

CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE SAFETY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, TREDOMEN ON THURSDAY, 7TH FEBRUARY 2002 AT 9.30 A.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor P.J. Bevan - Chairman
Councillor A.J. Pritchard - Vice-Chairman

Councillors:

Mrs M.E. Hughes, H.E. Styles and D.T. Wiltshire

Together with:

R. Gough (Personnel Manager - Advice and Consultancy), M. Workman (Commercial Services Manager), P. Griffiths (Senior Corporate Safety Officer), K. Meredith (Corporate Safety Officer), D. Price (Head of Grounds Maintenance), P.V. Neale (Health, Safety and Welfare Officer), Mrs. E. Thomas (Personnel Manager), T. White (Refuse and Cleansing Officer) and Mrs. K. Wall (Committee Services Officer)

Trade Union Safety Representatives

B. Barrowman, J. Reece, N. Davies, N. Short, K.A. Bevan, J. Poole, A. Morton, R. Agg, J. Hogan and L. Horrocks

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs. A. Blackman and H. Price, G. Price (Admin Officer - Welfare and Central Support - Education), A. Card and N. Blundell.

1. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 8th November 2001 were received and noted.

Matters Arising

(i) **Issues Raised by Safety Representatives - Refuse Collection**

Tony White (Refuse and Cleansing Officer) reported that since the last meeting, the Environmental Services and Housing Directorate had conducted a trial refuse collection service using a smaller refuse vehicle to collect refuse from areas with narrow rear lanes. However, the vehicle had broken down on a number of occasions and the trial had not proved to be very successful.

An independent risk assessment study of the refuse collection service in these areas had also been undertaken. Following the risk assessment, the authority had decided to employ extra operatives to collect the bins in narrow back lanes and take them to an appropriate collection point at the end of the lane to await collection by the refuse vehicle. The operatives would also then return the bins to households along the lane. Letters explaining the new procedure had been sent to residents and they had also been asked to identify

their house number on the bins to assist the operatives when returning the bins.

Members of the Committee expressed their concern about the proposal, but were assured that the risk assessment had identified this practice as being low risk and that the operatives would receive appropriate manual handling training. To provide further details, it was agreed that a copy of the Marsh Report would be provided at the next meeting.

(ii) **Issues Raised by Safety Representatives - Temperature of Warm Water at Hand Basins**

At the last meeting, it was reported that during their inspection of premises, Officers from the Corporate Safety Unit inspected wash hand basins to ensure that thermostatic valves had been fitted to control the temperature of warm water. Where this was not the case, the Unit would recommend that thermostatic valves were fitted and maintained.

Mr Ken Bevan (safety representative) enquired about incidents where the Corporate Safety Unit had identified the need to install thermostatic valves and these had not subsequently been fitted.

The Committee felt that this was an important issue and it was agreed that a report would be submitted to the next meeting outlining the regulations regarding the temperature of warm water at wash hand basins and the procedure for ensuring that recommendations made by the Corporate Safety Unit were enforced.

(iii) **Daily Vehicle Checks**

Mr Mike Workman (Commercial Services Manager) indicated that a report reflecting the views previously expressed at the Committee and suggesting that there should be uniformity throughout the authority in respect of the time allowed for daily vehicle checks had been submitted to Corporate Management Team earlier that day.

(iv) **Managers Handbook**

The Committee discussed the availability of the Managers Handbook and it was noted that a copy would be made available in the Members Library for Members' use. The safety representatives present indicated their wish to have access to the document and it was agreed that they would be provided with copies.

(v) **Corporate Guidance on the Control, Prevention of Infectious Diseases and Arrangement Guidelines on Immunisation**

Mr Rod Gough (Personnel Manager - Advice and Consultancy) reported that following the last meeting, no further comments in respect of the above guidance had been received and therefore copies of the documentation had been issued to appropriate managers. He also advised the Committee that managers' use of the documents would be monitored.

(vi) **Guidance for Managers on Lone Workers**

Ken Bevan referred to incidents where care workers had been attacked by their clients and he stated that in some of these cases, he believed risk assessments had not been undertaken.

