

**The Highland Council**

Minutes of Meeting of the **Central Safety Committee** held in Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on **Monday, 15 December 2025 at 2.00pm.**

**Present:**

**Employer’s Representatives:**

Mr A Christie (remote)  
 Mr A Baxter (substitute) (remote)  
 Mr P Oldham  
 Mrs M Reid

**Staff Side Representatives:**

Mr R Boyle, UNITE  
 Mr M Smith, UNITE/UCATT (remote)  
 Mr D Griffiths, GMB (remote)  
 Ms S Purdie, RCN  
 Ms G Warburton, LNCT (remote)

**In attendance:**

Ms E Barrie (**EB**), Head of People, Corporate Service  
 Mr D Cowie (**DC**), Service Lead, Safety Health Emergency Planning (remote)  
 Mr T Murdison (**TM**), Service Lead, Corporate Property Management  
 Ms D Sutherland, Corporate Health & Safety Wellbeing Co-ordinator  
 Mr A Yates (**AY**), Communities & Place Health & Safety Co-ordinator  
 Ms T Urry, Infrastructure & Environment Health & Safety Co-ordinator (remote)  
 Mr D Martin, Education & Learning, Health & Safety Wellbeing Co-ordinator (remote)  
 Ms M Montaner, Health & Social Care, Health & Safety Wellbeing Co-ordinator (remote)  
 Ms D Ferguson, Ross, Skye & Lochaber Area (remote)  
 Mr W Munro, Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey Area  
 Mr P Tomalin, Caithness, Sutherland & Easter Ross area (remote)  
 Mr A MacInnes (**AM**), Senior Committee Officer, Corporate Service

**Mr P Oldham in the Chair**

Item No.	Subject/Decision	Action
1.	<p><b>Apologies for Absence</b></p> <p>Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr R Gale, Mr K Gowans from the Employer’s Side and Mr F MacDonald, Property &amp; Housing Health &amp; Safety Wellbeing Co-ordinator.</p>	
2.	<p><b>Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement</b></p> <p>There were none.</p>	
3.	<p><b>Education Service Annual Health and Safety Report</b></p> <p>There had been circulated Report No. CSC/16/25 by the Strategic Lead Operations relating to the Education Service’s performance during 2024-25 in respect of the health, safety and wellbeing of staff within the Education Service.</p> <p>Following commentary on the report by the Education &amp; Learning, Health &amp; Safety Wellbeing Co-ordinator, it was queried if there had been any feedback from Head Teachers regarding the requirement for</p>	

	<p>staff who were driving school mini buses to have Minibus Driver Awareness Scheme (MiDAS) training and what financial support was being provided to Schools to enable them to provide this training. It was advised that there was a need to look at safety in driving in the Service, for example, not driving at excessive speed when driving pupils. In terms of the requirements of MiDAS within Council Health and Safety Policy, this was currently being reviewed and it was also being considered what additional driver training can be put in place. This would be considered further at the Education Health &amp; Safety trade union liaison group. There was no information available at the meeting on financial support to Schools for providing minibus driver training, but this may become apparent once the review of MiDAS requirements had taken place.</p> <p>In relation to HSE Notice of Contravention regarding maintenance and inspection of fixed playground equipment, it was queried if this was a single or multiple incidents. It was advised that it was a single incident that happened at Mallaig Primary School after a serious trim trail accident. Other historical cases involving this piece of equipment were looked at in the investigation. There had been action put in place to ensure there was a robust maintenance and inspection scheme in place for fixed playground equipment.</p> <p>It was queried if there would be an annual health and safety report for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), given the importance of asbestos management as there had been an HSE improvement notice relating to residential properties. It was advised that there was no annual health and safety report relating to the HRA. HRA issues were included in the Property related health and safety issues report. It was requested that there be a section in the Property report relating to HRA health and safety issues.</p> <p>Thereafter, the Committee <b>NOTED</b> the content of the report.</p>	<b>TM</b>
<p><b>4.</b></p>	<p><b>Update on Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing initiative and activities</b></p> <p>There had been circulated Report No. CSC/17/25 by the Chief Officer HR &amp; Communications which provided an update on fire, health, safety and wellbeing issues and developments for the Highland Council for the Q2 period of July to September 2025.</p> <p>It was highlighted that the Occupational Health Safety and Wellbeing (OHSW) team had now moved under a new service of Safety Health Emergency Planning (SHEP) and there had been an amalgamation with Business continuity and Emergency Planning. A new Service Lead - SHEP had been appointed which had created a vacancy for OHSW Manager.</p> <p>The OHSW team continued to support on the Council and High Life Highland fire risk assessments. The team had developed a conflicts management training programme that would be rolled out to all</p>	

