

**The Highland Council**  
**Central Safety Committee**

Minutes of Meeting of the Central Safety Committee held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Friday 8 August 2014 at 12.55 pm.

**Present:**

**Employer's Representatives:**

Dr D Alston  
Mr D MacKay

Mr F Parr  
Ms M Smith

**Staff Side Representatives:**

Mr C Cameron (UCATT)  
Mr D Griffiths (GMB)

Mr M Hayes (UNISON)  
Mr A Wemyss (UNITE)

**In attendance:**

Mr J Batchelor, Head of People and Performance, Corporate Development Service  
Mr B Porter, Head of Resources, Care and Learning Service  
Ms G Falconer, Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager, Corporate Development Service  
Miss M Murray, Committee Administrator, Corporate Development Service

**Business**

**1. Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair**

The Committee was informed that, in terms of its Membership and Remit, 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.

Mr C Cameron, seconded by Mr D Griffiths, moved that Mr M Hayes be appointed as Chair. There being no other nominations, Mr Hayes was duly appointed and took the Chair.

Ms M Smith, seconded by Dr D Alston, then moved that Mr F Parr be appointed as Vice Chair. There being no other nominations, Mr Parr was duly appointed.

**2. Apologies for Absence**

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mr H Morrison.

**3. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **4. Minutes of Last Meeting**

There had been circulated Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 11 April 2014, the terms of which were **APPROVED**.

#### **5. Matters Arising from the Minutes**

There were no matters arising from the Minutes.

#### **6. Minutes of Area Health and Safety Groups**

There had been circulated, for information, the Minutes of the:-

- i. Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey Joint Health and Safety Working Group held on 29 July, 2014;
- ii. Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross Health and Safety Working Group held on 29 May, 2014; and
- iii. Ross, Skye and Lochaber Health and Safety Group held on 5 June, 2014.

The Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager informed the Committee that, since the recent Service restructure, there had been a lack of attendance at Area Health and Safety Groups. The importance of management and Trade Union representation at these meetings was emphasised. She undertook to liaise with Services and it was suggested that Trade Union representatives also be encouraged to attend.

The Chair explained that clashes with courses had led to some Trade Union representatives being unable to attend recent meetings. In relation to Service meetings with Trade Unions, it was understood that the format was being reviewed and the Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager undertook to raise this with Service Directors.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the Minutes.

#### **7. Good News Story**

The Committee **NOTED** that the Highland Council had received a Silver Award for Occupational Health and Safety by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents.

#### **8. Health, Safety and Wellbeing Team: Update on Current Health, Safety and Wellbeing Issues**

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/10/14 by the Head of People & Performance providing an update on current health and safety issues and developments.

The report provided details of Health and Safety Executive (HSE) issues and management system updates. The revised Monitoring Protocol, amended to include reference to the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and the HSE's application of Fees for Intervention, was appended to the report. Progress was also reported on major projects and the management of issues identified as a result of the Radon sampling programme.

During discussion regarding Radon management, it was hoped that the readings would come down and there would be no need for any further engineering solutions. Information was sought on whether there was a contingency plan to minimise disruption in schools if further works were required.

The Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager confirmed that the latest information was that all readings had come down to well below Action Levels apart from three rooms in one school. In the event that these levels did not come down, occupancy in the rooms affected would have to be reduced. This had been discussed with the Care and Learning Service and contingency plans were in place.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the updated information on health and safety issues and developments contained in the report.

## 9. Occupational Health Report

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/11/14 by the Head of People & Performance which presented an overview of the work undertaken by RS Occupational Health for the period April to June 2014.

The report provided a breakdown of management referrals, health surveillance, physiotherapy, did not attend appointments (DNAs), key performance indicators and equalities monitoring. There had been 143 management referrals, an increase on the previous quarter, all of which had been closed out with no further input from the OH physician required. Of these, 52% were for mental health issues. This was cause for concern and Directors were being urged to ensure that prevention of workplace stress was a priority. In addition, it was highlighted that, in terms of the contract, RS Occupational Health charged the Council for DNAs, where an employee failed to give 24 hours' notice of being unable to attend an appointment or did not turn up. These charges amounted to almost £2000 in the last quarter. Attendance at Occupational Health appointments was mandatory and Directors had been asked to address this issue. However, the assistance of Trade Union representatives in encouraging staff to attend appointments was also requested.

During discussion, information was requested on how many of the 143 referrals were repeat referrals. In addition, it would be helpful to compare the Council's performance in terms of managing mental health and other absences with other local authorities.