Rod Gough explained that he believed that if difficulties had been experienced with a particular client, details would be included as part of that client's care assessment plan. However, as there were no Officers present from the Social Services Directorate, Mr Gough agreed to discuss the issues raised with colleagues in that Directorate and report back to the next meeting.

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND LEISURE

2. **Coal Fired Boiler Plant in Schools**

It was noted that the author of the report, Mr Greg Price (Admin. Welfare Officer - Education and Leisure) was not present at the meeting to outline his report.

During the course of discussion, Ken Bevan expressed a number of specific concerns and Mr Gough undertook to arrange a meeting with Mr Price and Mr Bevan to fully examine the issues raised.

The Committee felt that the report was not comprehensive and lacked details of the obligations placed on the authority to install automatic isolators to school boiler plants and the potential dangers of carbon monoxide.

It was therefore agreed that a more detailed report encompassing the above issues would be submitted to the next meeting.

During discussion, the feasibility of using wood burning boilers in schools was mentioned. It was reported that the issue of using alternative fuels and installing such equipment in new build schools was currently being considered by Property Services and it was agreed that a report providing further details would be submitted to the next meeting.

REPORTS OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

3. First Aid at Work Training

The Committee noted the report that provided details of first aid courses arranged by the Health, Safety and Welfare Officer from September 1999 to January 2002.

4. Violence at Work Register

The Committee noted the report that provided details of the INCHECK Violence at Work Register.

5. European Week of Safety and Health

It was reported that the authority had been awarded a certificate in respect of the corporate Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) training, from the Chairman of the Health and Safety Commission in recognition of the authority's contribution to European Week of Safety and Health.

It was noted that approximately 90 members of staff had participated in the CPR training and it was agreed that they be sent a letter of congratulations on behalf of the Committee.

REPORTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES AND HOUSING

6. Accident Statistics

The report provided details of the numbers and types of industrial accidents which had occurred to staff, school pupils, clients of services provided by the authority and members of the public and which had been associated with the activities of the authority during the period 1st July 2001 - 30th September 2001. Accident statistics for the six-month period 1st April - 30th September 2001 were also provided.

The Committee noted the report.

7. Standardisation of Respiratory Protective Equipment

The report advised the Committee of the proposals to standardise the personal protective equipment issued to staff.

It was noted that the Corporate Safety Unit was currently working with Procurement Services to

standardise the quality and type of the respiratory protective equipment stocked at Central Stores.

A guide identifying the type of respiratory equipment required for chemicals used in each Directorate had been produced and copies had been circulated to Committee members.

During consideration of the report, a safety representative referred to the potential harm that could be caused to staff suffering from breathing difficulties, when using respiratory equipment and he inquired whether staff had been warned of the potential dangers to health.

Mr Phil Griffiths (Senior Corporate Safety Officer), explained that operating instructions and appropriate health warnings would normally be issued by the manufacturer.

Notwithstanding this, the Committee felt that operatives with known breathing difficulties should be advised of the potential harm to their health caused by the use of protective respiratory equipment.

8. Standardisation of Fire Procedures

Copies of a draft document entitled 'Responsibilities of Fire Personnel Controlling Evacuations and Guidance on Terminology and Fire Plans for Offices', prepared by the Corporate Safety Unit to provide information in respect of the requirements of relevant legislation and to ensure that these requirements were introduced into workplace practices, were circulated at the meeting.

During discussion, a safety representative referred to incidences where fire extinguishers in particular premises had not received an annual inspection.

The Committee was advised of the procedure adopted by Property Services to ensure that all fire extinguishers received an annual inspection and it was agreed that the issue raised would be referred to Property Services to investigate.

The Committee noted the report and document circulated.

9. Performance Indicators

The Committee was informed that a number of performance indicators covering health and safety work had been devised by Syniad and that individual authorities had agreed to provide information on all or some of the identified indicators.

