

**The Highland Council
Central Safety Committee**

Minutes of Meeting of the Central Safety Committee held in Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Friday 9 August, 2019 at 12.10 p.m.

Present:

Employer's Representatives:

Mr A MacKinnon
Mr M Reiss
Mr G MacKenzie
Mr R Gale

Staff Side Representatives:

Mr D Griffiths, GMB
Mr D Morrison (substitute), 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
Mr S Duncan, Property Manager, Development & Infrastructure Service
Ms D Sutherland, Corporate Audit Manager, Corporate Resources Service
Ms H Ross, CSER Health & Safety Working Group (by telephone conference)
Ms B McKinley, Operational Support Officer, Care & Learning Service
Ms F Grant, Attendance Support Officer, Chief Executive's Service
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Chief Executive's Service

Mr A MacKinnon in the Chair

SUBJECT/DECISION

ACTION

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr M Hayes and Mr I Macleman of the Staff Side, Mr C Howell – CSER H&S Group; Mr W Munro – INBS H&S Group; Mr I Jackson – C&L Service and Ms C Campbell – Community Services.

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 3 May, 2019, the terms of which were **APPROVED**.

4. Matters Arising from the Minutes

Arising from the Minutes the following matter was raised:-

- i. Overnight Accommodation – Services should inform their staff that complaints about overnight accommodation should be made immediately so that they could be investigated.

**Service
HS Co-
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rs**

5. Minutes of Area Health and Safety Groups and Service Trade Union Health and Safety Liaison Groups

There had been circulated, for information, the Minutes of the:-

Area Health and Safety Groups

- (i) Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey Joint Health and Safety Working Group held on 26 June, 2019;
- (ii) Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross Health and Safety Working Group held on 16 July, 2019; and
- (iii) Ross, Skye and Lochaber Health and Safety Group held on 20 June, 2019.

Service Trade Union Health and Safety Liaison Groups

- (iv) Care and Learning Service held on 23 May, 2019;
- (v) Corporate Resources held on 30 May, 2019;
- (vi) Development & Infrastructure on 14 May, 2019;
- (vii) Community Services on 28 June, 2019.

The Committee **NOTED:-**

i the Area Health and Safety Groups and Service Trade Union Health and Safety Liaison Groups Minutes; and

ii that there should be representatives from Area Health and Safety Groups and Services at Central Safety Committee meetings.

**Democr
atic
Services**

Arising from the Minutes the following points were raised:

(i) Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey Minute

- i. It was noted that some staff had been exposed to dust during construction work at the Town House. The contractors had been asked to monitor the level and kind of dust and report back on this and on the controls in place to limit the amount of dust generated during construction. No information had yet been received on these matters from the contractor. Further, better consultation with the Council's Health and Safety Officers at the project planning

stage would have helped address these health and safety issues.

Thereafter, it was **AGREED** that a briefing on the construction dust issue at the Town House would be circulated to the Committee.

**OHSW
Manager
Property
Manager**

(ii) Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross Health and Safety Working Group

- i. The issue of violent incident reporting in relation to personal social media attacks was raised. Staff were encouraged to report such incidents. It was advised that Head Teachers were particularly targeted in this way and were starting to report such incidents. A review of the process of reporting violent and aggression incidents was to be undertaken by the OHSW Manager. A greater awareness of violent incident reporting was also required.

**OHSW
Manager**

- ii. A group had been formed to address security concerns at the Service point in Wick and initial work on this issue had already taken place and options were being considered. Further, in addition to this group and whatever RPO arrangements were in place, it was important that each Service undertook its own risk assessment for its own tasks.

It was advised that following a visit by the Principal Engineer to Caithness House a project had been established to address the issues, including looking at what acoustic improvements could be made.

- iii. it was confirmed that the Health and Safety Consultation Guidance document had included in it the requirement that health and safety should be discussed at Services team meetings. Health and Safety Advisers would be asked to remind Services of this.

**OHSW
Manager**

(iii) Ross, Skye and Lochaber Health and Safety Group

- i. In relation to Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome, it had been found that Managers who should be reporting employees receiving a diagnosis of HAVS, may not be doing so. The number of cases of HAVS was increasing and given that the Council had received a HSE Improvement Notice in the past regarding this, this issue needed to be addressed.
- ii. In terms of concerns raised that defibrillators were not routinely provided at Council offices, it was advised that there was no budget provision for these devices. Also, in relation to the defibrillator at HQ, this was located at Reception and was not easily accessible or charged. This issue would be addressed immediately.

