



CORPORATE HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE REMOTE MEETING HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON MONDAY, 14TH FEBRUARY 2022 AT 10.00 A.M.

PRESENT:

Councillors:

Councillor D. Havard (Chair)

M. A. Adams, P.J. Bevan, A.G. Higgs, S. Kent (Vice Chair), and W. Williams

Councillor C. Gordon (Cabinet Member for Corporate Services)

Together with:

R. Edmunds (Corporate Director of Education and Corporate Services), L. Donovan (Head of People Services), E. Townsend (Health and Safety Manager), P. Cryer (Service Manager Children's Services), S. Richards (Head of Education Planning and Strategy), A. Wigley (Principal Health and Safety Officer), A. Ford (Maintenance Manager – Property Services), T. Minett (Senior Insurance and Risk Manager), R. Barrett (Committee Services Officer), and J. Lloyd (Committee Services Officer)

Trade Union Representatives: J. Garcia (Unison) and N. Funnell (GMB).

RECORDING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

The Chair reminded those present that the meeting was being filmed and would be available following the meeting via the Council's website – [Click Here to View](#). Members were advised that voting on decisions would take place via Microsoft Forms.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor D.T. Hardacre, together with L. Dallimore (Unison), G. Parr (Unite), C. Edwards (Environmental Health Manager), D. Beecham (Electoral Services Manager), and M. Williams (Interim Head of Property Services).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received at the commencement or during the course of the meeting.

3. MINUTES – 15TH NOVEMBER 2021

A Member raised concerns following the last meeting, in relation to the level of attendance by officers. Discussion followed regarding the number of senior officers' present in the meeting and the Chair requested that a reminder be sent to officers prior to each meeting, to send a substitute if they were unable to attend. Reference was made to fines, in relation to Health and Safety, received by other local authorities. The Head of People Services confirmed the Corporate Director and senior officers' attendance in the meeting.

The Unison representative referred to page 3 of the minutes and advised Members that the increase in attendance at this meeting was noted at a recent Unison branch meeting. Reference was also made to the authorities' fire wardens, and the need to be aware who is in the building as staff start to return to the offices. Concern was raised in relation to staff who were previously trained first aiders who may require further training prior to all staff returning to the offices. The Health and Safety Manager invited the Unison representative to contact her outside of the meeting with the specific concerns in relation to fire wardens. Members were advised that fire risk assessments were still being carried out on the authorities' buildings and that a guidance document had been circulated to managers regarding the reduced occupancy of the buildings, in relation to the first aiders and fire wardens. Members were also advised that first aid training had continued throughout the pandemic as this was a legal requirement.

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the Corporate Health and Safety Committee held on 15th November 2021 be approved as a correct record and by way of Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Corporate Health and Safety Committee held on 15th November 2021 be approved as a correct record.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

4. HEALTH AND SAFETY UPDATE – VERBAL UPDATE.

The Health and Safety Manager gave a verbal update which advised Members of the high level of workload currently being experienced in Health and Safety. Managers are being advised to keep their risk assessments up to date and to notify Health and Safety of any changes. There has been an increase in enquiries received in relation to agile working as staff are beginning to return to the offices. Members were advised that there had been an increase in accident investigations, general inspections, fire safety work and asbestos safety, together with issues on buildings ventilation due to Covid, particularly in schools. Carbon dioxide monitoring has increased in schools following requests from headteachers and guidance notes have been circulated to schools from Health and Safety in relation to ventilation and temperature requirements. There has also been an increase in requests for fire safety inspections.

Members were also informed that Health and Safety are currently in the process of migrating to a new database system. This will include improvements from the current system and will ensure that essential asbestos information is maintained.

Members were advised that an audit was planned for contractual management, to review arrangements and procedures when engaging contractors to ensure their awareness of responsibilities and further training would be provided.

Members were informed that policy reviews were ongoing and the 'violence at work' policy was currently being reviewed. Reviews are ongoing to ensure robust and up to date policies and Members were advised that an update on policy reviews should be available to Members at the next Corporate Health and Safety meeting in June.

A Member queried whether the issue with ventilation in schools would be resolved the same way as it had been in Scotland, whereby the bottom of classroom doors had been removed. Members were advised that this would not be the course of action for schools in Caerphilly County Borough.

Following consideration of the update, the Committee noted the contents.

5. HEALTH AND SAFETY SLA UPDATE

The Principal Health and Safety Officer presented the report which updated members on the Health and Safety SLA Service offered to schools. The report provided information for members of the Committee, to ensure that they are kept informed of any matters that could impact on the management of health and safety within the Council. The action plan for the Health and Safety Division allows resources to be prioritised to areas considered to be an organisational risk. Since 2009 a health and safety SLA has been provided to all Caerphilly schools. Following requests from Head Teachers for additional health and safety support a premium SLA service was introduced in 2015. The report provided an overview of the support provided to Caerphilly Schools.

Members were advised that the Premium Health and Safety SLA Service provides schools with a named Health and Safety Officer who visits the school on a monthly or fortnightly basis. Members were informed of the broad range of tasks undertaken by the Health and Safety SLA Officer and referred members to the list of tasks contained within the report.

Members were advised that the overall responsibility for health and safety compliance remains with the Head Teacher however their Officer works with them to prioritise actions and workload. Health and Safety training is a significant part of the role and ensures schools comply with their legal obligation to provide staff with information, instruction and training on health and safety matters. The service is valued by Head Teachers who appreciate the professionalism, expertise and responsiveness of their Health and Safety SLA Officer.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services requested that the SLA referred to within the report be noted as the Service Level Agreement in future meetings, for the benefit of those viewing the meeting recordings.

Following consideration of the report the Committee noted its contents.

