

**The Highland Council  
Central Safety Committee**

Minutes of Meeting of the Central Safety Committee held in Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Friday 1 November, 2019 at 12.10 p.m.

**Present:**

**Employer's Representatives:**

Mr M Reiss  
Mr A MacInnes (substitute)  
Mr R Gale

**Staff Side Representatives:**

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

**In attendance:**

Ms E Barrie, Interim Head of HR  
Mr C Howell, CSER Health & Safety Working Group  
Mr B Porter, Head of Resources, Care and Learning  
Mrs C Campbell, Head of Performance and Resources  
Mr G Bull, Corporate Property Asset Manager  
Mr T Murdison, Acting Property Manager  
Mr K Gaittens, Senior Health & Safety Adviser  
Ms F Grant, Attendance Support Officer  
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant

**SUBJECT/DECISION**

**ACTION**

**1. Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair**

Members were advised that, in terms of the remit of the Committee, following an election of councillors, and annually thereafter, the Committee shall appoint from amongst their members a Chair and Vice Chair. If the Chair appointed be one of the Employer's representatives, the Vice-Chair shall be one of the Staff Side representatives and vice versa.

Mr M Hayes, seconded by Mr D Griffiths, moved that Mr A MacKinnon be appointed as Chair. There being no other nominations, Mr A MacKinnon was duly appointed.

Mr D Griffiths, seconded by Mr I Macleman, moved that Mr M Hayes be appointed as Vice Chair. There being no other nominations, Mr Hayes was duly appointed.

In the absence of the Chair, Mr Hayes took the Chair for this meeting.

## 2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr A MacKinnon and Mr G MacKenzie of the Employer's Side; Mr W Munro and Mr C Stephen – INBS H&S Group; Mr R Cattle, RSL H&S Group; Ms G Falconer, Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager and Ms D Sutherland, Corporate Audit Manager.

## 3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

## 4. Minutes of Last Meeting

There had been circulated Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 9 August, 2019, the terms of which were **APPROVED**.

## 5. Matters Arising from the Minutes

Arising from the Minutes the following matters were raised:-

- i. Overnight Accommodation – it was suggested that if staff had health and safety concerns regarding their overnight accommodation they should refer them to Environmental Health team who would investigate. An undertaking was given to make the Travel Desk aware of this, so that they could report incidents to Environmental Health.
- ii. Violent incident reporting in relation to personal social media attacks – it was advised that Refuse Loaders had been subject to social media abuse and it was queried if this should be reported as a violent incident. Head Teachers were also particularly targeted in this way. A review of the process of reporting violent and aggression incidents was being undertaken by the OHSW Manager. It was also suggested that the Public Relations team should be contacted to check if they had any strategies for dealing with social media abuse against employees. The importance of employees reporting instances of social media abuse was emphasised. There was also various legislation that covered abuse of communication. The Police would risk assess cases of social media abuse that was reported to them.
- iii. Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS) – there had been an increase in the number of detected cases of HAVS and information was being sent out to Heads of Services to ensure that all these cases are reported as required by RIDDOR and that interviews are held with staff affected. An active tracking system of HAVS and been implemented in Community Services.

**Head of  
Perform  
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**OHSW  
Manager**

- iv. Defibrillators – It was advised the Charity ‘Lucky to be Here’ supplied defibrillators and provided the ongoing maintenance of the devices. The Council paid the installation cost and electricity costs for charging the batteries. ‘Lucky to be Here’ were to give a presentation at the next Care, Learning and Housing Committee focusing on the provision of defibrillators in schools.

Further, it was noted at the last meeting that the defibrillator at HQ, located at Reception, was not easily accessible or charged. It was confirmed that the battery had now been replaced and there had been a communication to staff about defibrillators and their locations.

It was suggested the Council’s property portfolio be assessed as to their suitability to receive defibrillators. It was explained that the Council did work with other charities on an ad hoc basis for the supply of these devices at a location that was open and accessible to the community.

