

**The Highland Council  
Central Safety Committee**

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

**Present:**

**Employer's Representatives:**

Mr R Gale  
Mr J Gray  
Mr D Louden

**Staff Side Representatives:**

Mr D Griffiths, GMB  
Mr M Hayes, Unison

**In attendance:**

Mr M Jackson, Area Officer, Unite  
Ms L Denovan, Executive Chief Officer, Resources & Finance  
Mr M Rodgers, Executive Chief Officer, Property & Housing  
Ms E Barrie, Head of HR, Resources & Finance Service  
Ms G Falconer, Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager, Resources & Finance Service  
Mr F MacDonald, Property & Housing Health & Safety Wellbeing Co-ordinator  
Mr T Murdison, Property Manager, Property & Housing Service  
Ms T Urry, Infrastructure & Environment Health & Safety Wellbeing Co-ordinator  
Mr J Shepherd, Head of ICT & Digital Transformation  
Mr M Bailey, Team Manager, Transformation  
Ms K Murray, Health & Social Care Health & Safety Wellbeing Co-ordinator  
Mr I Jackson, (substitute) Education and Learning, Health & Safety Wellbeing Co-ordinator  
Ms D Sutherland, Resources & Finance/Performance & Governance/Transformation, Health & Safety Wellbeing Co-ordinator  
Mr A Yates, Community Services, Health & Safety Wellbeing Co-ordinator  
Ms H Ross, CSER, Operational Area Health & 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, Performance & Governance Service

**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 D Louden, seconded by Mr R Gale, moved that Mr J Gray be appointed as Chair. There being no other nominations, Mr J Gray was duly appointed.

Mr D Louden , seconded by Mr J Gray, moved that Mr D Griffiths be appointed as Vice Chair. There being no other nominations, Mr Griffiths was duly appointed.

## **2. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr G Mackenzie, Mr S Mackie of the Employer's Side and Mr I Macleman, Unite/Ucatt of the Staff Side.

## **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 15 September, 2021, the terms of which were **APPROVED**.

## **5. Matters Arising from the Minutes**

Housing and Property Minute 14 July, 2021– it was confirmed that there had been 33 cases of hand-arm vibration syndrome (HAVS) reported in the last 4 years within the Council (and not the Service as had been stated in the Minute).

Serious Assaults at Inverness High School – it was noted that there had been no response as yet to a letter sent to Police Scotland seeking an update on action taken into these incidents. A reminder would be sent.

**Clerk**

## **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:-

### **Area Health and Safety Groups**

- (i) Ross, Skye and Lochaber – 16 September, 2021.
- (ii) Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey – 11 November, 2021;
- (iii) Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross – 11 November, 2021.

## Service Trade Union Health and Safety Liaison Groups

- (iv) Health and Social Care Service – 8 October, 2021;
- (v) Education and Learning Service – 23 September & 4 November, 2021;
- (vi) Resources & Finance/Performance & Governance/Transformation Services – 29 September, 2021;
- (vii) Infrastructure, Environment & Economy Services – 6 October, 2021;
- (viii) Communities and Places Service – 1 October, 2021;
- (ix) Housing and Property Service – 29 September, 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 it was again disappointing to note that there was a need for better attendance from Services at Area Health and Safety Group meetings. There was consistent non attendance from some Services at these meetings. It did not have to be the Service Health and Safety Co-ordinator that attended, but anyone from the Service who worked in that area. In particular, there was a requirement for a property representative at Area meetings.

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It was advised that the H&S Co-ordinator for Resources & Finance/Performance & Governance/Transformation Services had raised this issue at their Service meeting and there was an action to have representatives attending the 3 Area Health and Safety Group meetings in future.

A diary of Area meeting dates and deadlines for reports would be placed on the health and safety intranet site and should be used by Service H&S Co-ordinators to co-ordinate Service representatives attendance at meetings.

**OHSW  
Manager  
/Service  
H&S  
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ii Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey Area Minutes – reference was made to the issue of evening access to Culloden Academy. This had also been discussed at the Education and Learning Service Trade Union Health and Safety Liaison Group. This was another example of duplication of work between the Service Group and Area Groups and should be addressed. It was advised that Agendas for Area and Service meetings would be placed on the health and safety Intranet Site so that duplication of agenda items could be avoided.