	<p>Services. An unacceptable behaviour survey would be issued early in 2026 which would link in with the conflict management training programme.</p> <p>The OHSW team currently had 2.5 FTE vacancies and efforts continued to be made to fill these vacancies, such as by 'growing our own' initiative. In terms of violence and aggression statistics, verbal abuse by the public was the most common type in the workplace. Further, there had been 47 contacts for mental health support in this quarter.</p> <p>Thereafter, the Committee <b>NOTED</b> the updated information on health, safety and wellbeing issues and developments contained in the report.</p>	
<p><b>5.</b></p>	<p><b>Update on Occupational Health Services</b></p> <p>There had been circulated Report No. CSC/18/25 by the Chief Officer HR &amp; Communications on the Occupational Health (OH) service which included Health surveillance (HS) and physio services contract for the period Q2 July to September 2025.</p> <p>Efforts continued to be made to reduce the number of missed (wasted) OH referral appointments. This was the fourth quarter in a row that the number of missed appointments had been reduced, but there was a need for a constant reminder and management to keep this going in the right direction.</p> <p>Also, the number of days for the health surveillance nurse had increased from 3 – 5 days per week until Christmas to try to reduce the number of outstanding health surveillance checks. There would be a review in the new year as to who is essential for OH referral, so staff are not being referred unnecessarily.</p> <p>Thereafter, the Committee <b>NOTED</b>:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. the updated position in reference to the Occupational Health contract; and</li> <li>ii. the usage of the Occupational Health service for the period Q2 July -September 2025.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>6.</b></p>	<p><b>Update on Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)</b></p> <p>There had been circulated Report No. CSC/19/25 by the Chief Officer HR &amp; Communications which provided an update on the Employee Assistance Programme for the period Q2 2025.</p> <p>The EAP was provided by Spectrum Life and the usage of their platform which has a wide amount of services could be accessed via the Spectrum Life website or app. The usage was down for the last quarter, and this trend would be monitored. The primary reason for</p>	

	<p>contacting the service was for mental health issues (77% of all enquiries).</p> <p>The Committee <b>NOTED</b>:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. the updated position in reference to the usage of the EAP.</li> <li>ii. the usage of the Employee Assistance Programme for the period Q2 July – September 2025.</li> </ul>	
<b>7.</b>	<p><b>Property Related Health and Safety Issues</b></p> <p>There had been circulated Report No. CSC/20/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive, Place which provided an update on significant property related health and safety concerns, any emerging future risks and new policy and procedures introduced.</p> <p>It was highlighted that Storm Amy had caused significant disruption across the estate, mostly due to power outages and road closures. Invergordon Academy, Park Primary School and Mallaig High School all suffered roof damage.</p> <p>In relation to Nairn Balblair depot, there had been serious health and safety issues at this depot. In particular, it was highlighted that a store room had no light as the power had been turned off for safety reasons due to water ingress. It was advised that there had been a site visit at Balblair depot and roof repairs were ongoing. The roof was operating well beyond its design life and needed replaced. The wider discussion was where did Balblair fit in the depot refurbishment programme. Ideally a new depot would be built. There was a plan to relocate the materials in the store room. An undertaken was given to progress this.</p> <p>In terms of buildings that the Council own, but other agencies operate such as care homes, High Life Highland facilities, Eden Court, it was queried how this Committee hears about any safety issues regarding these buildings. It was advised that any health and safety issues concerning such buildings would be included in the Property related health and safety issues report.</p> <p>It was advised that the Dochfour Huts, Inverness were to be demolished and the area be used for parking.</p> <p>Thereafter, the Committee <b>NOTED</b> the property related risks arising and overall progress being made regarding improving and maintaining statutory compliance across the built estate.</p>	<b>TM/DC</b>
<b>8.</b>	<p><b>Minutes of Last Meeting</b></p> <p>There had been circulated for confirmation, Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 29 September 2025 the terms of which were <b>APPROVED</b>.</p>	