Guidance was sought from the OHSW Manager on the Council’s duties in regard to First Aid Regulations as these regulations were based on risk assessment. Therefore, if it was deemed that a Council building or team would benefit from having a defibrillator, this should be provided under First Aid Regulations. The importance of training on the use of the devices was also highlighted.

**OHSW  
Manager**

- v. Property Rationalisation and Asset Transfer Projects – it was advised that the rationalisation and transfer of assets was undertaken with minimal consultation with the Staff Side in terms of health and safety. There were a number of examples in services of staff transfer to premises that were non compliant with health and safety.

The Joint Trade Union Group recently had written to the Chief Executive to highlight that consultation had not taken place at early stages of property rationalisation and asset transfer projects. A positive response had been received as a result in that, the health and safety team would be consulted at an early stage on proposals. However, in terms of ‘The New Way of Working’ occupancy survey of premises usage, it was advised that neither the Staff Side or the Health and Safety team had been consulted on this. This was disappointing and it seemed that the lack of consultation on health and safety relating to property rationalisation still existed.

It was requested that the Corporate Property Asset Manager and the Project Sponsor for ‘The New Way of Working’ should attend the next meeting to explain how health and safety has been embedded into that survey. It was confirmed that it was the Council’s commitment to ensure that health and safety was embedded in this project and the OHSW Manager was now involved in the project.

Continuing, the occupancy survey at Council HQ, was being undertaken by the Scottish Futures Trust and health and safety considerations should already have been factored into their approach to the survey. However, a Highland Council health and safety approach to the survey should also be done and the Staff Side should be involved in this. It was suggested that a project brief and methodology be sent to the Staff Side for review.

There was also discussion regarding the Diriebught Depot welfare facilities project which had been ongoing now for 3 years. It was advised that at the Staff Partnership Forum meeting held earlier in the day, it had been agreed that the Chief Executive and the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place would visit the depot next week to discuss with staff a solution to the difficulties with the project. The Staff Side were of the view that if the issues at Diriebught were not resolved, the only way forward for them was to raise the issue with the Health and Safety Executive.

Thereafter, it was **AGREED** that the Corporate Property Asset Manager and the Project Sponsor for 'The New Way of Working' be invited to attend the next meeting to give an overview of the project brief and methodology and how health and safety had been embedded into it.

**ECO I &  
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Corp  
Property  
Asset  
Manager**

- vi. Future Structure of Area Health and Safety Groups – it was advised that one option was that there be a Building User Group for multi occupancy premises. The Staff Side did not feel this would work due to the diverse nature of the workforce, but were open to further discussions on the future structure of Area Health and Safety Groups. The Trade Unions were encouraged to also bring forward their own proposals in terms of the future structure.

**OHSW  
Manager  
/Trade  
Unions**

Further, the Staff Side highlighted that there was a need to review health and safety consultation within the Council and trade union engagement in this process.

## **6. 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 9 October, 2019;
- (ii) Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross Health and Safety Working Group held on 26 September, 2019; and
- (iii) Ross, Skye and Lochaber Health and Safety Group held on 19 September, 2019.

## Service Trade Union Health and Safety Liaison Groups

- (iv) Care and Learning Service held on 29 August, 2019;
- (v) Development & Infrastructure on 2 October, 2019;
- (vi) Community Services on 23 August, 2019.

The Committee **NOTED** the Area Health and Safety Groups and Service Trade Union Health and Safety Liaison Groups Minutes.

Arising from the Minutes the following points were raised:

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

- i. Concerns remained regarding the lack of a Responsible Premises Officer (RPO) at Caithness House. In the absence of an RPO, it had been suggested sharing RPO duties amongst the Services in buildings with multi-service occupancy. Therefore, there would be a group of Service representatives that would carry out the RPO function. In addition, it was noted that there was a Council wide review of RPO role and duties and trade unions representatives in the CSER area would like to be involved in this process.

