

STIRLING COUNCIL

MINUTES of MEETING of the HEALTH AND SAFETY PANEL held in the COUNCIL CHAMBER, MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS, STIRLING on MONDAY 17 August 2015 at 2.00 pm

Present

Councillor Corrie McChord (in the Chair)

Councillor Graham HOUSTON

Councillor Mike ROBBINS

Trade Union Representatives

Richard Barron, UNISON
Frankie McCallum, UNITE
Abigail Robertson, UNISON
Brian Wilson, GMB
Lorraine Thomson, UNISON

Officers

Elaine Brown, Alcohol & Drugs Partnership
Pamela Forsyth, HR, Corporate Operations
Jacqueline Gibbs, Safer Communities, Communities & Partnership
Kristine Johnson, Chief HR Officer, Corporate Operations
Sian Lower, Communications, Market & Events, Chief Executive's Office
Susan Lyon, Health & Safety Support Officer, Social Services
Kirsty MacLeod, Fleet Management, Housing and Environment
Norman McLeod, Health & Safety Compliance Team Leader, Housing and Environment
Linda Melville, Service Manager, Social Services
John Nicholson, Fleet Management, House and Environment
Nick Sabo, Corporate Health & Safety Adviser, Corporate Operations
Seonaid Scott, HR Adviser, Corporate Operations
Barry Spence, Insurance Team, Corporate Operations
Gregor White, Communications, Marketing & Events,
Helen Geddes, Corporate Operations (Clerk)

HS121 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Fergus Wood.

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of the following officers:

Michael Boyle, substitute Aileen More, Education
David Bright, substitute Kimberley Campbell, Resilience & Risk, Corporate Operations
George Murphy, substitute Barry Spence, Insurance, Corporate Operations

HS122 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

HS123 URGENT BUSINESS BROUGHT FORWARD BY THE CHAIR

There were no items of urgent business.

HS123 MINUTES – 27 April 2015

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Health & Safety Panel held on 27 April 2015 were submitted for approval.

Decision

The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 27 April 2015 were approved as a correct record of proceedings.

HS124 EMPLOYERS LIABILITY CLAIMS FROM 01 APRIL 2009 TO 31 July 2015

A report by the Director of Corporate Operations provided a summary of Employers' Liability Claims against Stirling Council from 1 April 2009 to 31 July 2015, summarised by type in Appendix 1 and by Service in Appendix 2. Claims still open were listed in Appendix 3.

A total of 5 new Employers' Liability Claims had been received since the report to the Health & Safety Panel on 27 April 2015 and were highlighted in Appendix 4.

Decision

The Health and Safety Panel noted the contents of the report.

(Reference: Report by Director of Corporate Operations, dated 6 August 2015, submitted)

HS125 HEALTH AND SAFETY UPDATE – SERVICE AREA UPDATES

This report by the Directors and the Chief Executive provided the Panel with an update on key health and safety activities, initiatives and improvements across the Council since the last Panel meeting on 17 August 2015.

Chief Executive's Office

A written report having been circulated, no further issues or questions were raised.

Children, Young People & Education

A written report having been circulated, the Panel were advised that training had been arranged for escorts who escort children to school to assist them in protecting themselves when escorting children.

UNISON expressed concern about the escort taxi service and asked what training is provided to taxi drivers that transport potentially violent young people.

The Corporate Health & Safety Advisor explained that whilst there is no specific training provided to taxi drivers, escorts are briefed on what behaviour to expect from individuals clients.

Councillor Graham Houston suggested that proper risk assessment needed to be in place and guidance for taxi drivers about what they could do in certain situations when intervening would be helpful.

Communities & Partnership

A written report having been circulated, the Panel was advised that that as a consequence of the incident where a Community Warden was assaulted, Wardens had been instructed to ensure that personal cameras were switched on at all times.

Corporate Operations

A written report having been previously circulated, no further issues or questions were raised.

Housing & Environment

A written report having been previously circulated, the Panel was advised that the practice of including tyre depth gauges with car pool packs was to enable staff to carry out tyre depth checks along with the other general checks required by drivers using pool cars. The Panel was also advised that whilst car tyre depths are checked when vehicles were being serviced, the Strathclyde Tyre Services fitter also carried out random checks on tyres. Whilst the legal limit is 1.6mm, it is Council policy to replace tyres at 2mm. When the car is being used, it is the drivers responsibility to ensure that all tyres are legal before the journey commences.

