

**WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL**

MINUTES of a Meeting of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee held in the MS Teams on Thursday, 7 September 2023 commencing at 4.00 pm.

**Members:** Councillor Mrs Jackie Brockway (Chairman)  
Councillor Matthew Boles  
Councillor Moira Westley  
Councillor Tom Smith

**Also Present:** Councillor Ian Fleetwood

**Representatives of  
Union members:**

**Representatives of  
Non-union staff:** Amy Potts  
Brad Bishell

**In attendance:** Jeanette McGarry, Assistant Director People & Democratic Services  
Michelle Thompson, Human Resources Manager (Temporary)  
Simon Hunt, Health & Safety Co-ordinator  
Andrew Warnes, Democratic and Civic Officer

**Apologies:** Councillor John Barrett  
James Deacon (Vice Chairman)

**Membership:** Councillor Tom Smith substituted for Councillor John Barrett.

**15 MEMBERS' DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**16 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee held on Thursday, 6 July 2023 be approved as a correct record.

**17 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE**

The Chairman invited comments from Members regarding the registered Matter Arising of tracking devices for waste services staff. Members raised up their own examples, which included recent meetings where situations

could have escalated, and referenced the need for established practices with available trackers to triangulate officers.

Members present at the previous meeting clarified that the registered Matter Arising was in reply to an issue raised in response to the Lone Working Policy item at the 6 July 2023 Committee meeting. The Assistant Director of People and Democratic Services explained that enforcement staff received organised training, and had access to materials from the Suzy Lamplugh Trust, assisting staff working in lone working situations.

With no further comment, the Matters Arising schedule was **NOTED**.

## 18 **ANNUAL SICKNESS REPORT 2022-23**

The Chairman invited the Human Resources Manager (Temporary) to present the first report, the Annual Sickness Report 2022-23, which detailed the monitoring of sickness absence for the whole of the previous financial year April 2022 – March 2023.

The Officer explained that following the annual target figure for sickness absence being set at 7.0 per FTE, the reported outcome for the reported civic year was below that level, at 5.96 days per FTE. The Officer stated that these did not include absence figures related to COVID-19.

The report featured a breakdown of figures month by month in Section 2. Section 4 detailed the comparisons between long-term, mainly due to operations and post-operation work, and short-term absences, chiefly due to viral infections. Regarding managing attendance, the policy was kept in mind, but when it comes to employee attendance issues, each case is decided independently. The Officer also advised Members of the flexible working options and working from home options for employees.

Section 6.5 advised of the benchmarking compared to other Lincolnshire authorities. The Officer clarified that these Human Resources teams meet regularly and share the best practices. Members also learned that the reporting of absences due to COVID-19, from 1 July 2023, would be included in the sickness absences for each employee but that any issues and triggers due to absences would be handled on a case-by-case basis. This was a decision taken in line with other local authorities.

The Employee Assistance Programme was also noted, including immediate counselling support, financial advice, and other support networks that signposted employee direction. The Authority did not receive the specific information of what has been disclosed and only attained the usage statistics.

Discussion on the report commenced, and Members raised queries about the figures in December 2022 compared to previous years. The Human Resources Manager (Temporary) explained that increased cold and flu

cases were reported in that month. In response to an associated query on COVID-19 related absences during the relevant years, the Officer explained that the figures to Members would be provided at a later date.

In response to a question about the reduction of absences compared to previous years, Members were made aware of different approaches the Authority took. This included the Employee Assistance Programme in dealing with any queries and staff personal worries, more publicised flexible working arrangements and technology pushed before the coronavirus-related lockdowns, and a push by senior officers and managers to support staff and the relationships with Members.

Members also queried the spread of information on the types of absences beyond short and long term, such as cold, flu, and mental health issues. The Human Resources Manager (Temporary) advised that a deeper investigation into the historical records was required and would breakdown the available data to Members.

Members also raised the increase on hybrid working instituted that helped staff and reduced the absence figures, where staff could work through less intense illnesses, and work to support themselves. In a later comment, the usage of hybrid working arrangements regularly featured at interview stages with prospective employees.

