

Agenda Item 11.i

The Highland Council Central Safety Committee

Minutes of Meeting of the Central Safety Committee held in Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Friday 7 February, 2020 at 1.00 p.m.

Present:

Employer's Representatives:

Mr R Gale
Mr G MacKenzie

Staff Side Representatives:

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

In attendance:

Mr M MacLeod, Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure & Environment
Mr M Rodgers, Executive Chief Officer Housing & Property
Mr D Goldie, Head of Housing & Building Maintenance
Ms E Barrie, Interim Head of HR
Ms G Falconer, Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager
Mr B Porter, Care and Learning Health & Safety Wellbeing Co-ordinator
Mrs C Campbell, Community Services Health & Safety Wellbeing Co-ordinator
Mr T Murdison, Acting Property Manager
Ms H Ross, CSER Operational Area Health and Safety Working Group
Mr W Munro, Inverness, Nairn and Badenoch & Strathspey Operational Area Health and Safety Working Group
Mr R Cattle, Ross, Skye and Lochaber Operational Area Health and Safety Working Group
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant

SUBJECT/DECISION

ACTION

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr D Louden and Mr A MacKinnon of the Employer's Side; Ms D Sutherland, Corporate Resources Service Health & Safety Wellbeing Co-ordinator and Mr C Howell, CSER Health & Safety Working Group.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

3. **Housing and Building Maintenance Welfare Facilities Diriebught Depot, Inverness**

There was circulated Report No. CSC/1/20 by the Head of Housing and Building Maintenance.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- The construction of additional high quality welfare facilities at Diriebught Depot was being treated as a top priority for the Service with an expected completion date of late February, 2020.
- The Staff Side welcomed the progress that had been made with the provision of welfare facilities at Diriebught Depot. There was to be a health and safety site meeting at the depot next week and an update on this would be provided at the next meeting of the Committee.
- One of the mitigating measures put in place for staff until the new welfare facility was in place was allowing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to be stored in vehicles. The Staff Side felt this was inappropriate and circulated pictures showing the condensation and mould in vehicles as a result of PPE being stored in them. It was advised that the Council was legally required to provide proper and secure storage, such as lockers, for PPE and this equipment could not be kept in the back of vehicles.
- In view of the pressure on welfare facilities at Diriebught, there had been an extended agreement for operatives to take vans home. It was queried if there were any tax implications for employees as a result of this practice. It was advised that an adjustment had been made to the normal rules around acceptable private use of Council vehicles. Therefore, it was considered to be an operational requirement for employees to take vans home and there would not be personal tax implications for employees, providing that they were not using the vans for private purposes, which was not happening.

**Head of
Housing
& Build
Maintenance**

Thereafter, the Committee:-

i **NOTED** the report on current welfare facilities for the Housing Building Maintenance team at the Diriebught depot in Inverness; and

ii **NOTED** that an update on a health and safety site meeting at Diriebught Depot would be provided at the next meeting of the Committee.

**Staff
Side**

4. The New Way of Working Project

The Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment was in attendance and gave a presentation on The New Way of Working Project.

**ECO
Property
&
Housing**

As part of the overall project of property rationalisation within the Council, particular focus was being made to Council Headquarters, Inverness. There was a need to implement new ways of working to provide a more modern office and working environment, but also

reducing the size of the Council's property estate and have Council Headquarters and other key property hubs as receptor buildings when other buildings were vacated.

The presentation covered how staff were engaged in this process; engagement with the Scottish Futures Trust in terms of the rationalisation project and a space utilisation survey that had been undertaken at Council Headquarters. The benefits of a smarter working project could deliver were highlighted in terms of effectiveness and efficiency and what this would mean in practical terms for staff e.g. more informal meeting places; desk sharing; flexible working.

In terms of next steps to be taken on the project, there would be a further workshop next week with staff affected by the changes to explain how the various issues raised would be addressed. The new Executive Chief Officer Property and Housing would be taking over as the project sponsor for the new way of working project.

In discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- The Occupational Health Safety and Wellbeing Manager was working on additional health and safety guidance for staff undertaking mobile and flexible working;
- The HR team had been involved in the smarter working workshops to ensure health and safety requirements were being met and there was positive feedback from staff involved in the workshops about the benefits of smarter working.
- There was some concern that there did not appear to have been proper consultation on the project with the Staff Side representative, affected employees and their managers. While the smarter working model would work well for staff who worked mainly by electronic means, there were staff that did not completely operate by electronic means, such as Environmental team members, and so this model would not work for them. It was appreciated that the model would not work for all staff, but there was a move to paperless systems and it was good that the Scottish Future Trust were involved as they had experience in dealing with almost all scenarios in smarter working.
- There was a need to ensure that there was consultation and communication with the trade unions and staff affected, so that their particular needs could be identified and addressed.
- Improvements to the heating, lighting and ventilation at HQ had been raised as an issue.
- The interaction with the health and safety team was important as there were many health and safety issues with this project.
- The Staff Side were supportive of the project and any assistance they could give, they would be happy to engage with the appropriate Officers.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the presentation.

5. Minutes of Last Meeting

There had been circulated Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 1 November, 2019, the terms of which were **APPROVED**.

6. Matters Arising from the Minutes

Arising from the Minutes the following matters were raised:-

- i. Violent incident reporting in relation to personal social media attacks – it was confirmed that guidance on violent incident reporting did cover social media and staff were encouraged to report social media attacks.
- ii. Defibrillators – there was no legal requirement for the Council to have defibrillators and there was no budget for them, so it was difficult to get a corporate approach to the roll out of these devices. There was a need for a central register of the devices, to ensure that their location was known, that they were maintained and that there were staff in the location who were trained to use them. The Care and Learning Service were looking at ways to encourage and support schools and community facilities to install and train people to operate defibrillators. CPR training was available within the Council.
- iii. Future Structure of Area Health and Safety Groups - there had been discussions with the Staff Side on this and it was proposed to retain the 3 Area Health and Safety Groups in their current format and in terms of the Service Trade Union Health and Safety Liaison Groups, it was proposed that the high risk Services would have their own Service meetings, with lower risk Services (primarily office based staff) they be combined into one Service health and safety group. Staff Side representatives would form part of the composition of these groups.
- iv. Responsible Premises Officer – it was advised that there were gaps where there was no one taking on the role of RPO. It was the duty of the Executive Chief Officers where they were the main service in a building that they appointed an RPO. There was a review of the RPO function and training.
- v. Disability requirements for schools – there were significant challenges in meeting disability requirements in schools, particularly older schools. Adaptations would be put in place to meet the needs of staff/pupils who had a disability. There was funding available from the Government for adaptations for pupils/staff so that they could access work. It would be the individual who would require to apply for the money not the Employer and Managers needed to be made aware of this funding. In terms of mobility works, there were also challenges in getting contractors to site and there were often long lead in times for works

to be undertaken.

- vi. Employee Assistance Programme – it was confirmed that there had been an award of contract for an Employee Assistance Programme and project planning for this would now commence. The service would be free to all staff and Elected Members and would be available 24/7 on the internet and telephone. Family members could also access the information via the internet.

It was intended to have a presentation by the Employee Assistance Programme Provider at the next meeting.

**OHSW
Manager**

7. 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 15 January, 2020;
- (ii) Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross Health and Safety Working Group held on 15 January, 2020; and
- (iii) Ross, Skye and Lochaber Health and Safety Group held on 5 December, 2019.

Service Trade Union Health and Safety Liaison Groups

- (iv) Care and Learning Service held on 7 November, 2019;
- (v) Corporate Resources Committee held on 29 August & 22 November, 2019; and
- (vi) Community Services on 22 November, 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) Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey Minute
 - i. Mental Health Reps – it was advised that there was no charge or restrictions for Mental Health training.
- (ii) Ross, Skye & Lochaber Minute
 - i. Disappointment was expressed over the low number of attendees at the meeting (4 attended). All Services had a responsibility to be represented at these meetings.

(iii)Care and Learning Service Trade Union Health & Safety Liaison Group Minute

i EVAC Chairs – an issue had been raised about EVAC Chairs not being properly maintained which could cause an injury to someone. This issue would be raised at the Care and Learning Service Trade Union Health and Safety Liaison Group with a report back to this Committee.

**Staff
Side/
B Porter**

ii Strontian Primary School – there was no immediate risk, but the water supply remained non compliant. An enforcement notice had been received from Scottish Water, which had been passed onto the community group for a solution within the timescale set by Scottish Water. The timescale would be forwarded to Councillor R Gale.

**Acting
Property
Manager**

iii Fire Risk Assessments – 82 schools had not been assessed for fire risk assessments in the last 5 years. It was queried if any action was being taken to address this. It was advised that there was an ongoing programme for fire risk assessments, particularly in schools. There was currently a vacancy for a Fire Safety Officer and it was intended to advertise this post shortly, which would speed up the fire risk assessment process.

(iv)Corporate Resources Committee Minute

i it was queried if these meetings were passed onto staff for information. Service Meeting Minutes used to be published on the Intranet and efforts were being made to train someone to do this.

(v)Community Services Minute

i HAVS – it was disappointing that despite all the work done on HAVS staff were still using their own tools. The Council had a legal duty to provide tools, to ensure they were maintained and to provide training on them.

Staff were told not to use their own tools and trade unions needed to also relay this message to their members. There was a need to identify why staff were using their own tools, such as staff not having been provided with the tools. If there was an issue with staff waiting on tools to be delivered, this needed to be discussed with the relevant Managers. There needed to be a sufficient budget allocation for equipment to enable the right tools to be provided to staff. The Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property undertook to meet with the Staff Side outwith the meeting to discuss the scope of the problem and find a resolution. This issue should be discussed at all the appropriate Service Health and Safety Trade Union Liaison meetings.

**ECO
H&P**

8. Property Related Health and Safety Issues

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/3/20 by the Acting Property Manager.

During discussion, the following main issues were raised:-

- A budget pressure bid had been prepared and submitted for consideration to improve a range of non compliant areas within the financial year 2020/21. It was advised that this bid for funding would not address all the non compliant areas and there was also a need for staff resources in order that Officers could procure, manage and supervise the work.
- In terms of the Council's non housing related property stock, circa, 1200 buildings, there was a need to produce an up to date schedule of condition on all these properties so that repairs could be prioritised within the resources available to carry out the work. An update on progress with the strategic review of the condition of the Council's non housing property stock would be reported to a future meeting.
- It was emphasised that all property related health and safety concerns by staff should be reported and addressed, as the health and safety and wellbeing of staff and the public was of the utmost importance.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the current levels of non compliance and progress being made;
- ii. that an update on progress with the strategic review of the condition of the Council's non housing property stock would be reported to a future meeting.

**ECO
H&P**

9. Update on Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Guidance

There was circulated Report No. CSC/4/20 by the Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance. The report provided an updated Occupational Health Safety and Wellbeing policy to reflect the new organisational structure.

Following consideration, the Committee:-

- i **APPROVED** the updated policy, plan and guidance; and
- ii **AGREED** that the revised policy is submitted to the Corporate Resources Committee, in line with the agreed Guidance on Health and Safety Consultation.

**OHSW
Manager**

10. Update on Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Issues

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/5/20 by the Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance.

During discussion, the following main issues were raised:-

- it was queried when it was intended to have a system that could assess and manage what the greatest risks were and accident trends. It was explained that a decision had been made to use and develop High Life Highlands Accident database for use within the Council. It was intended that this system would be in place early in the new financial year.
- Concern was expressed regarding the increasing number of violence and aggression incidents in schools and it was queried if this was being reviewed. It was confirmed that the Council did have a large number of incidents, but the severity of them was not too bad. The North of Scotland Council Group was reviewing violence and aggression incidents and The Health and Safety Executive has asked Local Authorities to look at this issue and share best practice with a view to reducing the number of incidents, including RIDDOR reportable incidents across Scotland. It was recognised that these incidents were a common problem across Scotland. Most of the incidents came from Early Years and Primary Groups. Staff were being encouraged to report violence and aggression incidents. It was requested that a report be submitted to the next meeting with a timeline on how the issue of violence and aggression incidents in schools was to be addressed.

The Committee:

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

ii **AGREED** that a report be submitted to the next meeting with a timeline on how the issue of violence and aggression incidents in schools was to be addressed.

**OHSW
Manager**

11. Occupational Health Service Update

**OHSW
Manager**

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/6/20 by the Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance.

During discussion, it was advised that the Staff Side representatives did say to their members that occupational health support was for their benefit. It was therefore disappointing to note that the number of Did Not Attend appointments (DNAs) had increased in the last period. Under the terms of the contract, Iqarus charged the Council for DNAs.

The Committee **NOTED** the Occupational Health activity for the last

three months.

12. Dates for Meetings in 2020

The Committee **APPROVED** the undernoted dates for meetings of the Committee for the remainder of 2020:-

Friday, 1 May; Friday, 14 August, Friday, 13 November

The meeting ended at 3.10 p.m.