**OHSW  
Manager**

(ii) Community Services

- i. Diriebught Welfare facilities – the OHSW Manager was to engage with Building Standards regarding the requirements for this project i.e. why do we need disabled access to the first floor of a temporary site and also there was disabled access elsewhere on site. It was explained that as it was not a building site, Building Standards requirements meant that disabled access was necessary.

As mentioned before in the meeting, an urgent solution to the issues with this project was being at. Also, the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment was to investigate the Building Warrant application issues.

The Staff Side expressed their disappointment that the building standards issue had not been addressed at the project management stage.

The Forum **AGREED** that a report be submitted to the next meeting on what mitigation measures the Council planned to put in place in lieu of welfare facilities being installed at Diriebught Depot.

**ECO –  
C&P**

## 7. Care and Learning Service – Annual Health and Safety

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/11/19 by the Head of Resources for Care and Learning.

In discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- It was queried if there was a strategy for making schools comply with disability access standards. It was explained that the Council had an ad hoc arrangement for ensuring buildings met disability requirements based on an as needs basis. The Service was proactive in dealing with disability access issues when it was made aware of them and complied with its statutory responsibilities in this respect.
- It was noted that there was a reduction in referrals by management to the Council's Occupational Health Service. The Council were proactive in managing staff absences and staff wellbeing and there were a number of initiatives to support this activity. A comparative analysis with previous years on the referral data would be included in future reports which would show where improvements were being made and areas that required improvement.
- In relation to the responsibility for the maintenance of trees, shrubs etc. on school grounds, it was advised that this was ultimately the responsibility of Head Teachers. However, there was support for the Head Teacher in carrying out such functions from Facilities Management. The Service was reviewing the Devolved School Management handbook in order to have a more simplified approach to how the Council managed its schools. An undertaking was given to provide the Committee with information on who had maintenance responsibilities of trees/shrubs etc. on school grounds.
- In terms of the details on the accident reports from 2018-19, it was requested that in future reports the amount of days lost to education as a result of all industrial incidents be included as it was noted that only 1 RIDDOR incident had been shown, but there had been 40 incidents in total.

**Head of Resources (C&L)**

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED**:-

i the contents of the report;

ii that information on who had maintenance responsibilities for trees/shrubs etc. on school grounds would be circulated to the Committee; and

iii a comparative analysis with previous years on the Occupational Health referral data would be included in future reports

**Acting Property Manager**

**Head of Resources (C&L)**

## 8. Property Related Health and Safety Issues

**Acting  
Property  
Manager**

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/12/19 by the Acting Property Manager.

During discussion, the following main issues were raised:-

- It was queried if there had been a review of the health and safety implications of using LED lighting. It was explained that the LED lighting replacements will help to reduce electrical load, and therefore there would be less of a fire risk and also it would reduce energy consumption.
- Details were provided of budget pressure bids to supplement existing funding in order to enable current levels of non-compliance to be improved. More information on this was currently being collated for submission to the Executive Leadership Team for their consideration on the bids. It was requested that this information be shared with the Committee.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the current levels of compliance and progress being made; and
- ii. that the further information being collated on non compliance areas be shared with the Committee.

## 9. Update on Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Issues

**OHSW  
Manager**

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/13/19 by the Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance.

During discussion, the following main issues were raised:-

- where employees were off work due to work related stress, it was explained that as part of the return to work process, there should be a risk assessment;
- a survey had been issued to all Council RPOs in September to get feedback on the role. It was advised that there had been a 30% return to the survey which was currently being analysed. Information was also being collated on what other Councils were doing in terms of the RPO function and the role, responsibilities and training of the RPO was being defined.

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

## 10. Occupational Health Service Update

OHSW  
Manager

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/14/19 by the Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance.

During discussion it was advised that there had been a slight delay to the procurement of an Employee Assistance Programme which would provide confidential advice and support to all employees, their immediate families and Elected Members.

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

The meeting ended at 1.55 p.m.