

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 6 February, 2015 at 11.45 a.m.

Present:

Employer's Representatives:

Dr D Alston	Mr F Parr
Mr D MacKay	Ms M Smith
Mr H Morrison (by telephone conference)	

Staff Side Representatives:

Mr M Hayes (UNISON)	Mr C Christie (UCATT) (substitute)
Mr D Griffiths (GMB)	Mr A Wemyss (UNITE)

In attendance:

Mr J Batchelor, Head of People and Performance, Corporate Development Service
Mr G Hamilton, Head of Environment and Economic Development, Development and Infrastructure Service
Ms G Falconer, Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager, Corporate Development Service
Mr C Kemp, Area Community Services 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 M Hayes in the Chair

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr C Cameron (UCATT) and 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 24 October, 2014, the terms of which were **APPROVED**.

4. Matters Arising from the Minutes

Arising from the Minutes the following matter was raised:-

Item 8 – Community Services Depots

In terms of the ongoing works at Carr's Corner depot, the staff side tabled photographs taken recently of the yard at the depot which showed that the issues at the yard were still ongoing and the state of the repairs were not satisfactory and it was asked what actions needed to be taken to resolve this issue.

It was advised that the Director of Community Services had been contacted after the last meeting of the Committee about this issue, and he had given an undertaking to ensure that action would be taken.

The Area Community Services Manager advised that a substantial amount of repair work had been undertaken on the yard, and what was shown in the photographs were minor surface defects, and that there were some potholes that were in the process of being repaired. A substantial amount of foundation work had been done, with the whole surface having been recycled and ongoing levelling work was being carried out. The works were intended to be completed by March, 2015 weather permitting.

It was queried if the deterioration to the surface was not as a result of the works that had previously been done. In response it was advised that the original photographs that had been shown to Committee, showed substantial potholing which was no longer the case.

It was felt that there was a continual process that was having to be gone through of erosion to the surface and then repair work to be undertaken. What had been agreed originally was that if the yard had been repaired as originally stated with the £80k budget, then this would not be an issue now.

In response it was advised that the new work on the surface was not eroding quickly and a new innovative recycling technique was being used to make best use of the funding available for the repair work.

It was queried when the works would be completed so that the yard would be compliant with the Workplace, Health, Safety and Welfare Regulations, which required pedestrian routes to be marked. It was also queried if a risk assessment on the yard had been completed.

In response it was advised that pedestrian routes had been marked out with lining and signs. There would require to be a final health and safety inspection once the works had been completed.

The Area Community Services Manager proposed that a site visit to the yard with a representative of the staff side and the Health and Safety Adviser should be undertaken to discuss the work that was being undertaken and the specifications for the work. It was also requested that the risk assessment on the yard be sent to the Health and Safety Adviser prior to the site visit. The Committee requested that they be informed when the works had been completed and the health and safety issues had been addressed.

Thereafter the Committee **AGREED** that:

- i a site visit would be held at the depot yard at Carr's Corner, Fort William between the Area Community Services Manager, the Health and Safety Adviser and the UCATT trade union representative with the risk assessment report on the yard being sent to the participants prior to the site visit;
- ii a report on the site visit would be submitted to the Committee prior to its next meeting; and
- iii the Committee be informed when the works had been completed and the health and safety issues had been addressed.

5. Minutes of Area Health and Safety Groups

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

- i. Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross Health and Safety Working Group held on 20 November, 2014; and
- ii. Ross, Skye and Lochaber Health and Safety Group held on 11 December, 2014.

The Committee **NOTED** the Minutes and that the minute of the Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey Joint Health and Safety Working Group held on 26 January, 2015 would be submitted to the next meeting.

6. Development and Infrastructure Service – Draft Health Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Action Plan 2015

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/1/15 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which introduced the Development and Infrastructure Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Action Plan 2015. The draft had undergone consultation within the Service and with Trade Union representatives via the Service Health, Safety and Wellbeing Forum. The Committee was invited to consider and approve the draft Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Action Plan.

Following consideration, the Committee **APPROVED** the draft Development and Infrastructure Health, Safety, and Wellbeing Policy and associated action plan.

7. Corporate Development – Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Action Plan

There had been circulated Report No. CSC//15 by the Head of People and Performance which presented the Corporate Development Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Plan as required by the Corporate Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy 2014.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Corporate Development Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Plan.

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

There was circulated Report No. CSC/3/15 by the Head of People and Performance which provided an update on current health and safety issues and developments.

An update to the report was provided by the Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager in relation to a visit by Health and Safety Executive Inspectors to the Community Services' Gairloch depot in January, 2015. As a result two improvement notices had been served on the Council by the Health and Safety Executive relating to roads and community works failure to do risk assessments and in particular to manage hand-arm vibration syndrome as a result of the failure to manage staff working with power tools.