**OHSW
Manager
/Service
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**OHSW
Manager**

It was queried if the provision of defibrillators was the responsibility of each Service as part of their first aid risk assessment. It was

advised that there was no Council policy on the provision of these devices and an undertaking was made to look at this.

**Chair
CSC**

iii in relation to the issue of staff travelling in areas of poor mobile signal, it was noted that some Development & Infrastructure staff were being provided with EE network SIM cards to go into tablet computers which improves connectivity and allows e-mails etc to be sent. It was confirmed that the provision of EE network SIM cards was available to all Services, but there was a cost to this.

iv Response to panic alarms in interview rooms – it was advised that when architects were designing buildings they did not know how buildings were going to be operated and therefore there was not the ability to know how the building should function when a panic alarm was activated. Therefore there was a need for a better brief at the building design stage on how the building was to be occupied. In many cases, how panic alarms should be operated was not apparent until the building was occupied.

It was advised that in Drummie, there would be additional areas where panic alarms could be heard and a procedure would be drafted so that staff know how they should respond when a panic alarm was activated. Services should undertake their own risk assessments in terms of whether panic alarms were required and the system should be bespoke for Services in each building.

Continuing, there was not a procedure in place for staff responding to the panic alarm at HQ.

In relation to the interview rooms at the new Dingwall Service point, concern was expressed that they were not compliant with the guidance on how an interview room should be designed and operated. A standard template for an interview room had been requested when the interview rooms in the Town House were designed, so as to make all interview rooms compliant in order to mitigate any risks to staff interviewing members of the public. With the exception of the interview rooms in the Town House, which were compliant, other Council interview rooms were not compliant with the guidance and this was disappointing as the guidance was available.

It was acknowledged that there was a need for all interview rooms to be designed and operated in terms of the guidance and that procedures were in place for staff on how to respond to panic alarms.

**OHSW
Manager
Property
Manager**

v Building Security – this issue was highlighted as a concern particularly with regard to Tigh na Sgìre and Dingwall Offices. It was confirmed that security works at Tigh na Sgìre were currently being scoped. There was a need to ensure that health and safety and security of staff was included in design briefs for Council properties.

**Property
Manager
OHSW
Manager**

vi Future Structure of Area Health and Safety Groups – the OHSW Manager would discuss with trade union representatives the future structure of these groups.

**OHSW
Manager**

(iv) Care and Learning Service

- i. An issue was raised that Children’s Services staff in Fort William felt unsafe in their work environment due to staffing levels combined with workload pressures. It had been suggested that a survey be issued to all staff to gauge how they feel.

It was advised that the Council was rolling out wellbeing and resilience training which may help with this issue. Also the Employee Assistance Programme would start soon so staff could get confidential advice.

- ii. A concern was raised that staff were being located in premises that were non compliant with health and safety legislation and examples were provided. It was requested that the Corporate Property Asset Manager attend the next meeting to discuss this issue. There was a need for health and safety risk assessments to be part of the property rationalisation process. Further, there were a number of properties that had not had fire risk assessments.

**Corp
Property
Asset
Manager**

The Chief Executive and Interim Chief Officer Resources (Community Services) were undertaking a tour of Depots. There was a requirement to upgrade depots.

- iii it was advised that there were no health and safety reasons preventing cycling proficiency lessons being carried out on school grounds.

6. Care and Learning Service – Annual Health and Safety

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/5/19 by the Head of Resources for Care and Learning.

The Committee **AGREED** that the report be withdrawn and re-submitted to the next meeting in order that the report be updated to include references to Care Services.

**Head of
Resourc
es
(C&L)/
Educ
Officer**

7. Community Services Annual Health and Safety Report

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/6/19 by the Head of Performance and Resources.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- The report referred to 130 vacancies in Community Services during 2018/19. It was felt that staff could be at risk given this large amount of vacancies. It was confirmed that all vacancies that Services wished to fill required to get the approval of a Governance Board as there was currently a recruitment freeze. It was advised that if any post came forward that had a safety element, such as HGV Drivers who required comprehensive training, this would be considered by the Board. Clarification was sought as to whether Community Services still had 130 vacancies and if so, why were they not putting these posts forward to be filled and whether there were any safety concerns for existing staff by holding so many vacancies.
- There was a staff retention issue in the Inner Moray Firth with staff who having received training to become HGV drivers, leaving the Council to work in the private sector. There was also an issue with difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff in Trades services and this was being looked at in the Trades review, as there was a need to better promote the package of benefits that the Council offered its staff.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the contents of the report; and
- ii. that clarification would be provided as to whether Community Services still had 130 vacancies and if so, why were they not putting these vacancies forward to be filled and whether there were any safety concerns for existing staff through holding so many vacancies.