A report giving examples of the performance indicators to be used was circulated at the meeting and it was noted that a more detailed report including comparative data would be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

10. Corporate Safety Unit - Programme of Work for 2002 - 2003

The report advised the Committee of an alteration in the way the Corporate Safety Unit intended to prioritise its work in the coming year. It was noted that the Unit's service delivery plan included both pro-active and re-active activities. As part of its pro-active work, the Unit had undertaken 156 computer generated risk assessed audits per year. In order however, to provide a more balanced programme of work, a change of approach had been introduced. From April 2002, the programme would include the following:-

- 52 computer generated audits of premises based on risk-assessment
- 52 audits following requests from Management where non-compliance with legislation or Health and Safety Policies is suspected
- 52 audits allied to the HSE programme of work
- Specific projects, i.e. signage at road works, checks on contractors etc

- Educational and information initiatives, e.g. European Week of Safety and Health, Big Cheese, River of Light, Crucial Crew

The Committee noted the report.

11. **Damaged Tools and Equipment**

The Committee was reminded that at the last meeting, a Member had enquired about the procedure for the inspection of equipment and the process of logging damaged or dangerous equipment.

The report provided details of the procedures adopted and it was noted that Officers from the Corporate Safety Unit had visited depots and worksites operated by Building Maintenance, Grounds Maintenance, Highways and Refuse/Cleansing in order to check the procedures for dealing with damaged or defective tools and equipment.

Overall, Officers had found that each Service area had suitable and efficient procedures in place and details of specific processes were detailed in the report.

Where discrepancies in procedures had been highlighted, appropriate advice had been issued to Managers.

The Committee discussed the report and a number of safety representatives indicated that the procedures outlined in the report were not always adhered to, particularly in respect of portable tools.

The Chairman advised the safety representatives to notify the Corporate Safety Unit of any specific incidents of non-compliance so that they could be investigated.

12. **Audiometric Testing**

It was noted that the Audiometric Testing Programme had been completed in November 2001 and a total number of 735 employees had been tested. The report on the test results was still awaited.

13. **'In House' Training**

The report provided details of the Induction Training and Manual Handling Training courses organised by an Officer of the Corporate Safety Unit.

During discussion, the safety representatives enquired about the availability of asbestos awareness training.

Phil Griffiths responded and indicated that this type of training was of a specialist nature and could not be provided by the Corporate Safety Unit. However, he agreed that the Unit could facilitate appropriate training courses.

14. **Proposed Legislation and Guidance**

The report provided details of the following information issued by the Health and Safety Commission:-

- Managing Health and Safety, Five Steps to Success
- Proposal to amend the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 and the Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations 1997
- Proposals to amend regulations affecting the Council's operations

The Committee noted the information provided.

15. The Corporate Accident Reporting Programme

The report advised the Committee of an improvement made to the procedure for reporting industrial accidents and the recording of data relating to such incidents.

A proposed change to legislation was likely to require the investigation of reportable accidents within ten days of occurrence.

This change had led to concern at the Corporate Safety Unit because the length of time between an accident and receipt of the information at the Unit was often more than ten days.

In an effort to improve reporting procedures, IT had compared a number of proprietary accident recording systems, before deciding to write a programme 'in house'.

The Education and Leisure and Environmental Services and Housing Directorates were currently trialling the programme and once proved, use of the programme would be extended to other Directorates.

The Committee noted the report.

16. River of Light Procession

The report advised the Committee of the measures taken to ensure the health and safety of participants at the River of Light procession held on 20th December 2001.

17. Directorate Safety Co-ordinators Group

At the last meeting, a report had been submitted in respect of the measures to be taken to raise the profile of health and safety within the authority. One of these measures was the proposal to hold quarterly meetings of the Directorate Safety Co-ordinators.

The first meeting of the Group had been held on 3rd January and the report before the Committee provided details of the issues discussed at that meeting.

The Committee noted the report.

REPORTS SUBMITTED BY SAFETY REPRESENTATIVES

18. Risk Assessments

The report presented by Ken Bevan and Nigel Davies referred to the general duty placed on the authority under the Health and Safety at Work Act to ensure 'the health, safety and welfare of its employees' and to consult them concerning arrangements for joint action on health and safety matters. Under the Act, part of the employer's duty was also to provide systems of work that were so far as was reasonably practical, safe without risks to health.

The safety representatives referred to generic risk assessments provided by the Corporate Safety Unit and stated that in their opinion, managers did not always undertake detailed specific risk assessments for particular areas of work. An example of an incident where a painter had sustained a needle-stick injury whilst clearing an area of rubbish, a job that had been considered 'safe' was outlined and it was stated that in this instance, a specific risk assessment had not been carried out.

