

**The Highland Council  
Central Safety Committee**

Minutes of Meeting of the Central Safety Committee held in Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Friday 1 February 2019 at 12.05 p.m.

**Present:**

**Employer's Representatives:**

Mr A MacKinnon  
Mr D Louden (substitute)

**Staff Side Representatives:**

Mr D Griffiths, GMB  
Mr R Cran, UNITE/UCATT (substitute)

**In attendance:**

Ms G Falconer, Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager, Corporate Resources Service  
Mrs C Campbell, Head of Performance and Resources, Community Services  
Mr B Porter, Head of Resources, Care and Learning Service  
Mr S Duncan, Property Manager, Development & Infrastructure Service  
Ms D Sutherland, Corporate Audit Manager, Corporate Resources Service  
Ms F Grant, Attendance Officer, Corporate Resources Service  
Mr W Munro, Inverness, Nairn and Badenoch & Strathspey Operational Area Health and Safety Working Group  
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Chief Executive's Service

**Mr A MacKinnon in the Chair**

**Alister Wemyss**

The Chair on behalf of the Committee expressed his deepest sympathy to Mr Alister Wemyss family and friends following his sudden death. It was a deep shock and sadness to learn of the passing of Alister who had provided a valuable contribution as a loyal employee of the Council and as a trade union representative for Unite the Union on the Committee over many years. Alister would be sorely missed by all who knew him.

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr M Reiss, Mr G MacKenzie and Mr R Gale of the Employer's Side, Mr M Hayes and Mr I Macleman of the Staff Side and Mr G MacKenzie and Ms H Ross of Caithness, Sutherland & Easter Ross Health & Safety Working Group.

**2. Declarations of Interest**

Mr A MacKinnon declared a non-financial interest as his wife and daughter were employees of The Highland Council but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that the interest did not preclude him from taking part in the discussion at the meeting.

### 3. Minutes of Last Meeting

There had been circulated Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 2 November, 2018, the terms of which were **APPROVED**.

### 4. Matters Arising from the Minutes

Arising from the Minutes the following matters were raised:-

i Attendance at Meetings - Attendance by representatives of Area Health and Safety Groups at meetings of the Central Safety Committee and Service representatives at Area Health and Safety Group meetings needed to improve.

ii Public Private Partnership (PPP) School Wall Ties – it was queried if there was an ongoing programme of repairs on the Council's PPP School Wall Ties. It was confirmed that work to carry out repairs to wall ties in schools in high risk areas had been completed and a schedule of works for the remaining repairs to wall ties was in place.

iii Property related health and safety issues – it was confirmed that an update had been circulated to the Committee on the budget considerations for property related health and safety issues.

### 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 9 January, 2019;
- (ii) Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross Health and Safety Working Group held on 17 January, 2019; and
- (iii) Ross, Skye and Lochaber Health and Safety Group held on 6 December, 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

Item 3 Matters Arising – Fire Extinguisher Training – the minute be amended to reflect the correct name of the Fleet Manager – James MacDonald.

#### ii Caithness, Sutherland & Easter Ross Minute

Item 5 Health & Safety Advisor Update – the minute stated that 'Fire Safety Advisers have indicated that a current travel ban means limitations on visits.' This was incorrect and the Committee were reassured that Fire Safety Officers would be carrying out their duties as normal. The travel ban related to non essential travel.

## 6. Employee Wellbeing Survey/Health and Wellbeing Strategy

There was circulated Report No. CSC/1/19 by the Head of People and ICT which summarised the findings of an Employee Wellbeing Survey and put forward recommendations with regard to improving the information and promotion of health and wellbeing activities as identified in the survey. An Employee Wellbeing Strategy which sets out the Council's plan for health and wellbeing promotion for the next 3 years will be produced.

In discussion, the Chair advised that both he and the Chief Executive and Directors had recently undertaken a staff engagement exercise involving 68 events across the Highlands and the Chair was impressed how open and honest staff were in speaking about issues affecting them and the commitment to their work was recognised and appreciated.

In terms of mental health issues, sadly in Caithness there had been 7 drug/suicide related deaths in January, 2019 and this was a worrying statistic. The Council would work with NHS Highland, Police Scotland and other public sector partners to see what assistance they could give in this area. At the engagement events it was good to see that various health issues of staff were being addressed.

