

**The Highland Council
Central Safety Committee**

Minutes of Meeting of the Central Safety Committee held in Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Friday 3 August 2018 at 12 Noon.

Present:

Employer's Representatives:

Mr A MacKinnon
Mr R Laird
Mr G MacKenzie
Mr R Gale

Staff Side Representatives:

Mr M Hayes, UNISON
Mr D Griffiths, GMB
Mr I Macleman, UNITE/UCATT

In attendance:

Mr S Walsh, Head of People and ICT, Corporate Resources Service
Mr A Summers, Head of Environmental & Amenity Services, Community Services
Mr K Gaittens, Senior Health & Safety Adviser, Corporate Resources Service
Mrs C Campbell, Head of Performance and Resources, Community Services
Mr I Jackson, Education Officer, Care and Learning Service
Mr F MacDonald, Head of Property Services, Development & Infrastructure
Mr S Duncan, Property Manager, Development & Infrastructure Service
Mr S Graham, Project Manager, Corporate Resources Service
Ms H Ross, Caithness, Sutherland & Easter Ross Health & Safety Working Group (by telephone conference)
Ms D Sutherland, Corporate Audit Manager, Corporate Resources Service
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Chief Executive's Service

Mr A MacKinnon in the Chair

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr M Reiss of the Employer's Side, Mr A Wemyss of the Staff Side, Mr W Munro, Inverness, Nairn and Badenoch & Strathspey Operational Area Health and Safety Working Group and Ms G Falconer, Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager.

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 4 May, 2018, 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 27 June, 2018;
- (ii) Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross Health and Safety Working Group held on 19 April and 21 June, 2018; and
- (iii) Ross, Skye and Lochaber Health and Safety Group held on 20 June, 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 3 Inverness Royal Academy Kitchen Ventilation system - there had been further reviews of the ventilation system in conjunction with a Consultant. Given the hot conditions in the kitchen, a separate installation of the ventilation fresh air supply had now been commissioned. It was intended that this work would be complete soon after the start of the new school term. This should help alleviate the conditions in the kitchen pending receipt of the Consultant's report on the outcome of the review of the ventilation system.

ii Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross Minute

- a) Procurement efficiencies in Occupational Health Service – it was confirmed that the OH Service was out to tender and the Council would be looking for a high standard of OH to be provided.
- b) Item 6 – Relocation of ICT Training Facilities to Osprey House, Alness – there was a concern that the new location would require those without cars to cross the A9 on foot. It was suggested that a risk assessment of the access and egress to the facility be undertaken.

It was **AGREED** that a risk assessment of the access and egress to the ICT Training Facilities at Osprey House, Alness would be arranged by the Head of People and ICT in conjunction with the Responsible Premises Officer for Osprey House.

6. Kilvean Crematorium Health & Safety Improvement Plan

There was circulated Report No. CSC/12/18 by the Head of Environmental & Amenity Services.

A summary was provided of the notification of contravention issued to the Council in May, 2017 following a visit by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to Kilvean

Crematorium in April, 2017 and the actions taken by Community Services to address the issues raised by this notification.

It was queried if the Council had received a charge from the HSE for intervention. It was advised that no charge had yet been received.

There was an action to prepare safe systems of work for excavations. It was confirmed that employees now had to undertake an industry standard training course for cemetery operations.

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

7. Diriebught Depot

There was circulated Report No. CSC/13/18 by the Director of Community Services which provided an update on the Diriebught Depot project.

It was intended to submit future Diriebught depot updates to Community Services' health and safety meetings. However, the Staff Side requested that they still be given the opportunity to raise any future issues of concern at this Committee, given the significant issues at the depot.

It was advised that there was no mechanism for trade unions to demand a time bound action plan for dealing with matters at the depot and it was felt this was needed. While issues were being addressed there was no definitive end time to addressing some of them. It was requested that there should be timescales for the outstanding issues to be resolved.

The Committee:

- i **NOTED** the progress being made in addressing issues;
- ii **AGREED** that future Diriebught updates and discussion with trade unions will be via the Community Services' health and safety meetings (occur circa every 6 weeks) which are attended by the trade union health and safety representatives;
- iii **AGREED** that the Staff Side would still have the opportunity to raise any concerns regarding the Diriebught depot project at this Committee; and
- iv **AGREED** that timescales be provided for the outstanding issues at the depot to be resolved.

