

NEWS



Dance troupe offer photo opportunity

By Dolores Cowburn
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PHOTOGRAPHERS and artists are being given the chance to capture an award-winning dance company as they rehearse for their debut performance at the Jersey Opera House.

Islanders are being invited to go along and sketch or photograph the ten hand-picked dancers from the Diversions Dance Company of Wales on Wednesday 29 April.

Behind the scenes

The company's artistic director, Ann Sholem, said: 'I am delighted to welcome other artists to see what happens behind the scenes of a Diversions show. I hope that they will be inspired and develop their own creativity from this opportunity.'

Anyone who is interested in this opportunity should contact the Opera House on 511109.

Left: Poetry in motion . . . Members of the Diversions dance company

Police criticised over M & S thefts

Sandpiper boss speaks out over reaction to complaints

By Harry McRandle
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A SUPERMARKET manager was effectively told by the States police to carry out his own investigation after reporting that an employee had been stealing from the tills, it has been claimed.

And the courts have been criticised for imposing a community service order on the thief who stole from Marks and Spencer.

The firm that owns the supermarket says that the thief was eventually sentenced on charges of stealing just over £3,800 when about £17,000 was taken - and the Magistrate's Court knew the true amount.

Receipts
Tony O'Neill, the chief executive of Sandpiper CL, has spoken out about the way police officers responded to a complaint about the thefts.

He says that the police initially visited the M & S store at St Brelade last October after the manager made a complaint.

'The police were called on 6 October and were not particularly helpful, suggesting that we ought to do all the work and present the evidence to



Tony O'Neill

them when ready,' he said. As a result, the store manager felt compelled to review hours of CCTV footage and produce till receipts to hand to officers.

Mr O'Neill said that it was difficult to understand why the perpetrator was given community service as a sentence and there was no restitution to the supermarket business. 'Is it because they view us as Goliath and he is David? It is the wrong message to send out because it doesn't discourage other people from such actions. It also creates a horrid atmosphere for staff as people are under suspicion,' he said.

However, States police spokesman Det chief insp David Minty said

that CID officers conducted a 'thorough investigation which required considerable assistance from the company with documentary, accounting and CCTV evidence'.

'This is normal investigatory practice and entirely appropriate when considering the seriousness of such allegations,' he said.

Mr Minty said that as a result of the investigation, a man of 36 had been charged with theft and sentenced.

Patterns

Mr O'Neill said that during August and September last year it became apparent that significant sums of money were missing once the till reconciliations had been completed. After looking at the working patterns of staff, a man became chief suspect.

'CCTV showed that he was taking notes from various tills on different days and hiding the notes below his waist,' said Mr O'Neill.

The man was reported to the police and arrested. But Mr O'Neill said that Det con Jeremy Percival told the firm on 22 October that due to a technicality the suspect had not been charged, despite having been questioned.

'He also said that the evidence was not strong enough and he wanted more CCTV footage and electronic journal data. That was provided to the police later in the day and over the next week,' said Mr O'Neill.

Accounts

M & S were told that the police were reviewing bank accounts and tracking Western Union and Moneygram transactions and would interview the suspect again soon. However, the store manager reported that he had to chase the police repeatedly to learn what was happening.

On 3 December, said Mr O'Neill, M & S was told that the suspect

would only be charged with stealing £3,800 following advice from the police legal adviser.

He was eventually given 120 hours of community service by the Magistrate's Court in March. 'The police described the verdict as "a bit disappointing". When we ask

ed if he had to return any money, Mr Percival said that "the fact that the former employee was not fined suggests to me that his income was not sufficient to pay a fine", he said.

The officer was asked if the Magistrate knew that £17,000 had been

stolen and confirmed that St Peter Centenier Chris Le Brun had made the Magistrate aware.

Sizeable

'I decided to speak out about this because it feels as if the complaint was not handled the way

it should have been because we are a sizeable company. All the same, a theft is a theft, and the rule of law must be upheld. I have been in Jersey for a couple of years now and one of the island's strengths is that the rule of law is generally observed,' he said.

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