

**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 24 October, 2014 at 12.15 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 J Rosie (UNITE) (Observer) (by video conference)  
Mr A Wemyss (UNITE)

**In attendance:**

Ms G Falconer, Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager, Corporate Development Service  
Mr R Pope, Roads and Community Works Manager, Community Services  
Mr W Munro, Nairn and Badenoch & Strathspey Joint Health and Safety Working Group  
Ms D Grant, Caithness, Sutherland & Easter Ross Health & Safety Working Group (by video conference)  
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Corporate Development Service

**Mr F Parr in the Chair**

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr H Morrison of the Employer's Side and Mr M Hayes (UNISON), Ms E Caithness (RCN) of the Staff Side.

**2. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. Minutes of Last Meeting**

There had been circulated Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 8 August, 2014, the terms of which were **APPROVED**.

**4. Matters Arising from the Minutes**

There were no matters arising from the Minutes.

**5. 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 15 October, 2014;
- ii. Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross Health and Safety Working Group held on 21 August, 2014; and
- iii. Ross, Skye and Lochaber Health and Safety Group held on 25 September, 2014.

The Committee **NOTED** the Minutes.

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

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/13/14 by the Head of People & Performance providing an update on current health and safety issues and developments.

The report provided details of achievements, Health and Safety Executive (HSE) issues and Health and Safety management system updates. Progress was also reported on major projects, including new guidance documents on accident reporting and accident investigation which were circulated, and the management of issues identified as a result of the Radon sampling programme.

In particular it was noted that the Council had received the RoSPA Silver Award in recognition of our health and safety management system. It was also reported that no enforcement action had been taken against the Council, or its main contractors, in the period since the last meeting. Also, the Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing team were working in partnership with NHS Highland and the voluntary sector to prepare and run a course on self-management for long term conditions. A booklet "Living and Working with long term conditions" had been produced for Highland Council staff and was tabled at the meeting. It was confirmed that the booklet would be sent to employees who were off on long term sickness absence at the moment or who had a long term condition but were still at work.

In December 2014, the DWP would launch a new service to support people who are off work with long term absence (more than 4 weeks) return to work. The Fit For Work (Scotland) project will be run by the NHS in Scotland. The Council, as part of the managing attendance programme would raise awareness of this with Highland Council Managers and monitor potential conflicts with Council policies and our own Occupational Health provider's advice.

Further, a cross-Service group had been set up to look at additional support for lone workers who work in areas where mobile phone coverage was poor/non-existent. NHS Highland were interested in taking part in the project. Trade Union representation on the group was welcomed. Mr Wemyss, Mr Griffiths and Mr Cameron of the Staff Side indicated that they would like to take part in the group.

In terms of the guidance documents on accident reporting it was welcomed that 'Near Misses' would be recorded. It was confirmed that the importance of reporting 'Near Misses' would be communicated to staff. Trade Union representatives would receive a weekly summary of accident investigations or if a serious accident occurred they would be notified immediately.

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

## 7. Occupational Health Report

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/14/14 by the Head of People & Performance which presented an overview of the work undertaken by RS Occupational Health for the period July to September, 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 125 management referrals, a decrease on the previous quarter, all but 16 had been closed out with no further input from the OH physician required. Of these, 38% were for mental health issues. Directors were being urged to ensure that prevention of workplace stress was a priority and that stress risk assessments had been undertaken and action plans in place. 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. While there was no recharge system currently in place this may have to be considered should the trends continue thereby placing the Occupational Health budget under pressure.

During discussion, there had been a request at the last meeting to compare the Council's performance in terms of managing mental health and other absences with other local authorities. It was advised that information from other Councils was being requested, but some Councils did not do an analysis at that level.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

## 8. Community Services Depots

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/15/14 by the Director of Community Services which provided detail on the surfacing works carried out at the depot yard at Carr's Corner, Fort William and provided an update on progress with works at other Community Services depots.

