

**The Highland Council
Central Safety Committee**

Minutes of Meeting of the Central Safety Committee held in Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Friday 4 May 2018 at 12 Noon.

Present:

Employer's Representatives:

Ms J Campbell (substitute)
Mr R Laird
Mr D Mackay (substitute)
Mr G MacKenzie
Mr R Gale

Staff Side Representatives:

Mr M Hayes, UNISON
Mr A Wemyss, UNITE
Mr D Griffiths, GMB
Mr D Morrison, UNITE/UCATT

In attendance:

Mr S Walsh, Head of People and ICT, Corporate Resources Service
Ms G Falconer, Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager, Corporate Resources Service
Mrs C Campbell, Head of Performance and Resources, Community Services
Mr I Jackson, Education Officer, Care and Learning Service
Mr S Duncan, Property Manager, Development & Infrastructure Service
Ms S Barrie, Programme Manager, Development & Infrastructure Service
Mr S Graham, Project Manager, Corporate Resources Service
Mr G Mackenzie, Caithness, Sutherland & Easter Ross Health & Safety Working Group
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Chief Executive's Service

Mr M Hayes in the Chair

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr A MacKinnon and Mr M Reiss of the Employer's Side and Mr W Munro, Inverness, Nairn and Badenoch & Strathspey Operational Area Health and Safety Working Group; and Service Health and Safety Co-ordinators - Mr F MacDonald - Development & Infrastructure , Mr B Porter – Care and Learning , Ms D Sutherland, Corporate Resources Service.

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 2 February, 2018, the terms of which were **APPROVED**.

4. Matters Arising from the Minutes

Arising from the Minutes, the following matters were raised:-

i Kilvean Crematorium – It was **NOTED** that a report on this issue would be submitted to the next meeting.

ii Health and Safety Partnership and Safety Representatives Charter – it had previously been agreed to hold a signing ceremony for the Charter and this would take place on 24 May, 2018.

In accordance with Standing Order 18, with the consent of the meeting, item 6 on the agenda was taken at this point.

6. Diriebught Depot

There was circulated Report No. CSC/6/18 by the Director of Community Services which provided an update on the Diriebught Depot Project.

In discussion the following main points were raised:-

- It was queried if the issue of sewage coming out of a manhole in heavy rain had been addressed. It was advised that a solution for this problem had been identified and costed, but work to remedy the problem had not been commissioned as yet.
- It was queried if there was any progress regarding a new electrical supply at the Depot. It was advised that following an investigation by an Engineer it was concluded that there was not a significant issue with the electrical supply, but some minor issues were identified to be addressed.
- Improvements to the traffic management and parking facilities at the Depot were detailed, however there were still issues regarding the volume of traffic and the availability of parking at the site, particularly now that summer season Amenities operatives were using the site. To alleviate this problem some of the roads winter maintenance equipment had been moved to Lotland Street.
- It was advised that there had been a near miss at the site involving a vehicle which had been reported. In this respect, due cognisance of the safety issues at the site must be taken in the interests of the Council and its employees.
- Details of the welfare facilities at the depot were provided. It was advised that while these facilities met the regulations in terms of provision for roads and amenity staff, the issue was the 52 building maintenance staff on site and there was a current exercise to identify where welfare facilities could be situated within the depot. Options for this were being explored and costed and it was intended this exercise would be concluded in time for a progress meeting on 10th May, 2018.
- It was understood that there was no adequate storage for employee's personal protective equipment and a health and safety representative was involved in trying to address this issue. It was advised that a potential solution to this issue had been identified and costed.
- It was requested that timescales for remedy of outstanding issues at Diriebught Depot be provided at the progress meeting on 10 May, 2018. It was requested that

following this meeting an update report be submitted to the Central Safety Committee.

- It was encouraging that progress was being made on the parking and welfare facilities issues at Diriebught Depot and that staff were being engaged in this process.

The Committee:-

i **NOTED** the progress being made in identifying and addressing issues at Diriebught Depot; and

ii **AGREED** that an update report be provided to the next meeting of the Committee.

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 17 April, 2018;
- (ii) Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross Health and Safety Working Group held on 18 January, 2018; and
- (iii) Ross, Skye and Lochaber Health and Safety Group held on 21 March, 2018.

The Committee **NOTED** the Area Health and Safety Group Minutes.

Arising from the Minutes the following points were raised:

i Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey Minute

a) item 7, Accident Statistics

Trade union safety representatives were concerned that the Council was unable to effectively monitor and identify accident, near misses and ill health trends thus compromising their ability to effectively manage health and safety and target resources appropriately.

It was explained that Health and Safety Advisers who attend Area Health and Safety Group meetings are provided with information to share where there were lessons to be learned.