UNISON suggested that a reminder should be sent to staff.

The Corporate Health & Safety Advisor confirmed that a Health & Safety Bulletin had been sent out in July 2015.

Social Services

A written report having been previously circulated, it was noted that the NHS had delivered five sessions of blood borne virus training to Social Services staff across Stirling and Clackmannan. The NHS had offered to provide training to other Council services.

Decision

The Panel noted the content of the Report, endorsed the progress to date and supported a continued focus on Health and Safety and employee welfare issues across the Council.

(Reference: Report by all Directors and the Chief Executive, dated 7 August 2015, submitted)

HS126 QUARTERLY REPORT ON HEALTH & SAFETY INCIDENTS

This report by the Director of Corporate Operations provided quarterly comparison data regarding Council Health & Safety Incidents for the period January – June 2015. There would be no quarterly comparisons until January – March 2016 due to changes and mergers within Services.

The quarterly report on accidents was set out in Appendix 1 and detailed each Service area. One column was for employee accidents (E) and the other column was for accidents to members of the public (P). The table had also been separated into five areas: RIDDOR, Accidents, Dangerous Occurrences, Near Misses and Incidents.

It was noted that Chief Executive's was the only service without reported incidents.

Decision

The Health and Safety Panel noted the information contained in this report, in conjunction with Service updates.

(Reference: Report by Director of Corporate Operations, dated August 2015, submitted)

HS127 NATIONAL AND LOCAL HEALTH & SAFETY DEVELOPMENTS

This report by the Director of Corporate Operations provided a summary of National and Local Health & Safety developments for consideration by the Health and Safety Panel, together with the Health & Safety Bulletins issued in the last quarter to each Service for cascade to employees.

National Developments

It was noted that where Stirling Council had safe practices in place, these must be monitored to ensure they work correctly and are complied with. Managers, Safety Advisors, officers and those giving advice in critical situations must ensure work practices were followed and must not let bad practice creep in. Site inspections could not be on the lenient side.

Local Health and Safety Developments

Stress related and psychological disorders in 2014

Corporate Health & Safety Advisor advised that work related stress, depression and anxiety was defined as a harmful reaction people have to undue pressures and demands place on them at work.

The latest estimate from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) showed that the number of new cases of work-related stress, depression or anxiety in 2013/14 was 244,000.

It was noted that the Labour Force Survey mirrored the trend within Stirling Council in connection with the main occupations suffering from stress, depression or anxiety. Corporate Health and Safety and Human Resources were working closely to combat this modern problem.

A report by the Director of Corporate Operations on Level of Stress was to be discussed by the Panel at a later point in the Health & Safety Panel meeting.

Health & Safety Procedures Review

Work was being undertaken to review the Council's procedures in several areas of Health & Safety practice. These were:

- Accident reporting
- Lone working
- Violent Warning Markers

Health and Safety Bulletins

The Health & Safety bulletins noted at Appendices 1a, 1b, 1c and 1d had been issued since the last meeting, these were:

- May 2015 – Reporting accidents/incidents and dangerous occurrences
- June 2015 – Be aware, drugs and medicines
- July 2015 – Checking of pool car tyres
- August 2015 – Face mask fit tests

Health & Safety Training

Risk Assessment workshop ran on 19 May with 8 participants
Display screen assessment briefing ran on 9 June with 1 participant

A number of e-learning modules on Health & Safety topics were available on Vantage Point (the Council's Learning Management system).

Health & Safety Policies

It was noted that Domestic Violent Policy had been attached.

A revised Smoking Policy (including ban on smoking including e-cigarettes on Council property) under was under consultation and would be presented to the next Panel meeting.

Employee Stress Assessments

Twenty one stress assessments had been undertaken within the Council since the last Panel meeting.

It having been noted that the number of employee stress assessments were on the increase, Councillor Robbins commented that whilst the Stirling Council situation mirrored the national situation, he enquired what monitoring was in place and what the financial implications there were to the Local Authority.

The Corporate Health & Safety Advisor said that the most obvious cost to the Local authority was an increase in sick pay. He also advised that there was a referral system in place via Occupational Health – available to teams as well as individual employees.

UNISON said it was seeking actual figures of people medically diagnosed/off sick with work related stress and that the Union was aware that there were clusters of work related stress incidents.

