

EMPLOYMENT AND GENERAL COMMITTEE

Thursday, 28th July, 2022

Present:-

Councillor T Murphy (Chair)

Councillors Blank
Brittain
Davenport

Councillors K Falconer
Simmons

*Matters dealt with under the Delegation Scheme

1 **DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' AND OFFICERS' INTERESTS
RELATING TO ITEMS ON THE AGENDA**

No declarations of interest were received.

2 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies for absence were received.

3 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Employment and General Committee on 28 March, 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 **RPE POLICY**

The Service Director – Digital, HR and Customer Services presented the updated Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) Policy. The policy had been reviewed following concerns raised about the council's policy position on RPE and the requirement for employees to be clean shaven. The revised policy was attached at appendix 1 of the officer's report.

The policy had been developed following research on the use of RPE, Health and Safety legislation and guidance from the Health and Safety

Executive, and discussions with specialist asbestos contractors, chartered safety and health practitioners and the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health. A benchmarking exercise had been completed which identified how other organisations dealt with the use of RPE and trials of alternative RPE had taken place, including the use of air fed hoods. The results of the trials were mixed.

In developing the RPE Policy, it became clear that air fed hoods could not be used safely when asbestos fibres may be present. Where RPE is identified as a requirement through a risk assessment, the use of half or full-face respirators would be the council's main standard policy approach.

Respirators must be tight fitting and would therefore require employees to be appropriately clean shaven to maintain their safety. Reasonable adjustments would be considered for medical or religious grounds. Refusal to be clean shaven without a reasonable exemption would be considered as a failure to follow a reasonable management instruction and would likely to lead to action through the council's disciplinary process.

The Trade Unions and employees had been consulted on the development of the RPE Policy, the comments of the Trade Unions were attached at appendices 2 and 3 of the officer's report. Unison, Unite and GMB had worked together to carry out further research on appropriate RPE and they had consulted employees to understand their concerns, listen to their suggestions and find possible working solutions. The Trade Unions supported the main principles of the policy however Unite and GMB did not support the inclusion of section 12 of the policy.

***RESOLVED –**

That the updated Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) Policy be approved.

5 MINUTES OF THE EMPLOYER TRADE UNION COMMITTEE

The Minutes of the meetings of the Employer/Trade Union Committee held on 14 March, 11 April, 16 May and 13 June, 2022 were considered.

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes be received and noted.

6 MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

The Minutes of the meetings of the Council Health and Safety Committee held on 25 May, 2022 were considered.

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes be received and noted.