

**The Highland Council
Joint Consultation Group's Central Safety Committee**

Minutes of Meeting of the Joint Consultation Group's Central Safety Committee held in Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Friday, 12 December 2008 at 12.20 p.m.

Present

Employer's Representatives:

Mrs C A Wilson
Mr M Rattray
Mrs J Urquhart (substitute)

Mr J Ford
Mr A Henderson

Staff Side Representatives:

Mr T McCarthy, UNITE
Mr S Burroughs, UNISON

Mr S Manning, UNISON (substitute)
Mr G MacDonald, UCATT

Officials in attendance:

Ms M Morris, Assistant Chief Executive
Mr J Batchelor, Head of Personnel, Chief Executive's Service
Mr A Williams, Health and Safety Manager, Chief Executive's Service
Ms C Christie, Employee Development Manager, Chief Executive's Service
Mr M Halley, Fire Safety Management Officer, Housing and Property Service
Mr I Burnett, Representative of City of Inverness Health & Safety Group
Dr N Lindsay, Representative of Sutherland & Easter Ross Area Health & Safety Working Group
Mr J Sneddon, Representative of Lochaber Health and Safety Working Group
Mr C Stein, GMB (observer)
Mr N Wallace, Service Health & Safety Manager, Transport, Environmental & Community Services
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Chief Executive's Service

Mrs C A Wilson in the Chair

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr J Finnie from the Employer's Side and Mr G Reynolds and Mr A Wemyss from the Staff Side.

2. Minutes of Last Meeting

There had been circulated for confirmation the Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 19 September, 2008 - the terms of which were

AGREED.

3. Minutes of Area Health and Safety Groups

There had been circulated for information the following Minutes of Area Health and Safety Groups:-

- i Lochaber Health and Safety Working Group - 27 August, 2008,
- ii Nairn & Badenoch & Strathspey Joint Health & Safety Working Group -11 September, 2008;
- iii Caithness Health and Safety Working Group - 26 August, 2008;
- iv City of Inverness Health and Safety Working Group - 19 November, 2008;
- v Eilean A' Cheo Ward Health and Safety Meeting – 17 September, 2008;
- vi Sutherland & Easter Ross Area Health and Safety Consultation Group - 4 December, 2008.

The Committee **NOTED** the terms of the minutes.

Arising from the minutes the following matters were raised:

- i Lochaber Health & Safety Working Group – (item 3) – “Mobile Phone Use – Occupational Road Risk” – The Committee **NOTED** concerns of poor mobile phone coverage in the Lochaber area and potential implications for staff should any emergencies occur.
- ii Lochaber Health & Safety Working Group Minute (Item 5) – Fort William Service Point, Lochaber House – it was reported that expenditure had now been approved for works to the Fort William Service Point located in Lochaber House. It was **AGREED** that the Corporate Manager (Ross, Skye & Lochaber) would be asked to inform the Lochaber Area Health & Safety Committee Representative, when these works would proceed.

4. Health and Safety Review

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/11/08 dated 3 December, 2008 by the Assistant Chief Executive which provided an update on the review of the provision of health and safety services.

The Committee was advised that Health and Safety advisory services and operational issues including policy development, audits, inspections and training were currently undertaken by the Chief Executive's Health and Safety Team; TEC Services Training and Health and Safety Unit, and Housing and Property Services Contracts (PPP and Risk Management) team. It was acknowledged that the establishment of a Corporate Health, Safety and Wellbeing team could lead to benefits and efficiency.

The establishment of a new corporate Health and Safety Team had been discussed amongst Senior Officials who generally approved the proposals, subject to clarification of a number of issues. It was confirmed that full consultation would take place with trade unions and staff affected.

In response to questions from the Staff Side, the Head of Personnel confirmed that the Health and Safety Executive had been notified of the proposals. It was intended that implementation of the proposals would commence from April, 2009. The proposals were intended to improve the current health and safety provision within the Council and not diminish it.

The Staff Side appreciated the fact that they would be fully consulted on the proposals. They were also keen to see current expertise retained in the new structure and advised that staff were generally in support of the health and safety review.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** progress towards a Corporate Health, Safety and Wellbeing team and that there would be full consultation with trade unions and staff affected by the proposals.