In reply to a comment about personal hygiene issues and the spread of viruses and germs, holistically was made, with Members hearing that there are still hand sanitisers for use and alcohol wipes available to wipe down desks after usage.

With no further comment, and with no need to take a vote, the report was **NOTED**.

## 19 **ANNUAL HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT 2022-23**

The Chairman invited the Human Resources Manager (Temporary) to present the second and final report, the Annual Health and Safety Report 2022-23. This regularly scheduled report considered the reported accidents and actions in health safety for the past civic year. The report provided Members with information on how corporate health and safety worked within West Lindsey District Council.

It was the duty of management to ensure that all processes and procedures of work were designed and maintained, to prioritise the health and safety of our employees and visitors/contractors whilst working in or visiting our premises. The Health and Safety Co-Ordinator explained that he made spot checks on the teams where health and safety were in keen focus, such as the Depot and Operational Services.

The Officer explained that checks concerning home working were regularly

made, and that any employee unable to work from home with a suitable set-up safely was asked to return to the office. Home visits were offered to those who requested further support in setting up safe working environments for home.

Risk assessments and lone working arrangements were regularly reviewed and signed off, with a current review of the risk assessments taking place. Health and Safety Champions positions were under review due to the changed working practices, with the aim for more effective interventions going forward.

The Authority strived to improve the health and safety culture at West Lindsey District Council, progressively improving protection for employees, clients, visitors and contractors.

Accidents were recorded on Minerva (internal site), investigated by managers and assisted by the safety champion. Accidents that were reportable under RIDDOR - Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013, were subsequently reported by the Health and Safety Co-ordinator to the HSE (there were three reportable accidents in 2022-23).

Section 10.4 detailed the accident and incident figures, including the type of injuries and the narrative of each accident report. The main issue was 'Vehicle, plant, property', which included incidents caused by West Lindsey District Council vehicles whilst in the District. The increase in the yearly accident totals were attributed to better reporting of accidents and more standard operating procedures.

Employees throughout the council had been encouraged to report all incidents and near misses. Work continued through the Lincolnshire Health & Safety Advisors group around property and waste to ensure a consistent approach to health and safety.

Discussion on the report opened, and concerning the RIDDOR reportable incidents, the figures would be included in the Progress and Development reporting statistics, with any incidents logged and notified to Management Team. This would include informing the Director of Corporate Services and, in turn, liaising with the Chief Executive. Suggestions also arose about alternative notification methods for Members, which included reports to the Joint Staff Consultative Committee.

In response to a query about audits on the health and safety systems, with a raised concern of 'marking their own homework' and receiving external advice, there were regularly scheduled audits and reports made to the Authority. Further details of these could be shared with Members.

In response to a query about the verbal and physical violence figures, Members heard that these incidents were classified as such for internal logs and to build up data, for example, reporting anti-social behaviour at the

Trinity Arts Centre, and the incidents did not directly involve West Lindsey District Council employees. The Health and Safety Co-Ordinator explained that he contacted affected officers and individuals in reply to a query about checking staff welfare after incidents. This included incidents that involved front-line customer service staff, such as security guards, with these incidents included in the reported statistics.

With no further questions or statements, the report was **NOTED**.

20 **WORK PLAN**

The Democratic and Civic Officer explained that the Committee would likely consider the Body Worn Video Policy at the next meeting on 5 October 2023. Members also heard that unless there was an item in the call for papers for the 23 November 2023 meeting, that this meeting would likely be cancelled.

The Officer then explained that the other scheduled report in the workplan, for the January 2024 meeting, was the Gender Pay Gap Report, an annually scheduled report for the Committee.

With no comments from Members of the Committee, the Work Plan was **NOTED**.

21 **TO NOTE THE DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The date and time of the next meeting of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee to be held at 4pm on Thursday, 5 October 2023, was **NOTED**.

The meeting closed at 4.46 pm.

Chairman