

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Central Safety Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on **Friday 17 March 2023 at 10.30 am.**

**Present:**

**Employer's Representatives:**

Mr R Gale  
Mr D Louden  
Mr P Oldham

**Staff Side Representatives:**

Mr A Bell, LNCT  
Mr M Hayes, UNISON  
Mr I Macleman, UNITE/UCATT

**In attendance:**

Mr M Rodgers, ECO Housing & Property  
Ms E Barrie, Interim Head of People, Resources & Finance Service  
Ms G Falconer (**GF**), Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager, Resources & Finance Service  
Mr I Jackson (**IJ**), (substitute) Education & Learning, Health & Safety Wellbeing Co-ordinator  
Mr F MacDonald (**FM**), Property & Housing, Health & Safety Wellbeing Co-ordinator  
Mr T Murdison, Property Manager, Housing & Property  
Mr R MacLeod, Service Lead, Housing Investment/Building Maintenance, H&P  
Mrs F Malcolm (**FMalc**), Health & Social Care Health & Safety Wellbeing Co-ordinator.  
Ms T Urry (**TU**), Infrastructure & Environment, Health & Safety Wellbeing Co-ordinator  
Ms D Sutherland (**DS**), Resources & Finance/Performance & Governance/Depute CEX Services, Health & Safety Wellbeing Co-ordinator  
Ms H Ross, CSER, Operational Area Health & Safety Working Group  
Mr A Yates (**AY**), Communities & Place Service, Health & Safety Wellbeing Co-ordinator  
Mr W Mackinnon, Ross, Skye and Lochaber, Operational Area Health and Safety Working Group.  
Mr A MacInnes, Committee Officer, Performance & Governance Service

Item No.	<u>SUBJECT/DECISION</u>	Action
1.	<p><b>Apologies for Absence</b></p> <p>Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of :- Mr B Lobban, Mr C Munro of the Employer's Side; Mr D Griffiths, GMB of the Staff Side; Mr W Munro, Inverness, Nairn and Badenoch &amp; Strathspey Operational Area Health and Safety Working Group and Mrs A MacPherson, Education &amp; Learning, Health &amp; Safety Wellbeing Co-ordinator.</p>	
2.	<p><b>Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement</b></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>	

### 3. Minutes of Last Meeting

There had been circulated Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 2 December, 2022, the terms of which were **APPROVED**.

### 4. Matters Arising from the Minutes

i Representation at Service trade union liaison meetings – there had been confirmation from some Services that they had nominated representatives to attend Area trade union liaison meetings. The Occupational, Health, Safety & Wellbeing Manager undertook to contact the Chairs of these Groups to ensure that they have a representative attend Central Safety Committee meeting. **GF**

ii Additional Support Needs (ASN) provision – a separate meeting was to have been arranged for Councillor R Gale and Mr M Hayes, Unison with the Head of Secondary to discuss the ASN formulae used in schools. This meeting had not yet been held and an undertaking was given to arrange the meeting as soon as possible. Mr A Bell, EIS was also to be invited. Reference was made to a report submitted to the Education & Learning Committee on 15 February, 2023 on 'Supporting Learners' which set out the Education Services new vision on ASN resources. A copy of the report would be circulated to Committee Members. **IJ**

iii Thurso High School, Closure of Block A due to Structural Concerns - it was advised that internal steel propping was being installed to Block A to provide additional support to the building. Structural Engineers would carry out further invasive inspections of beams and columns and they would then produce a report on the future economic options for Block A. Modular units were to be installed by the end of the Summer holiday period to accommodate staff and pupils that had been displaced as a result of this closure. A further update would be provided at the next meeting and local Elected Members were being kept informed of the situation. **FM**

### 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:-

#### Area Health and Safety Groups

- (i) ;Ross, Skye and Lochaber – 2 March, 2023;
- (ii) Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey – 1 March, 2023 ;
- (iii) Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross – 23 February, 2023

#### Service Trade Union Health and Safety Liaison Groups

- (iv) Health and Social Care Service – 20 December, 2022;
- (v) Communities and Places Service – 15 December, 2023;
- (vi) Education & Learning – 16 February, 2023
- (vii) Infrastructure & Environment – 27 January, 2023
- (viii) Performance & Governance, Resources & Finance and Depute Chief Executive Services – 15 December, 2022.