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Manager  
/H&S  
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iii a point was made that some issues raised at Area Meetings had not been addressed by the Central Safety Committee. It was advised that there had been good work undertaken by the Committee and that some issues could take a substantial amount of time to resolve. Service and

Area Health and Safety representatives should feedback discussions from this Committee to their Service/Area Groups.

Further, Service/Area Minutes should reflect when actions were raised and completed. Also, currently in terms of the Health and Safety guidance on consultation if an action was on the Service/Area agenda for 3 meetings then this should be escalated. This timescale would be discussed with H&S co-ordinators and trade union representatives in the new year when reviewing health and safety documents to reflect Covid-19 and new ways of working.

**H&S Co-ordinators**

**OHSW Manager**

iv Responsible Premises Officers (RPO)– it was advised that there was now some funding available for RPO vacancies and Services would be consulted on options to address this long standing issue. There was also discussion ongoing to support and improve the RPO function in schools.

v Building Security – it was advised that following recent terrorist incidents, the terrorist threat had moved to severe which meant an attack was likely. The Resilience team had been asked to review the Council’s graduated security plan.

vi hand-arm vibration syndrome (HAVS) – it had been highlighted previously that staff within building maintenance were still using their own tools at work and it was queried if this had now been addressed. It was confirmed that staff should not be using their own tools and a budget was available and staff should contact their Manager if tools were required.

vii HGV Drivers –In relation to retaining and attracting HGV drivers to the Council this had been considered and a way forward agreed at a recent meeting of the Executive Leadership Team.

viii – Safe use of woodworking machinery – there was training available from the Scottish Schools Education Research Council on the safe use in technical classes of woodworking machinery, but the cost of providing this was too expensive. The advice was that if staff had not been trained then they should not be using machinery. The possibility of UHI delivering training courses or the Council itself becoming a training provider would be considered. An update on these options for training would be provided at the next meeting.

**H& S Co-ordinator Education**

ix – Violent incident statistics – there had been issues around the collection of data, particularly the definition of use of a weapon. There was a huge difference between a knife and a piece of foam and yet both were recorded under the same category. It was advised that a Health and Safety Adviser would engage with Managers and trade union representatives to review violence and aggression reporting in Education and Health and Social Care.

x – Annual leave requests – in relation to the issue of annual leave entitlement being denied, it was queried if this issue had been addressed as it was important for all employees to have their annual leave. It was advised that a staff communication would be issued reminding staff of the importance of taking their annual leave and staff would be allowed to carry forward leave into the new leave year.

xi – Tigh na Sgìre – there had been a plan pre the Covid pandemic to enhance security. However, there was a need to understand how the building would be used in the return to work before any work was undertaken. Further, the roof to the building was in a poor condition and an assessment of the repairs required was to be undertaken prior to any enhancements being made to security arrangements.

## **7. Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policies**

There had been circulated Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policies for the Health Social Care Service (Report No. CSC/9/21); Communities and Place (Report No. CSC/10/21) and Depute Chief Executive, Performance & Governance, Resources & Finance Service (Report No. CSC/11/21).

In particular, it was confirmed that new employees received a health and safety induction.

The Staff Side advised that there was a Health and Safety Partnership Agreement between the Council and Staff Side. The basis of the agreement was the Corporate Health and Safety Policy and supported by individual Service Health and Safety Policies as submitted to this meeting. The partnership agreement which had been in place for 15 years had not been signed off by the Staff Side over the last 2 years. The reason that the agreement had not been renewed mainly related to issues within the Corporate Health and Safety Policy. Additions to this policy had been suggested by the Staff Side in order for the agreement to be renewed. However, this had not been done and neither were changes made to Service Policies. Therefore, it was suggested that the Service policies be put on hold until the Corporate Health and Safety Policy is amended or clarification of why the amendments suggested by the Staff Side had not been included. The main issues highlighted related to:-

- a) The monitoring and consultation policy had not been reviewed since 2014 and did not reflect the current Service structure;
- b) In order for trade union safety representatives to undertake their statutory functions, they should be informed of accidents

within the Council and there was no mention of this in the policies;

- c) Align the Council's escalation process to that of the Health and Safety Executive escalation process.