5. Work Positive – Stress Risk Assessment

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/12/08 dated 2 December, 2008 by the Assistant Chief Executive which provided an update on progress of the roll-out of stress risk assessments for workplace stress using the Work Positive questionnaire and analysis.

The Committee were informed that it had been agreed to roll-out stress risk assessments within the Council using the Work Positive assessment tool. It had also been agreed to identify and support appropriate groups within Services to undertake stress risk assessments using Work Positive. A Stress Management Steering Group was to be set up, chaired by the Assistant Chief Executive, to monitor progress and action plans.

Progress so far was advised as – Staff groups identified to receive the Work Positive questionnaire: 5 Services; Questionnaires issued and returned: 4 Services; Results analysed: 3 Services. Having identified the stressors and hazards through the questionnaire, the risk assessment required actions to be agreed to prevent or minimise the stressors. Each group would produce an action plan, which would be agreed by their Service Management Team. Action Plans would also be reported to the Stress Management Steering Group so that progress across the Council could be monitored.

In discussion, it was noted that the Chief Executive's Service had been part of the initial pilot scheme, and it was intended that Service Points/Registration Offices within the Chief Executive's Service would receive the Work Positive questionnaire again. It was also suggested that all Receptionists/Front Line staff in the Chief Executive's Service should receive the Work Positive questionnaire. An issue of the lack of back up

support for the Receptionist at the Town House, Inverness was also raised, and it was suggested that the Corporate Manager (Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey) should be asked to look at this.

Thereafter, the Committee:

- i **NOTED** the progress of stress risk assessment in the Council;
- ii **NOTED** the intention for Service Points/Registration Offices within the Chief Executive's Service to receive the Work Positive questionnaire;
- iii **AGREED** that all Receptionists/Front line staff in Chief Executive's Service should receive the Work Positive questionnaire; and
- iv **AGREED** that the Corporate Manager (Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey) should look at the issue of back up support for the Receptionist at the Town House, Inverness, as it had been suggested that there was a lack of support for this postholder.

6. Practical Fire Extinguisher Training

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/13/08 dated 1 December, 2008 by the Head of Personnel which outlined the proposals for the delivery of practical Fire Extinguisher Training as required by legislation and the Highlands and Islands Fire Service.

It was reported that on an assessment of risk, the Fire Safety Management Officer had recommended certain groups (detailed in the report) be determined as "key staff" for training purposes. In total it was estimated that 1726 staff would require fire extinguisher training, including Social Work staff whom alternative training proposals had originally been proposed, but now were included in the programme. The Highland and Islands Fire Service had indicated that they would expect the Council to have 25% of key staff trained by the end of the next financial year (March 2010).

In relation to training costs, it had been estimated that training would be delivered over three years and quotations had been sought up until 2010. Three providers were approached in addition to a quotation for an in-house option. Based on a cost comparison, it was proposed that Moray Fire Safety Ltd provide the practical fire extinguisher training.

In discussion, it was advised that the first training sessions would commence end February/March, 2009 and Directors would supply names of employees, based on the categories of "key staff" for training purposes. An analysis of the various quotations had shown that the in-house option was not the cheapest. However, in light of suggestions raised at the meeting, it was felt that the Assistant Chief Executive and the Director of Housing and Property should be asked to re-examine the in-house quotation to see if the training could be provided any cheaper.

Thereafter, the Committee:

- i **AGREED** in principle to the proposed appointment of Moray Fire Safety Ltd, as the training provider for practical fire extinguisher training, subject to confirmation from the Director of Housing and Property that the training could not be delivered in-house cheaper than the price quoted by Moray Fire Safety Ltd; and
- ii **NOTED** the proposals for implementation.

7. Update on Current Health and Safety Issues

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/14/08 dated 25 November, 2008 by the Head of Personnel providing an update on several current health and safety issues and developments.

