

**The Highland Council
Joint Consultation Group's Central Safety Committee**

Minutes of Meeting of the Joint Consultation Group's Central Safety Committee held in Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Friday 6 September, 2013 at 11.45 a.m.

Present

Employer's Representatives:

Mr D Fallows
Mr F Parr

Mr H Morrison
Mr D Mackay

Staff Side Representatives:

Mr C Parr, UNISON
Mr J Rosie, UNITE (substitute) (by video conference)
Mr R Selkirk, GMB
Mr C Cameron, UCATT

Mr M Robison-Murphy, UCATT (observer)
Ms S Arch, CSP

Officials in attendance:

Ms M Morris, Assistant Chief Executive
Mr J Batchelor, Head of Human Resources, Chief Executive's Service
Ms G Falconer, Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager, Chief Executive's Service
Mr R Whyte, Regional Officer, UNITE
Mr R MacKenzie, Head of Support Services, Education, Culture & Sport Service
Mr S Duncan, Property Risk Management Officer, Housing and Property Service
Mr C Kemp, Area Roads & Community Works Manager, TEC Services
Mr A Macmanus (substitute - by video conference), Caithness, Sutherland & Easter Ross Health & Safety Working Group.
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Chief Executive's Service

1. Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair

The Committee had been advised that, in terms of the Membership and Remit of the Committee, following an election of councillors, and annually thereafter, it was required to appoint a Chair and Vice Chair from amongst its members. If the Chair appointed was one of the Employer's representatives, the Vice-Chair should be one of the Staff Side representatives, and vice versa.

The Employer's Side invited the Staff Side to nominate a Chair for the Committee. It was **AGREED** that the Staff Side would advise of their nomination for Chair and report back.

Thereafter, Mr D Fallows seconded by Mr H Morrison moved that Mr F Parr be appointed as Vice-Chair. There being no other nominations, Mr Parr was duly appointed and took the Chair.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Dr D Alston of the Employer's Side, Mr A Wemyss, Unite and Ms E Caithness, RCN of the Staff Side and Ms D Grant, Caithness, Sutherland & Easter Ross Health & Safety Working Group and Mr W Munro, Nairn and Badenoch & Strathspey Joint Health and Safety Working Group.

3. Declarations of Interest

Mr F Parr declared a non-financial interest on the items to be discussed at the meeting on the grounds that his brother was a Staff Side representative on the Committee and an employee of the Council but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude him from taking part in the discussion.

4. Minutes of Last Meeting

There had been circulated for confirmation, Minutes of the last meeting of the Sub-Committee held on 28 June, 2013 the terms of which were **APPROVED**.

5. Minutes of Area Health and Safety Groups

There had been circulated for information, Minutes of Meeting of:

- i. Caithness, Sutherland & Easter Ross Health & Safety Working Group held on 15 August, 2013;
- ii. Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey Joint Health and Safety Working Group held on 23 August, 2013; and
- iii. Ross, Skye & Lochaber Health and Safety Working Group held on 15 August, 2013.

The Sub Committee **NOTED** the minutes as circulated.

Arising from the minutes the following matters were raised:-

Caithness, Sutherland & Easter Ross Health & Safety Working Group held on 15 August, 2013 –

Responsible Premises Officers (RPOs) – it was advised that some updates to the RPOs list had been made, but other updates were required. It was anticipated that the list would be completed by their next meeting in December, 2013.

Girnigoe Street Offices Fire Alarms - weekly testing of fire alarms was now

taking place and a full emergency evacuation of the offices would be carried out soon.

6. Carr's Corner Depot Fort William

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/12/13 by the Director of Transport, Environmental and Community Services which provided an update on progress with the works and measures undertaken to address the health and safety issues raised in the previous report to the Central Safety Committee on 8 March 2013 in relation the TECS depot at Carr's Corner, Fort William.

The report detailed the repairs and other safety measures undertaken to date to minimise the risks within the depot. It was advised that a permanent solution would require the yard to be surfaced with a bituminous material. The cost of surfacing the yard and approach road had been estimated at £84,000. There was an annual provision in the Capital Programme of £100,000 for depot improvements and the budget for 2013/14 had already been allocated.

