

**The Highland Council  
Central Safety Committee**

Minutes of Meeting of the **Central Safety Committee** held REMOTELY on **Wednesday 15 September, 2021 at 10.30 a.m.**

**Present:**

**Employer's Representatives:**

Mr R Gale  
Mr D Louden

**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, Property Manager, Property & Housing Service  
Ms T Urry, Infrastructure & Environment Health & Safety Wellbeing Co-ordinator  
Mr B Porter, Education and Learning, 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  
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 Interim Chair**

In the absence of the Chairman and the Vice Chairman who was unable to Chair due to health reasons, Mr D Louden was unanimously appointed as Chair of the Committee for this meeting.

**2. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr J Gray, Mr G Mackenzie, Mr S Mackie of the Employer's Side; Mr M Rodgers ECO Property and Housing and Mr C Howell, Caithness, Sutherland & Easter Ross, Operational Area Health and Safety Working Group.

### 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 3 June, 2021, the terms of which were **APPROVED**.

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

Responsible Premises Officer (RPO) – it was advised that the New Ways of Working Group had been asked to encourage Managers who were in the Hub offices to stand for RPO. The RPO manual was to be updated and issued for consultation again. Also, a short term working group was to review the role and function of the RPO. There were still buildings that did not have an RPO and in this respect it was advised that there was now an Interim RPO for Caithness House.

Accident Reporting – there had been a recurring issue where trade union representatives had not been notified of some accidents and it was queried if any progress on this had been made. It was advised that an initial meeting was held with Service Health & Safety Wellbeing Co-ordinators and Trade Unions on this. A further meeting was to be held at which the role of Service Health Safety and Wellbeing Co-ordinators and Trade Union Health and Safety Representatives would be discussed.

### 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 - 17 June, 2021.
- (ii) Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey - 19 August, 2021;
- (iii) Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross - 26 August, 2021.

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

- (iv) Health and Social Care Service – 23 July, 2021;
- (v) Education and Learning Service – 10 June, 2021;
- (vi) Infrastructure and Environment Service – 30 June, 2021;
- (vii) Communities and Places Service – 23 June, 2021;
- (viii) Housing and Property Service – 14 July, 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. 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.

**H&S Co-ordinators**

ii CSER Minutes

Incident alerts in Drummie – there was not a current requirement for panic alarms as people were not being brought into the building. There would be a review once the return to offices was progressed.

Drummie back store – issues relating to this were being addressed.

Health & Safety Advisor – 3 posts were to be advertised, which included 2 additional Health and Safety Adviser posts. It had been difficult to fill these posts but efforts would continue to do so.

iii Health and Social Care Minutes – the Health Social Care Health and Safety Policy would be submitted to the next meeting.

**HSC H&S Co-ordinator**

iv Education & Learning Minutes – it was noted that there had been 2 serious assaults and 1 serious threat on staff recently at Inverness High School from persons outwith the School. There had been a security review, with new measures to be put in place to control access to the building and make the school more secure in future. The Committee viewed these incidents very seriously as the safety and security of pupils and staff was of the utmost importance.

The Committee **AGREED** that a letter be sent to Police Scotland seeking an update on action taken into these incidents.

**Clerk**

v I&E Service Minutes – the main issues discussed at this meeting included training staff to prevent hand-arm vibration syndrome (HAVS); new ways of working; a survey of Depots which will inform the capital review strategy; radio coverage; flexible working arrangement for Roads teams and preventative physiotherapy had commenced for Waste teams.

In relation to HAVS it was highlighted that staff within building maintenance were still using their own tools which should not be happening and it was queried if there was a budget for tools within building maintenance. In response, the ECO Resources & Finance was not aware of any budget pressures relating to the procurement of tools and if there were issues with procurement of tools then the ECO should

be made aware of these. The Staff Side undertook to liaise with the ECO Resources & Finance on this.

**Unite/Uc  
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vi Communities and Places Minutes – thanks were extended to David Griffiths, GMB for raising the issue of lack of toilet provision for staff across the Highlands. It was advised that work had been undertaken to improve toilet provision and locations of public toilet provision was available on the Council’s website and this would be shared with Councillor Gale.