During a summary of the report information was provided on:-

- i Policy – It was advised that a cross-service working group had been established to develop Highland Council Policy and operational guidance on Reducing Work Related Driving Risk. The second meeting of this Group had been poorly attended. It was therefore stressed that a good attendance was required in order to hear constructive comments from all Services affected by this. The next meeting of the Group was to be held in early March, 2009, and it was intended to submit a draft policy and guidance to the Joint Consultation Group in June, 2009.

It was noted that the Health and Safety Management Monitoring Protocol document had been posted on the health and safety website.

- ii Lotland Street Depot – a site visit and inspection tour had taken place after the last meeting of the Committee, with the purpose of determining the extent of remedial work undertaken at the depot. It was agreed that a satisfactory standard of health and safety compliance had been achieved at the depot. Further monitoring would take place to ensure that this standard was maintained.
- iii Drummuie Council Offices – safety issues at Drummuie Council offices, Golspie had been raised at previous meetings. In this respect, the Corporate Manager for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross had provided an update report in respect of the issues.

In particular, it was noted that problems with draughts through the windows at Drummuie Council Offices were being addressed by Housing and Property Services. With reference to the concern that the Reception area at Drummuie was originally laid out to accommodate one person, and that staff were concerned about personal safety because of this, it was suggested that the Director of Housing and Property be asked to look at this issue and any other similar situations across the Council.

The Representative of Sutherland & Easter Ross Area Health & Safety Working Group thanked the Committee for raising the profile of the health and safety issues that required to be addressed at Drumbuie. He was pleased to report that significant progress had been made in this respect.

- iv Moving and Handling – it was reported that the post of Moving and Handling Co-ordinator had been advertised twice but did not attract any suitable applicants. The post would be re-advertised early in the New Year and consideration was being given to seconding an employee from Social Work in the interim pending a permanent appointment.

It was suggested that Moving and Handling training should be carried out in conjunction with Fire Extinguisher training, particularly in rural areas, in order to keep costs to a minimum. The Employee Development Manager undertook to look at this possibility.

- v Annual Report – it was noted that the Highland Council Annual Health and Safety Report would be presented to Resources Committee on 18 February, 2009. It covered the period from 1 April, 2007 to 31 March, 2008 and included details of accident statistics and progress against the government Revitalising Health and Safety Targets. The report would also be submitted to the next Joint Consultation Group and Central Safety Committee meetings in March, 2009.
- vi Violent Incident Database – it was advised that progress had been made towards introducing an electronic system for recording violent incidents to allow information on such incidents to be shared between Services. It was anticipated that following training for key staff, the system should be available by April, 2009.

Thereafter, the Committee:

- i **NOTED** the updated information on health and safety issues and developments contained in the report;
- ii **NOTED** that the problems with draughts through the windows at Drumbuie Council Offices was being addressed by Housing and Property Services;
- iii **AGREED** that concerns relating to the layout at Reception areas and issues of personal safety arising therefrom would be relayed to the Director of Housing and Property; and
- iv **AGREED** that the Employee Development Manager would ascertain whether it was possible to undertake Moving and Handling training in conjunction with Fire Extinguisher Training, particularly in rural areas.

8. Health and Safety Partnership Agreement and Safety Representatives Charter

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/15/08 dated 21 November, 2008 by the Head of Personnel which proposed the adoption of a revised Health and Safety Partnership Agreement with the recognised Trade Unions and an updated version of the Safety Representatives Charter.

It was advised that the new Health and Safety Partnership Agreement would cover the period from 1 April, 2008 to 31 March, 2011. The new agreement sought to build on the success of the previous agreements by continuing to support the development of an increased network of trained Trade Union Safety Representatives. The Safety Representatives Charter had also been revised and updated to reflect the recent changes in the Council's Management Structure.

Following consideration, the Committee:

- i **APPROVED** the Health and Safety Partnership Agreement and Safety Representatives Charter; and
- ii **NOTED** that appropriate representatives would be invited to sign both documents on behalf of the recognised trade unions.

9. Dates for Meetings in 2009

The Committee **NOTED** the undernoted meeting dates for its meetings in 2009:

Friday, 6 March
Friday, 26 June
Friday, 18 September
Friday, 11 December

The meeting ended at 1.10 p.m.