8. Annual Health and Safety Reports

i Community Services

There was circulated Report No. CSC/14/18 by the Head of Performance & Resources, Community Services which outlined Community Services performance in relation to Health, Safety and Wellbeing during 2017/18.

In discussion, it was noted that there was a significant increase in long term absences in 2017/18 compared with the two previous years and it was explained that while there were many factors causing this, it was mainly due to an ageing

workforce involved in hard manual work. The situation was being managed by referring employees to the Occupational Health Service. It was requested that an analysis of the reasons behind the increase in long term absences in 2017/18 be undertaken.

Also of concern was a significant increase in the number of Occupational Health referrals in relation to mental health. The Service had trained a number of employees to be mental health representatives who promoted mental health in the work place, offered assistance and assisted with signposting to additional sources of support. Managers were more aware of stress issues and intervened at an early stage where employees were displaying signs of stress.

The Council was working hard on mental health in the workplace, there was a training course on this subject, and employees were being encouraged to become mental health representatives across the organisation.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i the content of the report; and
- ii that an analysis would be undertaken of the reasons behind the increase in long term absences in Community Services during 2017/18.

ii Development and Infrastructure

There was circulated Report No. CSC/15/18 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which outlined the Development and Infrastructure Service performance in relation to Health, Safety and Wellbeing during 2017/18.

It was noted that fire safety had not been included in the report and given the fact this was a significant health and safety factor it should be included. It was advised that fire risk assessment was a shared responsibility with other Services. Further, there was now a requirement for the Council to report on its compliance on fire safety to the Government. Following fire risk assessments there was significant fire safety work to be undertaken.

It was noted that future annual health and safety reports from Development and Infrastructure would include other functions such as Facilities management which the Service now had responsibility for, following a Council restructure.

The Committee **NOTED** the content of the report and that a section on Fire Safety would be added.

9. Property related health and safety issues

The Property Manager provided an update on a developing issue in relation to school wall tie vulnerability.

An independent report had been produced following the wall collapse at Oxfangs Primary School, Edinburgh which had far reaching implications for Councils in relation to examining their buildings and schools and ensure the structures are safe.

The Council's Public Private Partnership (PPP) 2 provider, Alpha Schools had arranged for checks on schools and the Council were informed of remedial works to be carried out, particularly to Kinlochleven campus. The Council had also asked for further checks on some schools and details of remedial works to be carried out were provided. At present, based on structural engineer reports received there was no reason to close any school. The Council was seeking substantial assurance that all schools were safe and had commissioned the services of its own structural engineers to review the information provided by Alpha Schools on checks to schools.

It was intended to submit a report on this issue to the next meeting of the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee. Also, it was confirmed that there would be no cost to the Council arising from all the checks and remedial action being taken in relation to PPP2 schools. Also in terms of remedial works to Dingwall and Portree secondary schools, closure reports on the work undertaken had been requested.

Further, enquiries would be made as to why some schools had been handed over to the Council when there had been structural faults associated with them. The Council had also instructed the PPP1 contractor to carry out inspections of the four PPP1 schools and were waiting on reports. Also, in terms of the Council's portfolio of other schools and non housing buildings with high masonry, a desktop review had been carried out which identified 29 properties to be inspected. A review of the residential portfolio would also need to be undertaken.

The Committee **NOTED** that any further updates on this issue would be reported to the Committee.

10. Update on Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Issues

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/17/18 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 Committee meeting.

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

11. Occupational Health Service Update

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/18/18 by the Head of People and ICT which provided an overview of the work undertaken by Iqarus, the Council's Occupational Health (OH) provider for the period April to June 2018.

In discussion, it was noted that the number of OH appointments where employees did not attend (DNA) had increased from the previous quarter. This was a continuing problem and money was being wasted as a result. It was confirmed that Managers would be expected to take action if an employee did not attend an OH appointment. It would be checked if employees received a text message the day before the appointment as a reminder and if not, this should be implemented.

An analysis of the reasons for DNAs was requested. In this respect some observations as to the reasons were provided as follows:-long distances that some staff had to travel for an OH appointment; Staff with mental health issues make a commitment to attend but do not follow through with it; School staff being offered appointments during the school holidays may be less inclined to attend.

Thereafter, the Committee:

- i **NOTED** the Occupational Health activity for the last three months;
- ii **AGREED** that an analysis of the reasons for DNAs be undertaken; and
- iii **AGREED** that it would be checked if employees received a text message the day before the OH appointment as a reminder and if not, this should be implemented.

The meeting ended at 12.55 p.m.