An exercise had been undertaken whereby every incident report for pupils in school since 2007 had been checked and it was found that 90% of these incidents did not need to be reported. This was a significant resource being taken up in schools and Health and Safety Advisers time. Therefore the Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager had written to the Head of Education, Head of Resources and Area Education Managers advising them that time and money could be saved by reducing bureaucracy. Therefore arrangements were being made to talk to staff groups about what incidents they report, why they report it, and when they should report incidents to the Health and Safety Executive.

The accident reporting system was very basic and it was a Service priority to improve it and it was on the Corporate Risk Register and on the Corporate Resources Service Plan priorities. There was a resolution which was an electronic system which would enable better searching and reporting of incidents. However, the implementation of this system would have to wait until the new computer rollout, and therefore it was intended to have the new system in place by end of March, 2019. It was confirmed that this was a top priority application to be introduced. It was requested that any progress on this issue be reported back to the Committee.

The Committee **NOTED** that any progress on the introduction of the new electronic accident reporting system would be reported to the Committee.

b) Item 7, Violent Incidents in Schools

It was advised that the Area Health and Safety Group and the Care and Learning Service Trade Union Liaison Group both discussed violent incidents in schools. It was felt that there was duplication in there being two Groups looking at the same data and potentially drawing different conclusions from it.

In response, it was confirmed that the Service Group should be considering service based incidents and Area Groups should look at issues that affect the geographic area. The Health and Safety Consultation Policy and Guidance detailed what issues should be taken to Service and Area Groups.

ii Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross Minute

a) Item 3.2 – Incident Alert Alarm for Violent Incidents

There was no protection for staff working at reception at Caithness House as there was only a desk between them and the public. In newly designed offices the emphasis was on access for the public, however there was a need to ensure the safety of staff from potential threats of violence.

The Chief Executive had asked for building access policies for every Council premises and for lockdown procedures. The Head of Property undertook to look at the reception area at Caithness House to determine what measures were necessary to be introduced to ensure that staff were protected.

It was queried if there was a standard policy for the design of reception areas within Council premises to make them accessible to the public but also safe for staff. An undertaking was given to get a response from the Design team on this for the next meeting, but it was explained that there was interaction between Architects and clients as to the client's design requirements for premises.

It was felt that there should be a template for the minimum standard of design for example, for Service Points or interview rooms, which should take into account the clients that would visit the premises. It was advised that there was a standard template for the design of interview rooms which was based on Government advice.

The Committee **NOTED:-**

i that a response from the Design team as to whether there was a standard design for reception areas within the Council would be provided at the next meeting; and

ii that the Head of Property undertook to look at the reception area at Caithness House to determine what measures were necessary to be introduced to ensure that staff were protected from violent incidents.

7. Kilvean Crematorium

This item was deferred until the next meeting.

8. Presentation on Corporate Fire Safety Group

There was a presentation on the Corporate Fire Safety Group by the Property Manager. The Group had been established following the Grenfell Tower fire.

It was advised that the UK Government had established an independent review of building regulations and fire safety following the Grenfell Tower fire. The Scottish Government had set up a Ministerial working group on building and fire safety and a building and fire safety working group.

The composition of the Council's Fire Safety Group comprised representatives from Community Services, Development & Infrastructure, Chief Executive's Service and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and was chaired by the Director of Community Services. Details of the terms of reference of the Group were provided.

Following an initial review of buildings in the Highland area it was established that there were no high rise multi storey dwellings in the highland area. The Group's focus of attention related to dwellings of three or more storeys (up to five storeys in height). It was also established that there were no properties within the highland property portfolio which have aluminium composite material cladding which was present at the Grenfell Tower. Details of a Fire Safety Action Plan were also provided and a copy of this would be circulated to the Committee.

In relation to high rise flats in Thurso, while the final outcome of the inspection of these flats was not yet known, it was understood that some fire doors had been replaced by private owners due to break-ins at the flats and this was the type of information that would be collated in order to determine future health and safety improvements.

There could be a problem if work had to be undertaken on high rise flats for fire safety purposes and private owners would not or could not afford to contribute to the works.

The Chairman thanked the Property Manager for his informative presentation.

9. Property related health and safety issues

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/8/18 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which provided an update on significant property related health and safety issues, emerging future risks and new policy and procedures.

In discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- In terms of the gas leak at Auldearn Primary School it was a member of the facilities team that identified this.
- In relation to the asbestos disturbance at Melvich Primary School it was the Cook that identified this and reported it and it was suggested that the employee should receive some form of recognition for identifying this. In terms of the Asbestos plan for the school, it was confirmed that the contractor had all the information needed to identify where the asbestos was, but there was a failing by the contractor in not using all the information provided. The Health and Safety Executive had been briefed on this issue.
- Details were also provided on an asbestos disturbance at Diriebught Court, Inverness and this incident was being investigated.
- An update was sought in relation to the Health and Safety Executive Improvement Notice on the contractors at Inverness Royal Academy in relation to gas fittings. It was advised that the Improvement Notice was still outstanding and it was understood the Company was now in administration.
- It was encouraging that the Council was looking at compliance in terms of health and safety for its property assets, but while this had to be done on a risk based approach, the finance needed to ensure compliance still needed to be addressed.

