

**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 5 February, 2016 at 11.45 a.m.

**Present:**

**Employer's Representatives:**

Mr B Fernie  
Mrs M Smith

**Staff Side Representatives:**

Mr M Hayes, UNISON  
Mr A Wemyss, UNITE  
Mr D Griffiths, GMB  
Mr D Morrison, UCATT (substitute)

**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  
Ms R Douglas, Health and Safety Adviser, Corporate Development Service  
Mr W Munro, Inverness, Nairn and Badenoch & Strathspey Operational Area Health and Safety Working Group  
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Corporate Development Service

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr F Parr of the Employer's Side, Mr C Cameron, UCATT of the Staff Side and Ms D Grant, Caithness, Sutherland & Easter Ross Health & Safety Working Group.

**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 30 October, 2015, 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 13 January, 2016;
- ii. Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross Health and Safety Working Group held on 3 December, 2015; and
- iii. Ross, Skye and Lochaber Health and Safety Group held on 3 December, 2015.

The Committee **NOTED** the Minutes.

Arising from the minutes, it was **NOTED** that the next meeting of the Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey Joint Health and Safety Working Group would now be held on 23 March, 2016 (and not 30 March, 2016 as stated in the minute of meeting of 13 January, 2016.)

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

There was circulated Report No. CSC/1/16 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 it was advised that two Improvement Notices served on the Council by the Health and Safety Executive in respect of the management of hand arm vibration syndrome had now both been addressed. It was likely that the Council would be subject to a Management Audit by the Health and Safety Executive sometime in 2016/17.

In discussion, a comment was made that there was £4.5m set aside in the capital programme over the next ten years for health and safety, and it was queried what this money was spent on. While it was understood that this money would be spent on bringing buildings up to health and safety standards, clarification on this would be sought and a response issued to the Committee.

The Stress Risk Assessment toolkit developed to assist managers in their duty to manage the effects of work related stress was welcomed by the Staff Side and it was requested that the Care and Learning Service be targeted with the toolkit. It was advised that a working group had been set up within the Care and Learning Service to look at the issue of stress amongst staff and the Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager was working with the Group.

In terms of attendance at Area Health and Safety Groups, the Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager had written to all Service Health and Safety Co-ordinators and the Chairs of the Area Health and Safety Groups reminding them of the need to co-ordinate meetings and to promote meetings. The Staff Side advised that in particular, there was a need for a representative from the Care and Learning Service at these meetings. The Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager undertook to contact the Care and Learning Service on this issue and would remind

all Services that they should be represented on Area Health and Safety Groups.

The Committee:-

- i **NOTED** the updated information on health, safety and wellbeing issues and developments contained in the report; and
- ii **AGREED** to the amendments in the health and safety guidance documents.

## 7. Occupational Health Report

There was circulated Report No. CSC/2/16 by the Head of People & Performance which provided an overview of the work undertaken by RS Occupational Health for the period October - December, 2015.

In particular it was advised that following a re-provision exercise, RSOH had been awarded the occupational health services contract for the next 3 years from 1 April 2016. This was a joint contract with Highlife Highland. The main change would be that Physiotherapy would now be a five day service with the intention that it would be rolled out to outlying areas.

In relation to the Attendance Management Policy it was queried what monitoring system was in place to ensure that Managers were delivering this Policy i.e. arranging return to work interviews; monitoring and reporting of sickness absence; how many employees are referred to Occupational Health. In response, it was advised that Managers were relied upon to implement the Policy and they were offered training and support to enable them to do this. There was not currently a system in place for recording information such as return to work interviews, but it was intended in future to use the Council's ResourceLink system for this purpose when the system was fully operational. It was requested that this be expedited.

In terms of the primary sources of stress at work, increasing demands on staff was a main cause of stress and when staff were looking for help in the office environment or from management or the Council as a whole in terms of support, this did not seem to be there and this was a problem that would only get worse with a reducing workforce and an increasing workload. As a result it was suggested that referrals to Occupational Health would increase. It was advised that now that statistics on stress were available then the Council could take appropriate action and Services were urged to ensure that the prevention of workplace stress was a priority. A health and safety human resources briefing for Managers was being developed and would include guidance on the signs to look out for in identifying stress amongst staff.

In terms of the Committee's decision at the last meeting to support an Employee Assistance Programme being introduced which would help in managing stress in the workplace, it was queried what progress had been made. It was advised that funding for the Programme would be required prior to it being implemented. A bid for funding would have to wait until the current budget process had been completed.

The Committee:-

- i **NOTED** the information contained in the report; and
- ii **AGREED** that work to enable the ResourceLink system to record information on

attendance management be expedited.

## **8. Trade Union Health & Safety Partnership Group Annual Report**

There was circulated Report No. CSC/3/16 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.

It was advised that it was important and encouraging to recognise that improvements in the number of Trade Union workplace inspections undertaken in 2015 within the Highland Council had been achieved against a reduction in the number of active Health and Safety Representatives. Like the Council who would lose a lot of experienced staff due to the reduction in the workforce, there would also be a reduction in experienced Health and Safety Representatives and this would have to be managed to ensure that performance was maintained and improved.

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

The meeting concluded at 12.25 p.m.

***Date of Next Meeting – Friday, 22 April, 2016 at 10.30a.m***