In response to concerns that stress risk assessments were not being carried out, it was explained that this formed part of the new Employee Review and Development process and was in the guidance. However, a reminder could be issued to managers.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the report;
- ii. **AGREED** that information on repeat referrals and comparator information from other local authorities be presented to a future meeting of the Committee; and
- iii. **AGREED** that a reminder be issued to managers regarding the inclusion of stress risk assessment in the Employee Review and Development process.

## 10. Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Annual Report

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/12/14 by the Head of People & Performance which presented the Council's occupational health, safety and wellbeing (OHSW) performance, achievements and progress in 2013/14 and the plan for 2014/15.

It was explained that the Council's Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy included a commitment to the production of an annual report on performance. In particular, information was provided on accident/incident analysis and the provision of training, including e-learning courses. It was highlighted that there had been no Health and Safety Executive enforcement action in relation to Council activities in 2013/14. A number of other achievements were summarised, including the approval of a strategy for supporting staff with dyslexia; the publication of a booklet on managing personal stress; the launch of a free 24 hour confidential counselling line for teachers; and the development of the Scottish Manual Handling Passport. Three Trade Union representatives had also achieved their Health and Safety Diplomas.

In relation to the work plan for 2014/15, the OHSW management system would continue to be reviewed to ensure that guidance for staff was up to date and met legislative and best practice requirements. The guidance due for review was summarised. New guidance would also require to be developed including Use of personal protective equipment; use of respiratory equipment; workplace equipment; and Work in confined space. Health and Safety Co-ordinators would continue to work with Services to ensure that there was a culture of positive health and safety management throughout the Council.

In response to a question, it was explained that the Mentally Healthy Workplaces e-learning course was mandatory for all managers. Some other courses were mandatory depending on the type of job. In addition, the new Health and Safety for Managers course would be mandatory for all managers when it was introduced in October 2014.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the report.

## 11. Carrs Corner Depot, Fort William

The Committee had been advised, at the previous meeting on 11 April 2014, that the surfacing works at Carrs Corner Depot in Fort William were scheduled for September 2014. The staff side had asked for confirmation that the works were still on schedule.

In response, the Committee was informed that the Director of Community Services had confirmed that the works were on schedule to be carried out in September 2014, as reported to the last meeting.

During discussion, the Staff Side confirmed that the works had now started and progress would be monitored. However, concern was expressed that the surfacing material being used was very light, similar to that used to treat single track roads. The issue had initially been raised four years ago and costs had escalated from £15k to £85k in that time. It was suggested that consideration be given to ringfencing funds for the maintenance of depots and other premises so that a similar situation did not occur in the future.

In response, the Employer's Side explained that this was not feasible in the current challenging financial climate and issues would require to be dealt with as and when they arose.

The Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager emphasised the importance of tracking and following up actions that had not been taken. There was a mechanism within the Health and Safety Monitoring Protocol to escalate outstanding actions to a higher level and it was hoped this would ensure issues were addressed more quickly in the future.

In relation to the earlier comments regarding the type of surfacing material being used, the Chair suggested that it would be helpful to have sight of the Schedule of Works. In addition, Carrs Corner Depot was only one of a number of sites that had been prioritised for maintenance/improvements and information was sought on the status of the remaining sites.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the position;
- ii. **AGREED** that a copy of the Schedule of Works in relation to Carrs Corner Depot be requested and circulated to the Committee; and
- iii. **AGREED** that an update on the other sites that had been prioritised for maintenance/improvements be sought from the Director of Community Services.

## **12. AOCB**

In relation to violence and aggression, the Staff Side raised the issue of on-call Community Services staff being called out by Police Scotland. This was often at night and no information was provided on whether the tenants were potentially dangerous. A request was made that this type of information be provided on the call out and the Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager undertook to raise this with the appropriate person.

With regard to Personal Protective Equipment, concerns had been raised that some of the protective clothing being issued to manual workers was not suitable. Particularly in the summer months, the type of heavy clothing provided was not appropriate for carrying out physical tasks.

In response, the Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager confirmed that this had been brought to her attention following the recent spell of hot weather and meetings had already taken place with Community Services in that regard.

The Staff Side commented that there was also an issue regarding the provision of drinking water for crews in refuse vehicles etc and thought needed to be put in to that.

The meeting concluded at 1.40 pm.

**Date of Next Meeting – Friday 24 October 2014 at 12.15 pm.**