

**The Highland Council**

Minutes of Meeting of the **Central Safety Committee** held in Committee Room 3, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness/remotely on Wednesday 27 March 2024 at 2.00pm.

**Present:****Employer's Representatives:**

Mr R Gale  
Mr S Kennedy (substitute)  
Mr D Louden  
Mr C Munro (remote)  
Mr P Oldham

**Staff Side Representatives:**

Mr A Bell, LNCT (remote)  
Ms E Mackay, UNISON  
Mr M Smith, UNITE/UCATT(substitute)  
(remote)

**In attendance:**

Mrs K Lackie, Depute Chief Executive  
Mr M Rodgers, Executive Chief Officer, Housing & Property  
Ms E Barrie (**EB**), Head of People, Resources & Finance Service  
Mrs A MacPherson, Education & Learning, Health & Safety Wellbeing Co-ordinator  
Mr F MacDonald (**FMacD**), Property & Housing, Health & Safety Wellbeing Co-ordinator  
Mr T Murdison (**TM**), Service Lead, Corporate Property Management, Housing & Property  
Mrs F Malcolm, Health & Social Care, Health & Safety Wellbeing Co-ordinator  
Ms C Campbell (substitute), Communities & Place, Health & Safety Wellbeing Co-ordinator  
Ms N Wallace (substitute), Infrastructure & Environment Health & Safety Co-ordinator  
Mr I Jackson, Education Officer, Education & Learning  
Ms D Ferguson, Ross, Skye & Lochaber Area  
Mr W Munro, Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey Area  
Ms H Ross, Caithness, Sutherland & Easter Ross Area  
Mr A MacInnes, Senior Committee Officer, Performance & Governance Service

**Mr D Louden in the Chair**

<b>Item No.</b>	<b>Subject/Decision</b>	<b>Action</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Apologies for Absence</b>  Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr B Lobban of the Employer's Side and Mr I Mcleman of the Staff Side.	
<b>2.</b>	<b>Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement</b>  There were no declarations of interest/transparency statements.	
<b>3.</b>	<b>Minutes of Last Meeting</b>  There had been circulated for confirmation Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 1 December 2023, the terms of which were <b>APPROVED</b> .	

#### 4. Matters Arising from the Minutes

- i. Assistance call alarm for accessible toilets – all the locations of alarmed accessible toilets had been identified and work was ongoing to identify who would respond to calls, taking account of access to the toilets and geography of the areas where the toilets were located. This would not be an issue specific to Highland and an undertaking was given to look at best practice elsewhere and report back. **TM**
- ii. Solar Panels – work was ongoing to switch all solar panels back on and a project plan was being developed around certification and an inspection regime to complete this work.
- iii. Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) – two permanent posts would be recruited to carry out PAT testing.
- iv. EVOLVE – a short-term working group would be established so expertise could be shared. An update on this would be provided at the next meeting. **EB**
- v. Woodwork machinery training – a tender for this work would shortly be issued to appoint a contractor to carry out this training.
- vi. Battery powered equipment – fire safety cabinets had been purchased for charging units.

#### 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 – 6 March 2024
- (ii) Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey – 6 March 2024
- (iii) Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross – 29 February 2024.

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

- (iv) Health & Social Care – 30 January 2024
- (v) Communities and Places – 15 December 2023
- (vi) Education – 14 February 2024
- (vii) Infrastructure & Environment – 21 February 2024
- (viii) Performance & Governance, Resources & Finance and Depute Chief Executive Services – 19 December 2023; and
- (ix) Housing & Property – 28 February 2024.

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 matters were raised:-

Ross, Skye and Lochaber – main issues covered at this meeting included works on heating and ventilation at Charles Kennedy building; Carr's corner users' group meeting; use of personal tools by staff; protocol for response to panic alarm at Charles Kennedy Building.

In relation to an issue at Spean Bridge Primary School, action would be undertaken to put safety measures in place to ensure the safety of a pupil with additional support needs. **TM**

Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey – a plan for significant repair works, including roof replacement, at the Balblair Depot was being developed and once complete would be presented to Services who used the depot. A budget was in place for these works to be undertaken.