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 Ross, Skye and Lochaber minutes - It was highlighted that there had been good attendance at the meeting from Services. The temporary roof repairs at Tigh na Sgìre had been completed and CCTV had been installed. The site specific traffic management plan for Carr's Corner depot had, at the time of the meeting, not been completed.

In terms of the Carr's Corner traffic management issue, the Interim ECO Infrastructure & Environment would liaise with the Roads Manager on this. This was a busy and congested site and the Council were making enquiries as to whether land adjacent to the site was for sale so as to expand the site.

**TU**

The lack of First Aiders had been raised as a concern. In this respect, the lack of First Aiders and Fire Wardens was linked to the bigger issue of not having Responsible Premises Officers (RPOs) in some buildings. The Occupational, Health, Safety & Wellbeing Manager and the Head of Property & Facilities Management had been tasked by the Executive Leadership Team to undertake work on this and an update would be provided at the next meeting.

**GF/FM**

Managers should ensure they have First Aiders and Fire Wardens for all premises and that retraining was carried out. Training was available for both First Aiders and Fire Wardens. If First Aiders/Fire Wardens were hybrid working, then interim arrangements should be in place when they were not at the premises. The Occupational, Health, Safety & Wellbeing Manager undertook to write to Service Health & Safety Co-ordinators to confirm who the First Aiders/Fire Wardens were for their Service at each location. The Health & Safety Co-ordinators Group would assist in providing this information and identify locations where there were shortfalls in First Aider/Fire Warden cover and where retraining was required. An action plan to address shortfalls in cover and training would be produced and an update would be provided at a future meeting.

**GF**

**Service  
Co-  
ordinators**

Service Co-ordinators were also requested to have this issue on the agenda for their Senior Management team and Service Trade Union Health and Safety meetings.

**Service  
Co-  
ordinators**

ii Caithness, Sutherland & Easter Ross -

There had been a reasonable mixed attendance from Services at this meeting which was welcomed. Similar issues/concerns as above had been discussed at this meeting relating to First Aiders/Fire Wardens/RPOs.

Training on the new Assure system (to report accidents, incidents & near misses) was available for anyone requiring this. The system should also be used by Schools.

iii Health & Social Care Service – Similar issues/concerns had been discussed in terms of First Aiders/Fire Wardens/RPOs and work was being undertaken to address these issues. Service area representatives had been identified and would attend Area Trade Union Health & Safety Liaison meetings.

A formal policy was required for the use of Naloxone nasal spray, which was an emergency treatment during drug overdose cases, so there was a standard approach to its use.

**FMalc**

iv Communities and Place – There had been good attendance at the meeting and issues highlighted from discussion at the meeting included depots; Service representation at Area trade union health & safety liaison meetings; the new accident/incident reporting system Assure.

It was highlighted that the App for the new Assure system could be downloaded onto a smartphone and there was no cost to this. Not all staff would have a smartphone, and in these cases, staff should report an accident/incident to their Line Manager as soon as possible.

In terms of portable appliance testing (PAT), the Cleaning & Facilities Manager would take on this process and additional resources were being sought to do this. PAT was a significant task given the thousands of electrical items the Council had and it would be an ongoing process. There was a legal requirement on the user of an electrical item to check equipment before they use it, no training was required for this and guidance had been issued. This guidance would be reissued to Service Co-ordinators for disseminating the information to their Services.

**GF/Service  
Co-  
ordinators**

An undertaking was given to put this issue on the agenda at the next meeting of the Corporate Risk Management Group, so that the Group could consider including PAT testing on the Corporate Risk Register. The outcome of this would be reported to a future meeting.

**DS/GF**

v Performance & Governance, Resources & Finance & Depute Chief Executive Services

It was highlighted that incident reporting training had been completed and Health and Safety Plans had still to be updated.

vi Education

Training for the safe use of woodworking machinery was proving more difficult than expected due to staff leaving. Another meeting with the Scottish Schools Education Research Centre and also with the UHI would be arranged. .

The new Assure System (for accident/incident reporting) in Schools

was working well.

The Staff Side referred to a survey they had undertaken on incidents of violence and aggression in Schools which had a significant response. The results would be submitted to a LNCT meeting. A significant number of respondents believed that the Authority were not doing enough to support Teachers on this issue which was concerning. It was advised that the Partnership for Health and Safety Representatives Scotland were looking at violence and aggression across the public sector and there was a short life working Group with other Local Authorities to share best practice. Further the Health and Safety Executive were to update their advice and information on violence and aggression in the workplace. Information on this issue would be brought back to this Committee in due course.