In terms of the ageing profile of employees working for the Council, as an employer the Council had to be aware that employees would be more challenged with their health as they got older.

In terms of questions in the Employee Survey relating to health and safety risks, it was suggested that in future surveys, employees be asked if they had experienced any of these health and safety risks. Also, it was suggested that terminology be more user friendly in future surveys.

It was advised that a mental health training event for Managers in January had been cancelled as there were not enough people going to attend. This was disappointing as it was important that there were more mental health representatives in Services. The Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing team would continue to raise awareness of this training and Area Health and Safety Group representatives and Officers of the Central Safety Committee should raise awareness of this at Area Health and Safety Group meetings.

It would be beneficial to compare the information in the report to accident statistics to see if there were any specific health issues in a Service. It was advised that there would be an analysis of accidents and incidents over the last year and this would be linked into the annual review of occupational health.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i **NOTED** the survey;
- ii **AGREED** the Health and Wellbeing strategy and plan;
- iii **AGREED** to the Health and Wellbeing strategy and plan being progressed by the Corporate Health Promotions Team; and

iv **AGREED** that the strategy and plan are monitored by the Central Safety Committee.

## 7. **Property related health and safety issues**

There was circulated Report No. CSC/2/19 by the Director of Development & Infrastructure which provided an update on significant property related health and safety issues, any emerging future risks and new policy and procedures introduced.

In discussion, in relation to performance of biomass boilers, a Heating servicing and maintenance workshop had recently been established with an aim to review where improvements could be made to respond better to call outs; improve reliability and reduce costs.

It was noted with concern that there was a lack of information on locations of fire dampers and clarity on routes of ductwork throughout buildings. Further, no proactive maintenance was carried out on ventilation systems, including smoke vents and fire dampers and the Council did not achieve its statutory duty to comply with the Fire Safety (Scotland) Regulations 2006. It was advised that a contract is in preparation for maintenance to the Council's fire hydrants and is due to be awarded May/June 2019.

Continuing, it was confirmed that the Property team put in bids each year for property related maintenance, but the funding made available for this purpose was insufficient to meet all outstanding maintenance work and statutory compliance. It was advised that the Council's Administration Budget team was considering more resources for property related maintenance.

Information would be sent to Councillor D Loudon on routine changing of filter maintenance of ventilation systems at Council Headquarters, Inverness presently carried out by an in-house Plant Engineer.

It was noted that the Highland Council Water Safety Engineer had been recognised nationally for his work and this was commended.

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

## 8. **Update on Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Issues**

There was circulated Report No. CSC/3/19 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.

In discussion, it was confirmed that financial resources had been made available for the supply of portacabins for welfare facilities at Diriebught Depot and that specifications for these facilities had been finalised and tenders for the work from suppliers were due on 1<sup>st</sup> February, 2019. A Panel, comprising officers and trade union representatives would be arranged to assess these tenders. Further, £10k

would be made available for car parking improvements and £30k would be spent on electrical works at the Depot.

Security in Council buildings needed to improve. It was advised that the new telephones being rolled out also had the facility to be used as pagers, which could be used to get the message across quickly for safety and security purposes. This system would be rolled out to Schools and at Council Headquarters and the Town House, Inverness.

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

## **9. Occupational Health Service Update**

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/4/19 by the Head of People and ICT which provided a breakdown of the management referrals, occupational health surveillance and other activities undertaken by and with Iqarus, the Council's Occupational Health (OH) provider for the period October to December, 2018.

In particular it was noted that a total of 21 medical referral appointments and 16 physio appointments were reported as Did Not Attend (DNA). This was an increase from the previous quarter. If the appointment is cancelled with less than 24 hours notice, then the full cost is charged to the Council. This is money that is being wasted and consideration was being given to re-charging Services for this.

Continuing, Managers should be discussing with the employee about going to the appointment and reminding them about it. Managers had also been asked to find out why employees had not turned out for appointments, but this was not always done. Managers had to address this issue as it was important that employees attended these appointments and the costs of cancellation at short notice was not acceptable. The Chair gave an undertaking to speak to the Chief Executive and Head and People and ICT about this issue and he would report back to the next meeting.

Following consideration, the Committee **NOTED** the Occupational Health activity for the last three months.

The meeting ended at 1.00 p.m.