The Committee were supportive of the Staff Sides comments and that they should be incorporated into the Corporate Health and Safety Policy and Services Health and Safety Policies.

It was advised that various health and safety documents such as the Corporate Health and Safety Policy would be reviewed and Service Health and Safety Co-ordinators and trade union representatives would be consulted on this. These documents would then be submitted to the next meeting of this Committee for approval.

In terms of accident reporting, it was intended that an integrated Health and Safety Management System would enable employees to easily record accidents/incidents, but there had been a delay in developing the system.

It was recognised that the Health and Safety team were under-resourced and efforts continued to be made to recruit 3 Health and Safety Adviser posts, but it was challenging to find staff with the specific skills required for these posts.

The Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance undertook to liaise with Officers across all Services to address some of the issues raised at the meeting as there should be a one Council approach to resolving health and safety issues.

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Following further discussion, the Committee **AGREED:-**

i that the Corporate Health and Safety Policy would be reviewed and would include the Staff Side's comments on it raised at the meeting. The Policy would thereafter be submitted to the next meeting for approval.

**OHSWM**

ii that the Service Health and Safety Policies be approved, subject to them being amended at a later date to reflect changes made to the Corporate Health and Safety Policy;

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iii to support efforts to recruit to the 3 vacant posts of Health and Safety Adviser; and

iv to support an integrated Health and Safety Management System being developed as a priority.

**8. Guidance on Managing Long Covid**

**OHSWM**

There was circulated Report No. CSC/12/21 by the Head of HR which provided new guidance for staff and managers on managing staff who develop long covid.

It was highlighted that absence for Long Covid would be treated as special paid leave for up to the first 12 weeks and thereafter it would be treated as standard sick pay in line with conditions of service. At present the number of staff diagnosed with Long Covid was low. The guidance would regularly be reviewed in line with further guidance which may be issued by Cosla or other national guidance.

The Committee **APPROVED** the guidance document and plan.

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

**OHSWM**

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/13/21 by the Head of HR which provided an update on health and safety issues and developments for the Council.

It was highlighted that there was a LEAN review in progress into the Fire Risk Assessment process and an initial report produced. A meeting would be held soon to discuss the initial findings and implications of the review.

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

**10. Update on Occupational Health and EAP Services**

**OHSWM**

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/14/21 by the Head of HR which provided an update on the work of the occupational health service and EAP for the period July – September, 2021.

In particular, it was advised that there was a high number of cases of staff mental health issues. It was encouraging that staff were engaging with the EAP and/or their Managers and were being referred to Occupational Health for further support and advice.

The occupational health report had not been available for issuing at this meeting, but if received, it would be circulated to the Committee before the next meeting. It was proposed that a presentation from OH on their analysis of mental health referrals is requested for the next meeting which would include a comparison with other Local Authorities.

The Committee **NOTED** the activity for both Occupational Health and the EAP for July – September, 2021.

## 11. Property Related Health and Safety Issues

The Staff Side sought clarification on the consultation process for projects. The Staff Side would like to see Project Managers engage with the trade union safety representatives on projects in order that they could comment on any health and safety issues affecting staff.

It was confirmed that there was a process in place to engage with trade union safety representatives and stakeholders on projects although it was acknowledged that this had not worked in relation to the Culloden Academy project. However, the Staff Side representative advised that he had never been formally consulted on any projects and an undertaking was given to discuss with the Staff Side on the engagement process on capital projects. In this respect a copy of the Council's capital programme would be shared with the Staff Side so that they could decide on what projects they would like to be involved in.

The Committee **AGREED** that the Health & Safety Co-ordinator Property and Housing would liaise with the Staff Side on the engagement process on capital projects, with an update provided at the next meeting.

**H&S Co-ordinator  
Property  
/Housing**

## 12. Dates of Meetings 2022

The Committee **APPROVED** the following dates for meetings of the Committee in 2022:-

Friday, 4 February  
Friday, 9 September  
Friday, 2 December

**All  
Committee  
Members**

The meetings would commence at 10.30 a.m.

The meeting ended at 12.30 p.m.