It was reported that surfacing works at Carr's Corner depot were complete and the work had been carried out using an innovative road recycling technique. The performance of this new surface would be monitored and was performing well to date. Progress with the priority list for depot maintenance in relation to Seater Landfill Site accommodation; Lotland Street Ramp Area Surfacing, and Vehicle Washing Gantries, was also provided.

The Staff Side tabled photographs of the yard at the Carr's Corner depot taken on 17 October, 2014. The photos showed an uneven surface and areas of standing water. They advised that these photos did not bear any relation to the contents of the report, which it stated that the surfacing works were complete.

Further, in terms of the history of this issue, it was reported to Committee on 11

April, 2014 that surfacing works would be carried out to the yard during September, 2014 and would provide a permanent bituminous surface of the affected area of the yard. This would be resistant to the damaging actions of heavy vehicles and would keep the area clean and safe. This was not the case at the present time.

The report to the Committee on 12 December, 2013 stated that £84k was allocated for these works. Further, on 7 February, 2014 a report to Committee stated that £60k had been allocated for these works. The Staff Side felt that the Committee had been misled, whereby assurances were given that the surface of the yard would be completed by September, 2014, but as was clear from the photos this was not the case. In winter time there would be severe problems with ice in the yard which was a serious health and safety concern. Also, most of the material on the surface was unbound, that would give underfoot, particularly with ice. Within a few months the situation would be the same as before the new surface had been put on the yard.

In response it appeared that there were areas where the final grade of the surface had not been levelled off sufficiently to shed water. It was requested that there should be a report to the Committee as to whether there had been work schedules prepared for the in-house team to adhere to. Given the length of time this issue had taken and amount of information given previously to the Committee and the assurances that were given, all of this should be looked at in terms of why the works did not meet the standards that should have been met. Clarification was also sought on how much of the £60k allocation for the works had been used.

It was queried if the pedestrian access had been lined off and clearly marked and segregated from moving vehicles. It was advised that the front of the Carr's Corner building had recently been lined, some of it over potholes. In this respect, the work could only be complete when it met the legal requirements under the Workplace Health and Safety Regulations, which included clear demarcation and clear areas where vehicles and people could and could not go.

The Staff Side sought agreement from the Committee that in terms of paragraph 3.1 of the report where it stated that the Carr's Corner Depot Surfacing, 2014/15 was complete, this be changed to 'incomplete'. This was agreed by the Committee.

In relation to the Lotland Street Ramp Area Surfacing, this was an issue raised by the Health and Safety Executive, so this project had high priority. The Staff Side referred to the amount of money allocated to depot improvements, when in actual fact it was only complying with health and safety legislation and the Council needed to look seriously at this issue.

Thereafter, the Committee:

- i **AGREED** that in terms of the Carr's Corner depot works these be classed as incomplete and not complete as stated in the report, and otherwise noted the progress of works on the other listed Community Services depots; and
- ii **AGREED** that a report be submitted to the Committee by the end of November, 2014 providing a briefing on the surfacing works undertaken at Carr's Corner depot, including information on work schedules that had been prepared for the in-house team; why the works had not met the standards that should have been met and assurances that had been given; how much of the £60k allocation for the works had

been used and proposals for completing the works, which should include ensuring the legal requirements under the Workplace Health and Safety Regulations for pedestrian access were met.

## **9. Dates for Meetings in 2015**

The Committee **NOTED** that the Joint Consultation Group at their meeting held earlier in the day approved the following dates for meetings in 2015 of the Joint Consultation Group and Central Safety Committee:-

Friday, 6 February  
Friday, 15 May  
Friday 14 August  
Friday 30 October

The Central Safety Committee would commence at 12.15pm (or following the JCG meeting whichever is the later).

The meeting concluded at 12.50 pm.

**Date of Next Meeting – Friday, 6 February, 2015 at 12.15p.m.**