She made the point that it is not about blame it is about learning and educating including the education of what a near miss is and she added that a process for the promotion and educating people with regards to near misses will be undertaken shortly.
- Councillor Gowler added that he has witnessed waste collection staff in other authorities running in order to collect bins and he asked whether the accidents which have taken place by our waste collection staff are as of a consequence of the staff being pushed and rushing to undertake their duties and then not looking where they are going. He added that he would like to think that the staff are given adequate time to undertake their role without having to run. Sam Anthony explained that at Fenland a task and finish approach used to be in operation 13 years ago, however, that operating module was abolished. She added that in some local authorities especially where they outsource as soon as staff finish, they can go home which is why you often see people running. Sam Anthony explained that this authority operates a team and finish model which is where the staff all start and finish at the same time and also have scheduled hours. She made the point that the staff are not being pushed and the majority of the staff take a great deal of pride in the work that they undertake, and the customer feedback received is testament to that.
- Councillor Clark stated that he holds the same views as Councillor Benney and added that there does not appear to be a chain of events when considering the accidents and they all appear just to be one off incidents. He added that he is quite content with the report.
- Councillor Mrs Davis stated that staff are given training so that they know that accidents should be reported, and the accident figures will eventually level out, but she is pleased to see the data which provides a true reflection.
- Councillor Mrs Davis stated that when considering fire safety, how do the fire wardens know who is on site. Sam Anthony stated that the evacuation procedures were reviewed during the Covid lockdown period, with there no longer being dedicated Fire Marshalls as everybody is now trained and the building is broken down into zones. She added that in the event of an evacuation a member of staff will assume responsibility for the Fire Warden role and ensure that their relevant zone is clear of staff. Sam Anthony explained that staff assemble in the car park and the appointed Fire Warden reports to the controller to advise that their relevant zone is clear, and that information is then passed to the Fire Service should they need to be called.
- Councillor Mrs Davis stated that statistics prove that many people who now work at home are now suffering from repetitive strain injury due to their working environment. She added that with regards to the display screen equipment assessment she is aware that staff undertake e-learning, but she questioned whether staff are actually signed off to confirm that they have understood the training and associated risks. Sam Anthony stated that every single member of staff has to update their DSE assessment on an annual basis which includes the desk they use in the office and the desk that they use at home. She explained that the staff member completes the same process for both locations and confirm that they are happy and then their line manager signs it off and a copy is kept on their personal file.

Proposed by Councillor Mrs Davis, seconded by Councillor Benney and AGREED to note the Council's Health and Safety performance for 2023/24.