The funding for depot improvements required to be prioritised in terms of health and safety requirements, and the resurfacing of Carr's Corner would be considered for the next financial year (2014/15) subject to prioritisation with other health and safety issues which may have to be addressed within depots.

The Staff Side opposed the postponement of the urgent works to the depot on health and safety grounds. There were particular concerns regarding large potholes and ice affecting the yard in winter. The delay was down to cost and given that there were a number of depots, £100k would not stretch far and there was no guarantees that the funding for this particular yard would be available next year either. Consideration should therefore be given to identifying other sources of funding for the urgent works that were required.

In response, the Area Roads & Community Works Manager advised that regular maintenance of the unbound surface had and would continue to be carried out to avoid the recurrence of potholes. The Service would look at increasing the frequency of this maintenance work. Also, de-icing was applied during periods of frost as a matter of routine and the staff at the depot would be reminded of the need for this work to be undertaken.

The Committee were of the view that the works required at the Carr's Corner depot should be a priority given the health and safety concerns that had been identified. Therefore the Committee sought an assurance that these works would be prioritised for 2014/15 and a recommendation to this effect would be made to the Director of Transport, Environment and Community Services. The Area Roads & Community Works Manager undertook to report back on the prioritisation list for improvements to TEC Service depots in 2014/15 and noted the request from the Committee.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i **NOTED** progress with the works and measures undertaken to address the health and safety issues raised in the previous report to the Central Safety Committee on 8 March 2013 in relation the TECS depot at Carr's Corner, Fort William;
- ii **NOTED** that TEC Services would look to increase the frequency of maintenance work at the Depot to avoid the recurrence of potholes and that staff at the Depot would be reminded that de-icing be applied during periods of frost;
- iii **NOTED** that permanent works to provide a good quality surface free from potholes, would be considered for next financial year (2014/15) subject to prioritisation with other health and safety issues which may require to be addressed within TEC Service's Depots. A report would be submitted to the next Central Safety Committee meeting on the prioritisation list for improvements to TEC Service depots in 2014/15; and
- iv **AGREED** that it be recommended to the Director of Transport, Environmental and Community Services that improvement works to the Carr's Corner Depot be treated as a priority given the major problems that have, for sometime now, required to be addressed.

7. **Housing and Property Service – Annual Health and Safety Report**

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/13/13 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Housing and Property which described the approach taken by Housing and Property Services to managing Health and Safety and set out the priorities for the next twelve months.

The report set out the health and safety consultation arrangements within Housing and Property which included consultation with trade union representatives. It also detailed accidents and incidents during 2012/13 and 2013/14. In this respect it was felt that there was under reporting of accidents and incidents within the Service and staff would be reminded to report all such incidents.

The report also detailed health and safety training undertaken within the Service and highlighted cases where the Health and Safety Executive had been involved and action taken by the Service to address this. Health and safety achievements within the last twelve months were detailed as was a health and safety action plan for the forthcoming twelve months.

In discussion reference was made to a wind turbine which had failed. While this was not one on Council owned land, an assurance was sought that there was a maintenance regime and maintenance records kept for wind turbines on Council land. In response, it was advised that there were specifications in the contract for wind turbines which were required to be met and there were monitoring arrangements and details would be submitted to the Committee. It

was further advised that in terms of the failed wind turbine, information was being gathered to see if any lessons could be learned.

Reference was made in the report to regular toolbox talks that were being held for staff in Building Maintenance. The Staff Side did not recognise this as a practice that was going on and requested that management be asked to enforce this. The Staff Side requested that a copy of this communication be issued to the Committee.

Thereafter, the Committee:

- i **NOTED** the approach taken by Housing and Property to managing Health and Safety and the priorities listed for the next twelve months;
- ii **NOTED** that details of maintenance and monitoring arrangements for wind turbines on Council land would be submitted to the Committee;
- iii **AGREED** that a communication be issued to management to ensure that regular toolbox talks were held for staff in Building Maintenance. A copy of this communication would be issued to the Committee.

8. Education, Culture and Sport Service Health and Safety Report

There was circulated Report No. CSC/14/13 by the Director of Education, Culture and Sport Service which invited the Committee to consider a draft report to Adult and Children's Services Committee on an Education, Culture and Sport Service Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy.