**C&P  
H&S Co-  
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HGV Drivers – in light of the current national shortage of HGV drivers it was queried if there was any impact on the Council. This was a significant issue for the Council and was concerning. In relation to the Roads and Waste teams, it was a challenge to recruit and retain HGV drivers particularly in rural areas. The Employee Development team intended to carry out a skills audit within the Council to see who had HGV licences to support teams in the event of difficulties in recruitment. HR were also looking at Pay grades.

vii – Housing and Property – there had been Pressure Systems Safety Regulations (PSSR) concerns raised at the Lotland street depot in relation to an item of equipment, but while the concerns were valid, the equipment was later found to be compliant with PSSR.

The minute referred to 33 cases of HAVS had been reported in the last 4 years within the Service. It was felt this figure should relate to the Council, but this would be checked.

**OHSWM**

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**7. Education and Learning Service Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy**

**E&L  
H&S Co-  
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There was circulated Report No. CSC/5/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Education and Learning.

It was highlighted that there was no reference to risk management within the policy which would detail what risks in the Service there were. Also, the plan was generic and should be more specific to Education.

It was advised that Head teachers were the Responsible Premises Officers for their School.

The Committee **NOTED** the Education and Learning Service Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy.

**8. Annual Corporate Health, Safety and Wellbeing Report 2020/21** **OHSWM**

There was circulated Report No. CSC/6/21 by the Interim Head of HR.

It was highlighted that the Employee Assistance Programme was one of the best support systems in the Council and it was being well used. There had also been a reduction in the accident rate which was great news and staff were commended for working more safely.

The Committee **APPROVED**:-

- i the annual report and plan; and
- ii the report's passage to the Resources Committee in November, 2021.

**9. Update on Occupational Health Service and EAP Services** **OHSWM**

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/7/21 by the Interim Head of Human Resources.

It was highlighted that there had been a slight improvement in do not attends for occupational health appointments which was good news. It was queried what impact staff working from home had on OH appointments. It was advised that staff were offered appointments via telephone or on Microsoft Office teams so this should not impact on their ability to attend appointments.

There had been an increase in staff being absent from work for more than a year being referred to OH and it was positive that these more difficult cases were being addressed.

A lot of male staff in particular did not have access to IT devices during the day and therefore posters and leaflets promoting the Employee Assistance Programme had been produced for distribution in Depots and workshops. Trade Unions help in promoting this Service would be welcomed.

**Trade  
Unions**

The Committee **NOTED** the activity for both Occupational Health and EAP activity for the period April to June, 2021.

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

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/8/21 by the Interim Head of Human Resources.

In particular, it was advised that progress still had to be made on the training of CCTV operators and this would require a corporate approach on how the information would be managed.

**I&E  
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As the Council had no policy on the use of CCTV recordings, it would be checked whether this should be included in the Council's Risk Register.

**R&F  
H&S Co-  
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Further, it was understood that a HGV vehicle had a camera installed that focused on the driver and it was queried if this was correct. This issue would be checked with the Fleet Manager and reported back to Mr I Macleman, Unite/Ucatt

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

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

**Property  
Manager**

The Property report would be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

#### **12. AOB**

New Ways of Working Project – The Staff Side felt this was a great opportunity for a good work lifestyle balance and wellbeing of staff, while not compromising service delivery. There had been good engagement on the New Ways of Working project with the Staff Side. However, there was a proposal for staff to go into the office for 2 days and moving to 3 days in the Autumn and it was queried what the basis for this was. In response, it was understood that the outcome of the project was a desire from staff to have a blended home/office approach to work, Covid allowing.

The Staff Side understood that the outcomes of the project would be based on individual interviews with staff and managers and therefore it was not known how the 2/3 days in the office had come about when the project was still ongoing.

The Committee **NOTED** that any further feedback on this issue would be provided to the Staff Side.

**ECO  
R & F**

The meeting ended at 12.05 p.m.