**GF**

In terms of solar panels, it was noted that roof mounted solar panels had been disconnected as there was a potential shock hazard to Scottish Fire and Rescue staff. A solution was currently being sought.

#### vii Infrastructure & Environment

It was highlighted that a pest control issue at Carr's Corner depot had been discussed and actions to address this were identified. Also, safe working for Road Operatives had been raised by the Staff Side representatives. An annual temporary speed limit order had been put in place to protect the workforce and this was introduced when necessary. However, legal advice was that this may no longer be appropriate and a second legal opinion was being sought.

There had been some Gritter fires whilst the vehicles were stationary. An investigation into the cause of the fires found that there was a risk that some circuits in the vehicles could still be live even when the vehicles were switched off. The recommendation was for an isolator switch to be fitted which had now been completed and training provided to crews of these vehicles.

It was highlighted that some of these vehicles had been modified and this may be an issue and a briefing on this by the Fleet Manager for the ECO Infrastructure & Environment would be arranged.

**AY**

Continuing, a leased refuse vehicle had caught fire on the Drumnadrochit road and this was under investigation and an update would be provided to the next meeting.

**AY**

### **6. Update on Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Issues**

There was circulated Report No. CSC/1/23 by the Interim Head of People which provided an update on health and safety issues and developments for the Highland Council. A summary of the report was provided by the Occupational, Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager.

It was highlighted that 2 vacancies in the health and safety team were

being re-advertised and a review of delivery of the team's services was being carried out. A point was made that if the Council was committed to health and safety then it needed to have the staff resources to properly carry out these functions and to implement the Occupational, Health, Safety and Wellbeing Plan. The Committee were supportive of these vacancies, which had been vacant for some time, being filled as soon as possible. It was felt that it was a risk to the Council if these posts were not filled and this should be considered by the Corporate Risk Management Group.

Thanks were extended to trade union health and safety representatives for their work. These representatives worked closely with the Health and Safety team and also provided a role in encouraging other trade union members to become trained trade union health and safety representatives.

The Committee:-

- i **NOTED** the updated information on health, safety and wellbeing issues and developments contained in the report;
- ii **NOTED** the updates to the Occupational Health, Safety & Wellbeing Plan; and
- iii **AGREED** to support the filling of the two advertised vacancies in the Occupational, Health, Safety and Wellbeing team as soon as possible. The Committee considered it was a risk to the Council if these posts remain unfilled and asked that the Corporate Risk Management Group consider including this risk in the Corporate Risk Register.

**GF/DS**

## **7. Update on Occupational Health, Safety and Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) Services**

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/2/23 by the Interim Head of People which provided an update on the work of the occupational, health, safety and employee assistance programme services.

It was highlighted that the contract for the EAP service had been extended by one year which was good news. A procurement exercise for the provision of occupational health services resulted in no bids being received. Work was ongoing to establish a new provider by the end of March, 2023.

The Staff Side advised that some of the savings identified by the Council included trying to get employees, who were off on long term sickness absence, back to work. Therefore, not having an Occupational Health provider in place would have significant consequences in trying to get employees back to work. Those employees may eventually also incur a loss in wages through no fault of their own, if the Council could not provide occupational health services. The Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager shared these concerns and would be willing to discuss these further with trade unions out with the meeting.

**GF**

The Committee **NOTED** the activity for both Occupational Health for the period November 2022 to January 2023 and the Employee Assistance Programme for Quarter 3, 2022/23.

## 8. **Property Related Health and Safety Issues**

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/3/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

In particular, an update was provided in relation to HSE notifications of contravention in relation to the control of asbestos; supervision of water management activities on PPP2 school sites and gym equipment.

It was highlighted that there was a considerable amount of work involved in addressing HSE notifications of contravention. Concern was expressed regarding the Council having received 4 HSE notifications of contravention and the Committee were of the view that there was a need for more staff resources in the Property service to manage and maintain properties in order to prevent receiving HSE contraventions.

The Committee:-

i **NOTED** the current levels of compliance and progress being made; and  
ii **AGREED** to support more staff resources in the Property Service to address the HSE notifications of contravention and to prevent further contraventions happening in future.

The meeting concluded at 12.25pm