Phil Griffiths responded and confirmed that the Corporate Safety Unit provided generic risk assessments but stressed that managers should use these as the basis for preparing more

specific risk assessments. He also stated that the Unit had identified a shortfall in appropriate training for managers and foremen and he assured the Committee that the situation would be closely monitored and advice given as appropriate.

Following discussion, it was agreed that a letter would be sent to managers and foremen reminding of their duty to undertake specific risk assessments and to notify staff of potential hazards.

19. **Asbestos**

Ken Bevan submitted a report on the dangers of exposure to asbestos.

He referred to the need to undertake an asbestos audit of all council owned property and the need to inform employees working in buildings found to contain asbestos and employees or contractors carrying out refurbishments of the presence of asbestos and how to protect themselves.

He also stated that in his opinion, work carried out where asbestos had been found to be present should be better monitored and that employees and contractors in the building sector should receive training in asbestos awareness and precautions to minimise risk.

The report made reference to the requirements of the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations and to incidents where contractors had knowingly or unknowingly disturbed asbestos panels without taking adequate precautions.

The position of contractors undertaking work on behalf of the authority was outlined and examples given of incidents where it was alleged that work had been carried out on asbestos based products without the necessary precautions being taken.

Members of the Committee thanked Mr Bevan for his report and a general discussion ensued.

The Committee was reminded that Corporate Management Team (CMT) had recently considered a report outlining the changes to the Approved Code of Practice to the Control of Asbestos Regulations 1989 which required the authority to survey buildings, identify the presence, type and condition of asbestos and the necessity to remove or manage the material.

Further reports on the implications for the authority had been considered by CMT and the Technical Services Directorate had submitted a growth bid for the employment of a suitably qualified person to undertake surveys of Council owned and operated premises.

Reports on surveys, together with advice would then be presented to Management to enable decisions on the removal or management of asbestos to be made. If asbestos was to remain in place, appropriate details would be kept at individual premises and made available to persons working on that building.

The Committee welcomed the fact that a qualified surveyor would be employed to undertake surveys as described above but also referred to the apparent lack of asbestos awareness training made available to the workforce.

The Committee acknowledged the importance of training and it was agreed that a report outlining the training courses available and identifying future requirements would be submitted to the next meeting.

The position of contractors undertaking contracts on the authority's behalf was then discussed and it was reported that the Council operated a Select Tender List and that as part of this process, the Corporate Safety Unit vetted contractors' health and safety policies.

The Chairman thanked Mr Bevan for raising the issue and Committee members for their contributions to the debate.

20. **Catering**

(i) **Footwear**

Nigel Davies reported that he had received numerous enquiries regarding the issue of protective footwear to staff working in Council kitchens.

Phil Griffiths reported that he had spoken to Lyndsey Williams (Contracts Manager) who had indicated that members of staff were responsible for providing their own footwear and that as part of the risk assessment carried out for this type of work, staff were required to use a spray on the soles of their shoes to avoid the risk of slipping.

Following discussion, the Chairman agreed to discuss the requirements of the risk assessment with Mrs Sally Franks (head of Catering and Cleansing Services).

(ii) **Arm Protection Whilst Entering Hot Ovens**

Nigel Davies enquired about the provision of personal protective equipment to kitchen staff.

It was reported that wrist and arm protectors were available in all kitchens.

(iii) **Building Services/General**

The Committee was informed that a member of Building Services had recently suffered an injury when a nail had penetrated his wellington boot. It appeared that the boots did not have reinforced soles and Nigel Davies enquired whether in light of this incident, Central Stores would continue to stock these particular boots.

Phil Griffiths indicated that this issue was being discussed with the Head of Procurement Services and it was reported that there was very little difference in the cost of ordinary wellington boots and those with reinforced soles.

On a general note, the Chairman urged the safety representatives to contact individual managers in the first instance if they encountered specific problems and to only refer issues to the Corporate Safety Committee if they could not resolve the problems.

21. **Date of Next Meeting**

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on Thursday, 9th May at 9.30 a.m.

The meeting closed at 11.45 a.m.