Health and Safety Executive visits and contacts in the last session

No visits reported during last session.

Central Scotland Fire and Rescue Service visits and contacts in the last session

- 17 June 2015 – Fire Brigade attended IT Unit adjacent to Teith House following automatic release of gas extinguisher system and sounding of alarms
- 18 June 2015 – Fire Brigade attended IT Unit adjacent to Teith House following smoke detector activation.

Decision

The Health and Safety Panel noted the content of the report.

(Reference: Report by Director of Corporate Operations, as submitted)

HS127 OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH ACTIVITY REPORT

This report by the Director of Corporate Operations outlined the progress of the Council's Occupational Health and Health Surveillance programmes.

The report covers the period April to June 2015.

Workplace monitoring was undertaken to ensure all relevant employees are included within the Health Surveillance programme, which includes identifying risks associated with noise, vibration, dust/fumes and chemicals.

Decision

The Health and Safety Panel noted the content of the report.

(Reference: Report by Director of Corporate Operations, as submitted.)

HS128 LEVELS OF STRESS

This report by the Director of Corporate Operations was submitted in response to concerns raised by Trade Union representatives that levels of stress amongst Council employees were at unacceptable levels.

Appendix 1 to the report showed the recorded working days lost to stress from 1 January 2008 until 30 June 2012. Figures showed that comparing the 2008-11 period against 2012-2015 indicated a marked increase in the levels of absence attributed to stress. However, the number of absences for Work Related Stress remain broadly similar, although the length of these absences appear to have increased.

Appendix 2 to the report showed the number of employees contacting the Employee Counselling Service due to work related issues since 2008.

Appendix 3 to the report showed the number of Stress Risk Assessments carried out by the Health & Safety Team from 2011 and indicated an upward trend over the period reported.

In conclusion, the data reviewed did not suggest that levels of stress are wholly increasing.

UNISON representatives said that more robust review processes by management might ensure that employee stress levels were identified at an early stage.

HR responses by saying that workplace assessments relating to supported attendance should pick up on need for stress assessments. HR would appreciate knowing where gaps. It was also confirmed that a new accident reporting system was in place.

Councillor Houston said that this was a big issue but a confused picture. He noted that in Appendix 3 referrals around Social Care were high. He asked that the Panel request an Employee Stress Survey be conducted to gain a clear picture of where stress was being experienced and if it was personal or work related. The Local Authority cannot tackle the situation without knowing causes.

He also acknowledged that managers experience stress as well and if Council policy was identified as putting pressure on the workforce, this needed to be identified.

The Corporate HR Advisor commented that the causation from his stress assessments partly cited lack of communication between management and staff. He advised that if the assessment went to Court, a member of the Health & Safety Team was always called as a witness for the prosecution.

UNISON was of the view that there was a duty of care to the workforce.

The Chair suggested that the issue of employee stress levels be referred to the

Council Tripartite and it was agreed that a report would be submitted including a recommendation that an Employee Stress Survey be conducted.

Since the Council Tripartite was not due to meet until November 2015, the Panel also agreed to raise the issue of employee stress levels with the Corporate Management Team.

Decision

1. The Panel noted the content of the report.
2. The Panel agreed to refer the issue of Employee Stress Levels to the Corporate Management Team and request that an Employee Stress Survey be conducted.
3. The Panel agreed to refer the issue of Employee Stress Levels to the Council Tripartite and request that an Employee Stress Survey be conducted.

HS129 DISCARDED NEEDLE RECORDING SCHEME

This report by the Director of Communities and Partnerships provided the Panel with an update on the collection of discarded needles in the Stirling area, by the Safer Communities Team and Land Services, and a summary of actions taken as a result.

The Panel was advised that whilst there had been a spike in the figures relating to the Castle and Bannockburn Wards, this could be attributed to a specific property in each area.

UNISON again raised the issue of the needle cap colour having changed. It was noted that the cap is now clear making it harder to spot in communal areas.

The Alcohol & Drug Partnership representative advised that needles and therefore needle caps were part of a national procurement arrangement. The issue of the cap colour had been raised with NHS Scotland and would be raised again.

Decision

The Health and Safety Panel noted the content of the report.

(Reference: Report by Director of Communities and Partnerships, as submitted)

HS130 TRADE UNION/WORKFORCE ISSUES – UPDATE

No Trade Union/workforce issues were raised.

The Chair declared the meeting closed at 3.20 pm