The objective of the policy was to ensure that there was a positive culture embedded across the Service that recognises and accepts the importance of health, safety and well-being for all staff and service users. Also, that all managers and employees were aware of their specific health and safety responsibilities, including statutory duties, on an on-going basis. Appropriate health and safety training was to be provided for all employees and the Policy would also ensure that there was a safe working environment for all employees in the Service and any other users of its buildings and services. The report detailed measures to implement the policy across the Service and advised of resources and legal implications.

Reference was made to some equipment in schools that was NHS Highland funded and not Council funded that was probably under a different maintenance regime. It was advised that the intention was to asset tag every piece of equipment to ensure that it was traceable and to ensure that all equipment was inspected and maintained on an annual basis.

In relation to individual employees health and safety responsibilities, there was an issue regarding managing challenging behaviour in the classroom and it was queried whether some clarity could be given to staff on what the expectations of staff were in such instances. It was advised that there were a growing number of pupils in schools with additional support needs which was

challenging. There was more staff resources going into classrooms as a result, and there was an extensive training programme to support those staff.

It was queried whether TEC Services had the capacity to carry out the inspection and maintenance contract for playground outdoor equipment given that they were responsible for public play grounds as well. It was advised that discussions had been held with TEC Services on this issue and they had given an assurance that they did have the capacity to fulfil this contract.

It was advised that there was an issue over TEC Services ability to carry out maintenance and inspection of public play parks in Caithness. The Head of Support Services, ECS undertook to investigate this issue and report back to the Committee.

Thereafter, the Committee:

- i **APPROVED** the ECS policy on health, safety and wellbeing and noted that the contents of the related manual, which underpins the policy document, would be completed as soon as practical; and
- ii **AGREED** that the Head of Support Services, ECS would report back on TEC Services ability to carry out maintenance and inspection of public play parks in Caithness.

9. The Highland Council - Annual Health and Safety Report 2012-2013

There was circulated Report No. CSC/15/13 by the Head of Human Resources which outlined the Council's health and safety performance and achievements for the period 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013 and set out the programme for the next 12 months.

The report addressed Health and Safety Principles, Targets and Performance and set out a health, safety and wellbeing action plan for 2013/14. A regular update on progress with the action plan would be provided at future meetings.

Following consideration, the Committee:

- i **NOTED** the achievements for 2012/13; and
- ii **APPROVED** the health and safety plan for 2013/14.

10. Health and Safety Team: Update on Current Health and Safety Issues

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/16/13 by the Head of Human Resources providing an update on several current health and safety issues and developments.

The report detailed health and safety executive issues and various current projects relating to health and safety issues and developments, including:-

- Internal Audit had completed a health and safety audit within the Council which would be submitted to a future Audit and Scrutiny Committee.
- The Housing and Social Work team were working with officers in Human Resources and Corporate Improvement Programme with a view to using Resourcelink as the method to record workplace accidents and injuries.
- New guidance for Responsible Premises Officers was in development in conjunction with Housing and Property Services and Employee Development.
- A health and safety induction module would shortly be available on My Online Learning. Following a request from the Staff Side, a paper copy of the module would also be made available.

The Sub-Committee **NOTED** the updated information on health and safety issues and developments contained in the report.

11. Occupational Health Report

There was circulated Report No. CSC/17/13 by the Head of Human Resources which provided an overview of the work undertaken by RS Occupational Health (RSOH) for the period April 2013 – June 2013.

The report provided a breakdown of the management referrals, occupational health surveillance and other activities undertaken in this period.

In particular it was noted that a total of 120 management referrals were seen by RSOH in this period. This was a slight decrease in referrals from the previous quarters.

An e-learning course was being developed to assist managers in understanding the role of occupational health, the importance of detailed referrals and dealing with the outcomes of cases. It was requested that this e-learning course should be introduced as mandatory training for Managers

The Committee **NOTED**:

- i the contents of the report; and
- ii that consideration would be given to the e-learning course on occupational health being introduced as mandatory training for all Managers.

12.AOCB

Use of CALM (Crisis Aggression Limitation Method) by The Highland Council

It was **AGREED** that an update on the integration of the General Services Method and CALM systems for dealing with violence and aggression would be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

The meeting ended at 12.50 p.m.

Date of Next Meeting – Thursday, 12 December, 2013 at 11.45a.m.