6. STATUTORY MAINTENANCE REPORT – VERBAL UPDATE.

The Maintenance Manager for Property Services gave members a verbal update on the statutory maintenance of the authority and noted a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities of compliance and advised members of the training programme for building managers. Members were advised that the statutory maintenance group meet quarterly to discuss compliance and maintenance figures, and the findings from these meetings are presented to CMT. Members were informed of the reduction in fire risk assessment tasks in schools from 700 to just over 200 in the last 2 years and were working to reduce this number further.

Members were shown a quarterly report that is presented to CMT which gave members information on the compliance testing in operational buildings and schools. Members were advised that figures for outstanding compliance checks had risen during the pandemic due to restricted access into schools but that these figures had now been reduced. Members were provided with information in relation to overdue remedials and were advised that these figures were in relation to the Councils 400 buildings. Information was provided to members in relation to the leased-out buildings and noted very good compliance figures, considering the difficulty contacting clients during the pandemic.

Members were also advised that compliance for floodlights owned and maintained by CCBC and all compliance in relation to sheltered housing were both 100%.

Members were informed that the Councils' 10,000 assets in relation to general housing had very low figures for outstanding remedials, and that external lighting and power had excellent compliance levels.

The Head of People Services advised members that the level of outstanding fire risk assessments is under constant review and as tasks are removed, new tasks will be added. The level of risk assessment tasks is constantly changing; however, members were advised that any priority matters are looked at as urgent matters to minimise the risks across the authority.

A member thanked Health and Safety staff for all their hard work and during the pandemic, and the Unison representative wished to compliment staff on the information and guidance provided on the CCBC website in relation to risk assessments and queried whether staff were encouraged to report 'near misses' and any potential health and safety concerns. Members were advised that there had been an increase in 'near misses' being reported but would wish to see an increase in these figures in the future. Members were informed that a training video for staff is currently being developed.

A member wished to note the good work being done with asbestos. Referred to another authority's fines over asbestos issues and sought clarification on Caerphilly's status and progress. Members were advised that clearly defined roles and responsibilities are confirmed with Health and Safety before any asbestos work is carried out. The ongoing training of contractors has resulted in very few asbestos related issues, and members were informed that asbestos management and procedures are constantly being reviewed with a significant amount of work planned in the future.

The Chair thanked the staff in Statutory Maintenance and wished to note that they had done a fantastic job.

A member sought clarification on the reporting of 'near misses' and queried whether the low number of reports could be due to staff concerns that reporting a 'near miss' could reflect badly on them. Members were advised that some actual incidents where personal injury occurs are not always reported so 'near misses' are reported even less and this is very difficult to monitor. Staff are encouraged to report 'near misses' to help prevent actual incidents in the future.

Following consideration of the update, the Committee noted its contents.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT PRESENTATION – VERBAL UPDATE.

The Senior Insurance and Risk Manager presented members with a verbal update on risk management and provided details of the employer liability claims against the authority within the last 4 years. Members were advised that in 2018/19 there were 7 employee claims, with costs and damages so far of £26,000, in 2019/20 there were also 7 employee claims with £13,500 paid out for costs and damages so far. For 2020/21 there were 3 employee claims with no payments to date and for 2021/22 there were also 3 employee claims which are all still ongoing. Members were advised that these numbers had significantly reduced in the last 10 years due to the robust policies and procedures in place by the authority. Members were also advised that most employee claims are from education and cleansing.

Members were referred to a recent article in 'Wales Online', in relation to a Freedom of Information request regarding employee liability claims within local authorities in Wales. Members were informed that Caerphilly had received lower claims than Cardiff, Newport, Swansea, and Rhondda Cynon Taff and that this was thought to be due to good risk assessment and robust policies. Members were advised that there is always room for improvement and meetings will continue to be held between risk management and health and safety, going forward. Advice is available to all departments within the authority in relation to insurance, risk, health and safety and staff training.

Members were referred to the risk management fund which has covered schools and training programmes. Members were provided with information relating to incidents involving council vehicles driven by council staff and were advised that refresher driving training is provided where incidents occur. Members were informed that £593,000 had been paid out in insurance claims, by Caerphilly in the last 4 years, for incidents where council staff have been at fault.

The Unison representative noted the low level of employee liability claims for Caerphilly, in comparison with other local authorities and advised members that union support is given to employees to ensure that incidents are thoroughly investigated, and a full and accurate report is provided when any claims are made. The GMB representative noted the level of claims from the cleansing department and advised members that this would be expected due to the nature of the job and the risks involved. Everything possible is in place to make sure staff safety is priority.

The Head of People Services noted that it would be beneficial for the Senior Insurance and Risk Manager to attend future Corporate Health and Safety Committee meetings and requested a meeting with the Chair, Vice Chair and Cabinet Member to confirm this attendance going forward.

The Unison representative sought clarification relating to insurance cover for staff driving their own vehicles for work purposes. Members were advised that staff should contact their own insurance provider to check their insurance. Members were also advised that a guidance note in relation to using your own vehicle for work purposes had previously been circulated to all staff.

The Cabinet Member sought clarification on any reductions in employee liability claims during the pandemic. Members were advised that there had been a slight reduction in claims, particularly in relation to motor claims. Members were also advised that no employee claims had been received in relation to home working.

The Chair thanked the Officer for her contribution to the meeting.

Following consideration of the presentation, the Committee noted its contents.

8-9. INFORMATION ITEMS

The Committee noted the contents of the following information reports which had not been called forward for discussion at the meeting. Full details were included in the Officer's reports.

1. Recent Health and Safety Executive Updates.
2. Accident Statistics Report for October – December 2021.

The meeting closed at 11.12 am.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 18th July 2022, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR