

**The Highland Council
Central Safety Committee**

Minutes of Meeting of the **Central Safety Committee** held REMOTELY on **Thursday 3 June, 2021 at 10.30 a.m.**

Present:

Employer's Representatives:

Mr R Gale
Mr J Gray
Mr D Louden
Mr G MacKenzie

Staff Side Representatives:

Mr D Griffiths, GMB
Mr M Hayes, Unison
Mr I Macleman, Unite/Ucatt

In attendance:

Ms L Denovan, Executive Chief Officer, Resources & Finance
Ms E Barrie, Interim Head of HR, Resources & Finance Service
Ms G Falconer, Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager, Resources & Finance Service
Mr T Murdison, Acting Property Manager, Property & Housing Service
Ms T Urry, Infrastructure & Environment Health & Safety Wellbeing Co-ordinator
Mr I Jackson, (substitute for Education and Learning, Health & Safety Wellbeing Co-ordinator)
Mr F MacDonald, Housing and Property, Health & Safety Wellbeing Co-ordinator
Ms D Sutherland, Corporate Resources, Health & Safety Wellbeing Co-ordinator
Mr A Yates, Community Services, Health & Safety Wellbeing Co-ordinator
Mr C Howell, Caithness, Sutherland & Easter Ross, Operational Area Health and Safety Working Group
Mr J Scott, Corporate Improvement Project Manager, Transformation Service
Mr S Skinner, Learning and Development Manager, Education & Learning Service
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Performance & Governance Service

SUBJECT/DECISION

ACTION

1. Appointment of Chair

Following the resignation of Mr A Mackinnon, the Committee were invited to appoint a Chair of the Committee for the remaining term. As the Vice Chair was from the Staff Side, in terms of the remit of the Committee, the Chair to be appointed would be from the Employer's Side.

Mr J Gray was unanimously appointed as Chair of the Committee for the remaining term.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr B Porter - Education and Learning, Health & Safety Wellbeing Co-ordinator and Ms H Ross, CSER, Operational Area Health and Safety Working Group.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. New Ways of Working/Wellbeing Survey Presentation

There were presentations on the New Ways of Working and Wellbeing Survey following which the following main points were raised:-

- By way of clarification there was no asbestos issue in Block A, HQ. There was suspicious material found in the duct in Block A, this was investigated and reported to the Health and Safety Executive and there were no issues. It may be that this was not communicated well enough to those concerned which was something that would be learned for the future.
- It was confirmed that a proactive maintenance contract for ventilation equipment was awarded in January, 2021.
- There was an opportunity with homeworking to open up the workplace to people with disabilities who had found it difficult to get employment. It was suggested that each job should be reviewed to determine who could work from home or not or on a blended home/workplace basis.
- There would be future Wellbeing surveys and Officers would be working with Corporate Communications to ensure that those employees who were not office based get the opportunity and time during working hours to complete the survey.
- Executive Chief Officers were receiving the same information on health, safety, wellbeing and the Employee Assistance Programme as all other staff. The Chief Executive had regular meetings with ECOs and part of this was regarding personal wellbeing. The Senior Leadership Team were also to take part in an ISOS health and safety training course and there would be a follow up event for them to provide feedback and how this translates to health and safety in the Council.
- The Council's flexible working policy and family friendly policies were being reviewed in light of lessons learned from the Covid period to ensure that the Council was supporting staff, and ensuring they had a good work environment.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentations on New Ways of Working and Wellbeing Survey.

**OHSW
Manager
/Corporate
Improve
ment
Project
Manager**

5. Minutes of Last Meeting

There had been circulated Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 9 February, 2021, the terms of which were **APPROVED**.

6. Matters Arising from the Minutes

Homeworking Issues - Reference was made to the minutes of the last meeting where it referred to “documents received recently for completion of home working risk assessments. It was understood that the guidance on homeworking had not been issued prior to Officers being asked to complete the risk assessment”. It was queried if this guidance had now been circulated. It was understood that the guidance had been sent out some time ago and Managers would be able to access the guidance on the Intranet. However, Managers would be reminded of the homeworking guidance as part of communication with them on the New Ways of Working project.

**Interim
Head of
HR/
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:-

Area Health and Safety Groups

- (i) Ross, Skye and Lochaber - 18 March, 2021.
- (ii) Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey - 13 May, 2021; and
- (iii) Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross - 13 May, 2021.

Service Trade Union Health and Safety Liaison Groups

- (iv) Health and Social Care Service – 23 April, 2021;
- (v) Draft Education and Learning Service – 18 February, 2021;
- (vi) Communities and Places Service – 17 March, 2021;
- (vii) Infrastructure and Environment Service – 24 February, 2021;
and
- (viii) Housing and Property Service – 27 May, 2021.

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 general matters were raised:-

- i There was a need for better attendance from Services at Area Health and Safety Group meetings. Health and Safety Co-ordinators were asked to work with Executive Chief Officers and Heads of Service to

**Health &
Safety
Co-
ordinato
rs**

ensure that there were Service representatives at Area Health and Safety Group meetings.

ii Role of the Responsible Premises Officer (RPO) –

A short term working group would be arranged as soon as possible to review the role and function of the RPO and to ensure there were enough RPOs for Council premises. The composition of the Group would comprise representatives from ECOs, Service Representatives and engagement with trade unions. Further, a list of all Council premises where no RPO was in place would be produced in order to understand the scale of the problem of not having enough RPOs. A report on progress would be submitted to a future Committee meeting.

**Head of
Property
/Facilitie
s
Manage
ment**

iii Accident Reporting – there was a recurring issue where trade union representatives had not been notified of some accidents and in some cases they still had not received reports on them. There was a need for access to information on accidents and incidents and while the information management system was key to addressing this issue, it was still being developed after 4 years.

Further, following a request from the Staff Side, a Fire Risk Assessment of premises report would be submitted to a future meeting

**Acting
Property
Manager**

Ross, Skye and Lochaber Minute on 18 March, 2021

i Building Security at Tigh na Sgìre, Portree – it was advised that a work plan had now been agreed and the work had been instructed to Logic.

ii Incidents and Accidents – a member of staff had suffered a heart attack while working on site. The co-worker knew exactly what to do and the patient was taken to hospital for treatment. The actions of co-workers was commended as their timely intervention in this very serious incident resulted in a positive outcome for the patient.

Caithness, Sutherland & Easter Ross Minute of 13 May, 2021

Occupational Health Referrals – it was noted that some staff were not attending OH referrals and that it cost the Council for each non attendance. A view was expressed that the focus should not be on how much the OH costs but on how OH could help the wellbeing of the employees.

Education and Learning Service Minute – 18 February, 2021

The issues of staff being properly trained in the use of cutting equipment in Technical classes and Hand Arm Vibration in the Education and Learning Service would be discussed further by the OHSW Manager, Strategic Lead, Secondary Education and the Education Officer, Resources.

**OHSWM
/Strategi
c Lead,
Second
ary
Educ/Ed
ucation
Officer**

It was noted that 33 staff had been harmed due to over exposure to vibration equipment. It was advised that a Cross Service meeting had been arranged for next week to discuss how hand arm vibration was being managed in each Service. Action Plans for each Service would need to be reviewed and it was intended that these HAVS Action plans would be submitted by each Service to the next meeting of the Committee on 15 September, 2021.

8. Update on Occupational Health Service and EAP Services

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/3/21 by the Interim Head of Human Resources.

In particular, it was welcomed that the Employee Assistance Programme was being well used and there was good feedback on the service provided. The EAP was also available to Elected Members and families of staff.

There were many reasons why people did not attend OH appointments and these needed to be investigated so as to rectify matters. In particular the high number of stress referrals was concerning and needed to be addressed.

It was noted that the Highland Council appeared to have a higher percentage of staff diagnosed with mental health concerns than ISOS's client average. The reasons for this would be discussed with the OH provider.

OHSWM

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the activity for both Occupational Health and EAP activity for the period January to March, 2021.

9. Update on Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Issues

OHSW
Manager

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/4/21 by the Interim Head of Human Resources.

In particular, the Committee acknowledged the long service to the Council of Andy Mactaggart, Health and Safety Adviser. He was primarily the main health and safety support for Education and his wealth of experience would be missed.

Members acknowledged the great work the OHSW team did in assisting the Election team in developing their election risk assessments. The scope of work the OHSW team did was also recognised and it was hoped that the team were back to a full complement of staff soon.

A number of guidance documents had been created or updated to assist Managers and staff in health and safety issues. The Committee were asked to consider these documents and if agreed, to publish them and share with staff. In this respect, in terms of the Partnership Agreement, this was recognised nationally in Scotland, but the Monitoring Protocol and Health and Safety Consultation Policy were out of date and it was highlighted that there was likely to be significant negotiations before the Partnership Agreement was renewed. A meeting was therefore requested to consider these documents.

The Committee:-

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

ii **AGREED** that a meeting would be held comprising the OHSW Manager, Trade Union Representatives and Service Health & Safety Wellbeing Co-ordinators to consider the new and updated Guidance documents referenced in paragraph 8.2 of the report.

OHSW
Manager
/Trade
Union
Reps/Se
rvice
H&S Co-
ordinato
rs

10. Health and Safety Champion

Mr J Gray was unanimously appointed as Health and Safety Champion.

The meeting ended at 12.15 p.m.