The Occupational, Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager had met with Service representatives and an action plan had been developed to address the issues. An officer had been appointed within the Service to co-ordinate all the actions. Regular updates would be provided to trade union safety representatives.

There were implications for others Services whose employees used power tools i.e Development and Infrastructure and Care and Learning. Therefore the relevant actions put in place for Community Services would also require to be replicated in other Services. Further updates on progress with the action plan to address the issues raised in the improvement notices would be provided to future meetings of the Committee. Work was also being undertaken on a compliance monitoring exercise and updates on this would also be provided to future meetings.

There was also a cost of £124 per hour for Health and Safety Executive intervention when dealing with these improvement notices.

The Committee **NOTED:**

- i the updated information on health, safety and wellbeing issues and developments contained in the report;
- ii that further updates on progress with the action plan to address the issues raised in the improvement notices would be submitted to future meetings of the Committee; and
- iii that work was being undertaken on a compliance monitoring exercise relating to the improvement notices and updates on this would be submitted to future meetings.

9. Health, Safety and Wellbeing Team: Revised Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policies

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/4/15 by the Head of People & Performance providing an update on the Corporate Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy, the Policy and Guidance on Management of Smoking at Work and the Policy and Guidance on the Management of Radon in Workplaces owned and/or Managed by Highland Council.

In relation to the Smoking at Work Policy and the enforcement measures to stop people smoking in Council workplaces, it was queried how this would work. In response it was advised that enforcement action would be undertaken by Managers and disciplinary action only taken as a last resort. However, employees would not be expected to challenge members of the public who were smoking at Council workplaces and this would be stated when the policy was advertised.

It was felt that there should be phased action against employees who were found to be smoking at workplaces, as smoking was an addiction and was difficult to stop. The Scottish Government had a tobacco strategy but this was not a nicotine strategy and a lot of doctors were starting to prescribe e-cigarettes as part of smoking cessation. Therefore there could be difficulties for employees on a smoking cessation programme complying with the smoking policy. By way of clarification it was advised that there would be a measured approach in dealing with employees who were breaching the policy and disciplinary action would only be taken as a last resort.

The issue of employees undertaking home visits was raised, where the homeowner may be a smoker and it was queried what arrangements were in place to protect employees in such circumstances. In response, it was advised that people who were receiving home visits were written to in advance and were asked not to smoke when employees were in attendance or alternatively arrangements could be made to meet somewhere else. The Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager undertook to ask Services what arrangements were in place for staff attending home visits and any issues that had arisen.

The Committee **APPROVED** the revision to the Corporate Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy, the Policy and Guidance on Management of Smoking at Work and the Policy and Guidance on the Management of Radon in Workplaces owned and/or Managed by Highland Council, and that these policies be submitted to Resources Committee.

10. Occupational Health Report

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/5/15 by the Head of People & Performance which provided an overview of the work undertaken by RS Occupational Health for the period October – December, 2014.

In discussion, the point was made that mental health issues were complicated and solutions were just as complicated. More awareness of mental issues was required and counselling would be looked at, but this would be an additional cost to Services and was not part of the Occupational Health contract. However, it was advised that the cost could be justified if it meant employees were not off on sickness absence.

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There had been a request at previous meetings to compare the Council's performance in terms of managing mental health and other absences with other local authorities. It was advised that responses had only been received from four local authorities. Most authorities had not responded or did not do an analysis of their absences at that level. The responses would be circulated to the Committee. In addition, it was requested that of the authorities who had responded, they be asked if they had employee support programmes in place.

In terms of health surveillance, there were a lot of employees who used power tools and it was queried if they were all on the health surveillance programme. In response it was advised that assessments had been carried out on cleaners and there was no risk, and Rangers in the Development and Infrastructure Service and Janitors and some teachers in Care and Learning Service had been included in the programme. If employees were called to a health surveillance appointment this was a mandatory attendance and trade unions assistance with this was requested. If trade unions knew of members who operated power tools and they were not receiving health surveillance, they be encouraged to contact their managers to arrange an appointment.

Concern was expressed that a lot of employees particular those in Community Services purchased and used their own tools and perhaps were not recorded on the Council's equipment list. It was advised that this issue was on the action plan to manage staff who work with power tools and had been raised with the Director of Community Services to address.

The Committee **NOTED**:

- i the information contained in the report;
- ii that the provision of counselling for employees with mental health issues would be explored; and
- iii that the responses from other local authorities in terms of managing mental health and other absences would be circulated to the Committee.

11. Union Health and Safety Partnership Group Annual Report

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/6/15 by the Chairman of Joint Trades Union Health & Safety Representatives Group which presented the trade union performance and progress in respect of meeting the objectives of the Partnership Agreement 2014.

The Committee **NOTED** the contents of the report.

The meeting concluded at 12.35 pm.

Date of Next Meeting – Friday, 15 May, 2015 at 11.45 a.m.