

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 15 May, 2015 at 11.45 a.m.

Present:

Employer's Representatives:

Mr D MacKay
Mr F Parr

Ms M Smith

Staff Side Representatives:

Mr M Haymer (GMB) (substitute)
Mr D Morrison, UCATT (substitute)

Mr A Wemyss (UNITE)

In attendance:

Mr J Batchelor, Head of People and Performance, Corporate Development Service
Ms G Falconer, Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager, Corporate Development Service
Mr R Guest, Head of Roads and Community Works, Community Services
Ms D Sutherland, Audit and Risk Manager, Finance Service
Mr S Duncan, Property Risk Management Officer, Development & Infrastructure Service
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 Dr D Alston and Mr H Morrison of the Employer's Side, and Mr M Hayes, Mr D Griffiths and Mr C Cameron 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 6 February, 2015, the terms of which were **APPROVED**.

4. Matters Arising from the Minutes

Arising from the Minutes the following matter was raised:-

Item 10 – Occupational Health Report – it was noted that the provision of additional support for employees with mental health issues was being considered. It was queried if self-referral would be an option. In response, it was advised that if it was decided to provide counselling, then the option of an employee being able to self-refer would be considered.

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 26 January, 2015 and 5 May, 2015;

In terms of the Minutes of 26 January, item 4.2, paragraph three, it was **AGREED** that the words 'rot iron' be replaced with 'Wrought Iron'.

Reference was made to Responsible Premises Officers duties and it was advised that guidance on these duties had now been prepared and displayed on the health and safety pages of the Council's intranet and training courses would commence in June.

- ii. Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross Health and Safety Working Group held on 26 February, 2015;

Drummuie Damp Issue – the damp on the ground floor of Drummuie was a cause for concern and indicative costs for addressing the issue were being sought.

Weeding – in terms of the operators undertaking the spraying programmes, it was advised that they should be certificated for handling chemicals used in the spraying process.

- iii. Ross, Skye and Lochaber Health and Safety Group held on 19 March, 2015.

The Committee **NOTED** the Minutes.

6. Finance Service – Health Safety and Wellbeing Policy

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/7/15 by the Director of Finance which introduced the Finance Service's Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy for approval by the Committee.

The Audit and Risk Manager advised that a Service Health and Safety Group had been established to take forward the requirements of the Service Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy and in particular to produce an action plan which ensures compliance with the policy. The Action plan would be presented to this Committee for approval.

In response to a question raised about near misses and how these were reported, the Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager advised that near misses were reported on the accident report form, but it was intended to change the accident report form and guidance when there was access to ResourceLink to record all health and safety information and there would be a greater emphasis on near misses.

It terms of educating employees to report near misses, this would be part of a training course that was being offered on accident investigation.

Following consideration, the Committee **APPROVED** the Finance Service's Health, Safety, and Wellbeing Policy and that an Action Plan would be presented to the next meeting of the Committee for approval.

7. Carr's Corner Depot

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/8/15 by the Director of Community Services which provided an update on works carried out at Carr's Corner Depot, Fort William.

It was advised that the surfacing works at Carr's Corner Depot had now been completed. It was also confirmed that the yellow marking showing proposed safe routes for pedestrians and white lining for traffic flow had now been completed.

The Chair on behalf of the Committee wished to express his thanks to Mr Calum Cameron, UCATT for all his work in bringing this issue to the Committee's attention.

The Committee **NOTED** the completion of works at Carr's Corner Depot.

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

There was circulated Report No. CSC/9/15 by the Head of People and Performance which provided an update on current health and safety issues and developments in relation to Health and Safety Executive Issues; Health and safety management system updates; Radon Management and Projects.

In particular, reference was made to a course on self-management for long term conditions. This course was for employees who had long term medical conditions and how they could use self management techniques to help them stay at work. There had been very positive feedback from participants on this course.

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

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

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/10/15 by the Head of People & Performance providing an update on the Corporate Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy, the guidance on Managing Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome and the guidance on Risk Assessment. New guidance on the purchasing/hiring of plant/equipment was presented as was a timetable for the review of documents in the occupational health and safety management system.

In terms of the guidance on the purchase or hire of plant and equipment, it was advised that on small items of plant the Council did not have a workshop that carried out maintenance on these items and there was no one trained to carry out this maintenance. It was advised that in the guidance there was a checklist of things to

consider when looking at buying or hiring equipment, which included can the supplier carry out maintenance as well.

The view was expressed that in some areas a lot of the Council's equipment was out of date and there must be excessive vibration and noise from these items of equipment as a result. It was queried why new equipment was not purchased. In response, it was advised that this was happening and equipment was being replaced, either through hire or purchase. It was intended that if Services hired less equipment, this would release more money in order to purchase equipment.

There were employees particularly in Building Maintenance who were using their own equipment and this was being addressed, as the Council had no control over an employees own equipment.

Further, if equipment was not being used it should be sold. An example was given of an item of equipment used for drains, worth a significant amount of money, and had not been used for some considerable time.

It terms of lone working it was advised that there was a Group looking at this issue and considering ways of managing lone working better.

The Committee **AGREED** the revision to these documents, and:-

- i that the Corporate Health Safety and Wellbeing Policy and the programmes for review of the occupational health and safety management system be submitted to Resources Committee; and
- ii the guidance on purchase/hire of plant/equipment, hand arm vibration and risk assessment are issued as working drafts.

10. Occupational Health Report

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/11/15 by the Head of People & Performance which provided an overview of the work undertaken by RS Occupational Health for the period January – March, 2015.

It was advised that there had been a total of 143 management referrals seen by the RS Occupational Health Service during the period, with 72 of these cases for mental health issues. An assessment of these cases was being undertaken and an update would be provided to the next meeting. It was intended to give specific advice to Services on the actions they should be taking in order to help address the issues behind employee referrals. It was advised that a higher referral rate was not necessarily bad, as for attendance management purposes, early referral was encouraged.

A new, mandatory training course on Mentally Healthy Workplaces was now available from Learning and Development and perhaps more awareness was the reason behind an increase in referrals.

The view was expressed that if employees were to be referred for additional support then the outcome should be that the amount of sickness absence for employees was reduced. The cost of additional support could therefore be justified. Therefore a correlation between the financial cost of providing additional support and reduced

sickness absence should be proven, before providing additional support for employees. It would also be of benefit to know of any obstacles that would prevent employees seeking additional support, e.g. lack of confidentiality, and consideration be given to finding out this information in the next employee survey.

Continuing, it was advised that employees could also be encouraged to go to their GP to access services, and if self referral to additional support was an option this might prevent mental health issues developing. If additional support was made available, employees should be reminded bi-annually or annually that the service was available for awareness purposes.

Work would be undertaken with Services to identify the reasons for employees not turning up for Occupational Health Service appointments.

The Committee **NOTED** the information contained in the report.

The meeting concluded at 12.30 pm.

Date of Next Meeting – Friday, 14 August, 2015 at 11.45 a.m.