**Head of
Perform
& Res**

8. Property Related Health and Safety Issues

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/8/19 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- it was advised that from Water Safety risk assessments carried out so far on 70 properties (35 of which were schools), there was £1.37m of remedial works identified for compliance and Water Byelaw arrangements. It was advised that Public Private Partnership operators of Schools had been informed of non compliance works required and the Council has assisted the operators in carrying out Water safety risk assessments and remedial works and the Council had been refunded for assisting them.
- in relation to electrical, gas and water safety compliance works on properties there was a need to address these issues now, otherwise non compliance issues would only increase and there were risks to staff, pupils and clients using Council properties.

There were significant budgetary implications associated with these non compliance works and the Committee would be briefed on decisions taken with regard to the funding of these works.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the current levels of compliance and progress being made; and
- ii. that the Committee would be briefed on decisions taken with regard to the funding of works to address a range on non compliance areas on properties.

**Property
Manager**

9. Update on Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Issues

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/8/19 by the Head of People and ICT.

During discussion, the following main issues were raised:-

- a short life working group had been convened to look at the role and duties of the Responsible Premises Officer. An update on progress with the working group would be reported to the next meeting.
- Guidance in supporting staff with long term medical conditions was circulated for consideration.
- In relation to an open water safety water strategy, it was queried if this would be difficult to do given the extent of coastline in Highland. In response, it was hoped to engage with the localism agenda and manage things locally and where there were water safety signs, these be standardised and advice and assistance sought from the coastguard. It was important that people enjoyed the outdoors and water activities and for a common sense approach to water safety.

The Committee:-

- (i) **NOTED** the updated information on health, safety and wellbeing issues and developments contained in the report; and
- (ii) **AGREED** to the publication of the guidance on supporting staff with long term conditions.

**OHSW
Manager**

10. Corporate Occupational Health and Safety and Wellbeing Annual Report 2018-2019

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/9/19 by the Head of People and ICT

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- It was noted that the number of Did not attend appointments had

increased again. It was explained that this was partly due to the temporary loss of being able to send reminder text messages to employees prior to their appointments and a solution to this was being worked on.

- It was disappointing that there had been a significant decrease in staff attending health and safety training as it was mandatory for staff to attend these training courses. The reasons given by staff for this were – lack of time, lack of staff, reduced budgets. It was explained that the less health and safety training there was, accidents would increase and the more Health and Safety Executive enforcement notices would be received. There was a need to invest in training, otherwise the cost to the Council would be significant. In this respect, it was agreed that this issue be reported to the Executive Leadership team meeting.

The Committee:-

- (i) **APPROVED** the Occupational Health and Safety and Wellbeing Annual Report 2018-2019;
- (ii) **NOTED** the achievements and performance for 2018/19; and
- (iii) **AGREED** that the decrease in staff attending mandatory health and safety training would be reported to the Executive Leadership team meeting.

**OHSW
Manager**

11. Occupational Health Service Update

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/10/19 by the Head of People and ICT.

During discussion, it was confirmed that in addition to the Women's health week run by the Occupational Health Provider, there would also be a Men's health week.

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

**OHSW
Manager**

12. Date of Next Meeting

The Committee **AGREED** that the next meeting would be held on Friday, 1 November, 2019 at 12 noon.

13. AOCB

- i Town House Construction Dust Monitoring – it was advised that dust monitoring equipment had been ordered but there was no confirmed date of delivery. In the meantime all invasive work had been stopped.

- ii the OHSW Manager had been asked to join a change team to assist in the delivery of the property rationalisation project; **OHSW Manager**
- iii Coatbridge schools health fears – a report had just been released which claimed that there was no link between the schools and the ill health suffered by staff and pupils. The report would be studied to see if there were any lessons to be learned from this case. **OHSW Manager**

Steve Walsh, Head of People and ICT

The Chair on behalf of the Committee wished Steve all the very best in his new role as Chief Executive of High Life Highland and thanked him for his commitment and assistance over the last few years to the Committee which was very much appreciated.

Stuart Duncan, Property Manager

The Chair on behalf of the Committee wished Stuart a long and happy retirement and thanked him for his assistance and professional advice to the Committee on property matters.

The meeting ended at 1.40 p.m.