<p><b>9.</b></p>	<p><b>Matters Arising from the Minutes</b></p> <p><b>Item 12, CSER minute - Personnel protective equipment (PPE)</b> – a potential collective grievance was being considered regarding new PPE provided to employees in the Waste Services team, which was not deemed to be of a suitable standard. The Head of People undertook to discuss with the Staff Side their concerns regarding PPE.</p>	<p><b>EB</b></p>
<p><b>10.</b></p>	<p><b>Minutes: Area Health &amp; Safety Groups; Service Trade Union Health &amp; Safety Liaison Groups</b></p> <p>There was circulated for information, Minutes of Meeting of:-</p> <p><b>Area Health and Safety Groups</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Ross, Skye and Lochaber – 13 November 2025.</li> <li>ii. Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch &amp; Strathspey – 26 November 2025</li> <li>iii. Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross held on 27 November, 2025</li> </ul> <p><b>Service Trade Union Health and Safety Liaison Meeting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>iv. Corporate – 16 October 2025</li> <li>v. Place – 20 October 2025</li> <li>vi. Health and Social Care – 1 December, 2025.</li> </ul> <p>The Committee <b>NOTED</b> the Area Health and Safety Groups and Service Trade Union Health and Safety Liaison Groups Minutes.</p> <p>Matters arising from the minutes were highlighted as follows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i there were still issues with the heating and ventilation at Charles Kennedy Building (CKB), Fort William and also there were repeated failures with one of the lifts in CKB. The lift had been repaired again and the Property team would continue to work with the staff in the building in order to test the lift so that there could be confidence in the reliability with it going forward.</li> <li>ii there were various ongoing issues with depots in Balblair, Kingussie and Diriebught. Depots needed investment and there was work ongoing regarding this. In the meantime, the Property team would continue to work with Services to address maintenance issues with depots.</li> <li>iii it was noted that the Orbis RedAlert Professional, smartphone app which provided a 24/7 support service for lone workers, was operating in some Services. All Service health and safety representatives should be made aware of what tools were available to support lone working arrangements, such as Orbis. Risk assessments would still require to be undertaken to identify what could be done to mitigate risks.</li> </ul>	

	<p>There was a need for a corporate approach to supporting lone workers and options for different Service areas would be considered. Progress on this would be reported to the next meeting of the Committee. This would fit in with work being undertaken on developing a centralised violent marker system.</p>	<b>DC/AY</b>
<b>11.</b>	<p><b>Dates for Meetings 2026</b></p> <p>The Committee <b>APPROVED</b> the undernoted dates for their meetings in 2026:-</p> <p>Monday 9 March  Monday 15 June  Monday 21 September  Monday 14 December</p> <p>All the meetings to commence at 2.00p.m.</p>	<b>AM</b>
	<p>At this stage, the Chair expressed thanks to Tracey Urry, Infrastructure &amp; Environment Health &amp; Safety Co-ordinator on what was her last meeting of the Committee prior to her retirement. Tracey was thanked for her contribution to the Central Safety Committee and the Committee wished her well in her retirement.</p>	

The meeting concluded at 2.52 pm.