Following discussion, the Committee **NOTED:-**

i the update on significant property related health and safety issues, emerging future risks and new policy and procedures;

ii that the Property related issues log format is under review to correlate with strategies for addressing compliance and other works planned for properties; and

iii that a fire safety working group has been established following the tragic events at Grenfell Tower in London and reviews including the fire risk assessment process are being undertaken by the group.

10. Corporate Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Plan 2018

There was circulated Report No. CSC/9/18 by the Head of People and ICT which presented a revised Corporate Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Plan. There was a statutory requirement to produce such a written policy and there was a commitment to review the policy on an annual basis and update it as required.

In response to a query it was advised that the Council's Health and Safety Champion was Councillor A Mackinnon.

It was explained that the function of safety representatives had been strengthened to encourage local managers to take part in the quarterly workplace inspections undertaken by trade union safety representatives. However, this in no way diminished the rights of safety representatives who could still undertake their own independent workplace inspections.

The Committee:-

- i **NOTED** the updated policy and plan; and
- ii **AGREED** that the policy and plan be presented to the May meeting of the Corporate Resources Committee.

11. Update on Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Issues

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/10/18 by the Head of People and ICT which provided an update on health and safety issues and developments for the Highland Council. It reviewed activities arising from Health and Safety Executive interventions; changes made to the health and safety management system and other activities undertaken since the last Central Safety Committee meeting.

In particular, it was noted that work was still ongoing to improve the recording and follow up tracking of violent and aggression incidents to staff. The Council could not knowingly send employees to unsafe places and there was a duty of care to look after its staff. Therefore it was a priority that the system that was available was improved.

It was Highland Council health and safety policy that employees should not work in a property where someone was smoking/drinking alcohol and that dogs be kept under control. There was a need to remind Council house tenants of this policy and it was suggested that a reminder be included in the Tenants newsletter. It was also suggested that this issue be introduced at workplace toolbox talks regarding employees own risk assessment and their right to walk away from a job if health and safety was being compromised. Further, the scheduler of appointments when advising the tenant of the arrangements for work on their property, should also remind the tenant to not smoke and keep their dog under control.

It was felt that information on violent incidents could be shared more effectively between Services. It was confirmed that the improved system for recording violent and aggression incidents would address this. The Council was also liaising with the Police and Fire Service to obtain information in order that all public sector employees and Elected Members could be protected.

Following discussion, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the updated information on health, safety and wellbeing issues and developments contained in the report;
- ii. **APPROVED** the changes to the health and safety management system;
- iii. **AGREED** that Council house tenants be reminded of the Councils Health and Safety Policy for employees undertaking work on Council properties in the Tenants Newsletter; and
- iv. **AGREED** to introduce a standard process whereby schedulers of appointments remind tenants of the Council's Health and Safety Policy for employees undertaking work on their property.

12. Occupational Health Service Update

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/11/18 by the Head of People and ICT which provided an overview of the work undertaken by Iqarus, the Council's Occupational Health Provider for the period January 2018 to March 2018.

In discussion, it was noted that Iqarus had introduced sight and hearing tests for Road Crossing Patrollers and the Care and Learning Service would receive a copy of the reports on these tests once completed.

The Committee **NOTED** the Occupational Health activity for the last three months.

13. Relocation of ICT Training Facilities from Dochfour Drive, Inverness to Osprey House, Alness

The Committee were invited to note the potential implications the relocation of ICT training facilities from Dochfour Drive, Inverness to Osprey House, Alness may have on the delivery of TUC, Health and Safety Education within the Highlands.

There had been no engagement with the Staff Side on the relocation considering the amount of involvement in training they had at Dochfour Drive. Also, there may be health and safety issues with trade union representatives attending Osprey House, Alness particularly by public transport. Osprey House was outwith Alness and representatives may have to walk a considerable distance from Alness which was a concern particularly in Winter. The TUC partners were content on seeing how the new arrangements developed and the Committee would be updated if any concerns with these new arrangements needed to be addressed.

In this connection, there was circulated the following briefing note from the Head of People and ICT:-

“The Kinmylies Property Rationalisation Business Case was approved on 26 March. The benefits of this project include reduced revenue costs (contributing to Corporate targets), a potential capital receipt and eliminating backlog maintenance liabilities. No decision had yet been made on the use of the site after it is vacated. As a result a number of employees working in the Kinmylies building will be relocated to the huts at Dochfour Drive. This has required the Learning & Development team to give up the current E-Learning Centre facility and source additional facilities at no additional cost. Suitable facilities were found at Osprey House and all ICT training will be delivered from there from 1 May 2018. The trade unions have previously been given free access to the training facilities at Dochfour Drive, Inverness. This same arrangement will be available for the facilities at Osprey House, Alness.”

The Committee **NOTED** the position.

The meeting ended at 1.35 p.m.