A list of Responsible Premises Officers (RPOs) was being refreshed and a report was to be submitted to the corporate management team so that any gaps in the list could be filled. An update would be provided at the next meeting. **FMacD**

Caithness, Sutherland & Easter Ross – main issues arising from this meeting included a large amount of flammable liquid stored in an area near paper in Caithness house had now been moved; Fire risk assessments and testing in Caithness House were proceeding; the issue of RPOs for Drummie and Caithness House buildings was still unresolved;

Health & Social Care – the main issues raised at this meeting included the low turnout of staff side representatives at the meeting and efforts would be made to try and address this. There had been a number of break-ins at the Dochfour huts where the Childrens health team were located. This was a concern for staff and data stored in the huts. It was noted that a move of this team to HQ was imminent which was very positive news.

In terms of the reporting of violence and aggression incidents, a system was to be put in place on lessons learned from these incidents, so that the Service could be better at protecting its staff.

Communities and Place – It was highlighted that a working group had been established to develop a policy for 'with cause drug and alcohol testing and rehabilitation' to support people in work. Further, the latest policy in respect of vocational drivers was available online.

In terms of the issue of members of the public filming Council employees, while this was not an offence, but it could intimidate employees. Policies and procedures were being reviewed so that staff had the necessary guidance and training on dealing with this type of situation.

Education – the issue of violence and aggression pupil staff incidents was highlighted and the Service was committed to further work with trade unions on this. This was a national issue and there were discussions taking place nationally on this.

Infrastructure & Environment – issues highlighted from this meeting were in relation to RPOs and heating and ventilation in Block B, HQ and the process of personal evacuation plans. It was advised that the Health and Safety team would provide support to the Service with guidance on arrangements to be put in place for staff personal evacuation plans.

Performance & Governance, Resources & Finance, Depute CEX Services – It was highlighted that the Trade Union Charter and Partnership Agreement would be reviewed and submitted to trade unions. Further guidance had been issued on the Assure incident reporting system.

The staff wellbeing survey had now closed. An overview of responses had been submitted at the Corporate Resources Committee and the information from the survey would be considered by Services who would draw up Service plans to address the issues raised from the survey. The survey responses would also help shape policy development such as the Council's Wellbeing Strategy.

## **6. Update on Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing initiative, activities and issues**

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/1/24 by the Head of People which provided an update on fire, health, safety and wellbeing issues and developments. It reviewed activities arising from Health and Safety Executive interventions, activities of the Occupational, Health, Safety and Wellbeing team as well as proposed changes to strategies or policies.

It was highlighted that 2 vacancies for Health and Safety Advisors were being currently advertised and an update on progress was provided.

In relation to the automatic opening of the glass doors in the Chamber entrance, HQ, officers would review who should have permissions to change the settings on these doors in order to support people accessing and exiting the premises in a secure manner.

**TM**

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

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

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/2/24 by the Head of People which provided an update on the occupational health service contract and the Employee Assistance Programme for the period October to December 2023.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the updated position in reference to the occupational health contract; and

- ii. the usage of the Employee Assistance Programme for the period October- December 2023.

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

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/3/24 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property which provided an update on significant property-related health and safety concerns, emerging future risks and new policy and procedures introduced.

The mitigation works at Charleston Academy and Nairn Academy in terms of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) were highlighted. Both schools are and would continue to be subject to a programme of regular RAAC inspection for the remainder of their service life. Also, the Council had recognised the need to maintain a safe and operational estate and had approved an additional £2.0m of revenue budget, per annum for the next 3 financial years to fund urgent inspection and repair works to the Councils general fund property estate.

Reference was made to an incident in a science class where there had been a gas leak with a brief flare up from a Bunsen burner. This was a one off incident and there had been no injuries or damage and the faulty burner removed. The incident was investigated and recommendations made. Other issues discussed related to the Thurso High School oil leak, fire alarms at HQ and St Clement's school repairs.

The Committee **NOTED** the current levels of compliance and progress being made.

The meeting concluded at 3.35pm.