



CORPORATE HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT COUNCIL OFFICES, PENALLTA HOUSE
ON MONDAY, 21ST NOVEMBER 2011 AT 10.00 A.M.**

PRESENT:

Councillor P.J. Bevan – Chairman
Councillor J.E. Fussell – Vice-Chairman

Councillors:

D.T. Hardacre, G.J. Hughes

Together with:

D. Jones (Health and Safety Manager), E. Townsend (Deputy Health and Safety Manager), N. Barnett (Deputy Chief Executive), G. Hardacre (Head of Human Resources and Organisation Development), T. Phillips (Senior Health and Safety Officer), J. Rowe (Leisure Services Manager), M.S. Williams (Head of Public Services), R.J. Thomas (Committee Services Officer)

Trade Union Representatives:

S. Brassinne (UCATT), J. Roberts-Garcia (UNISON), P. Jones (AMICUS)

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P.C.W. Bailie, Mrs A. Collins, A.G. Higgs and Trade Union Representatives N. Funnell (GMB) and B. May (T&G)

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the beginning or during the meeting.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Corporate Health and Safety Committee held on 15th August 2011 (minutes nos. 1 - 9, on page nos. 1 - 4), be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. MATTERS ARISING

3.1 Health and Safety Executive Involvement (Minute Item No. 4.2)

Members were advised written agreement to extend notice compliance had now been received from the HSE.

3.2 Establishment of an In-House Asbestos Team (Minute Item No. 6)

Members were advised that the system support officer had now joined the team.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

4. PRESENTATION ON EMPLOYEE WELL BEING

Terry Phillips, Senior Health and Safety Officer, gave Members, Management and Trade Union Safety Representatives a presentation on the Authority's Employee Well Being Protocol.

Members were advised there was no specific Health and Safety legislation relating to stress in the workplace, but this was implied under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992 and HSE standards. There was also legal precedent as a result of John Walker versus Northumberland County Council in 1995, the first case where an employee was awarded damages for 'psychiatric injury'.

Mr Phillips advised the well being protocol can be initiated when staff are absent from work or report that they are suffering from work related illnesses. The referral is via line managers, Human Resources or Occupational Health and can be dealt with at a local, informal level or by a well-being referral for more complex cases. The referral process was highlighted and examples of completed wellbeing indicator results and a well being risk assessment were circulated at the meeting.

Members were asked to note that the risk assessment was a legally binding document that laid out clear, mutually agreed measures to resolve any issues within a predetermined timescale. The risk assessment was a working document that is updated and amended as necessary during the course of its life. Control measures within the document need to reduce the risk as low as possible, be reasonable, simple, inexpensive and where applicable, take into account the Equality Act.

The importance of mediation to allow the employee to have their say, and for the employer to take the employee's perceptions into account, was emphasised. In addition, other support mechanisms were highlighted, such as Care First, and line managers had been trained to identify early warning signs. Further training was planned for next year.

In closing the presentation, the need for early recognition and intervention of employee issues was highlighted. Health and Safety teams and Human Resources had worked closely together to establish the protocols and early indications showed this to be successful. This was recognised by other local authorities who were making enquiries regarding the protocol.

The Chairman thanked Mr Phillips for the informative presentation and invited comments and questions from Members.

Members sought clarification regarding the initial referral and sought assurances that the immediate line manager could be circumvented (if the employee perceived them to be the source of their concerns), and that officers would wait for the appropriate time to ask the employee to complete the well being questionnaire. Officers responded further to additional general questions.

The Corporate Health and Safety Committee noted that the Corporate Management Arrangements – Well Being Protocol meets legal requirements, provides consultation and evidences management action and the Committee supported the arrangements.

5. HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE INVOLVEMENT

The report gave Members, Management and Trade Union Safety Representatives a formal update on Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Involvement with the Authority.

Officers presented highlights from the report and the Health and Safety Manager gave special thanks to trade union representatives, in particular GMB representatives who had been very supportive over the past few years in improving health and safety standards in the Waste and Recycling Service and who were directly involved in the Waste Industry Safety and Health Inspection. She stated this had demonstrated a collaborative effort to the HSE, which had reflected well on the Authority. In recognition of the Council's excellent work, the HSE have advised neighbouring Authorities to visit Caerphilly to view the arrangements in place.

Members discussed the Public Services Division disbandment within the HSE and how this would affect communication with the Public Sector in future. While CCBC was in a strong position, this was partly as a result of a positive relationship with the HSE over the past few years, assisting in the development of health and safety standards. Officers felt this was a retrograde step for Health and Safety within the Public Sector, but an inevitable development given budget constraints and loss of staff in the HSE.

It will be important to maintain the standards achieved in health and safety and continue with the improvement agenda. In addition, the Authority had a moral responsibility to assist neighbouring councils in improving their standards. This support would continue and in some cases may become more formal, positioning Caerphilly as a strategic leader in Health and Safety Management in the region. However, this additional activity would not be to the detriment to Caerphilly County Borough Council.

The Corporate Health and Safety Committee noted the contents of the report

6. INCLEMENT WEATHER PREPARATIONS

The report provided Members, Management and Trade Union Safety Representatives of the Committee with an overview of preparations for inclement weather for the coming winter months.

Officers highlighted that following each winter Highways Operations hold a de-briefing session to review and improve preparations for the following winter. Regular updates are also received to ensure arrangements are in place in key service areas to reduce the risk to staff, service users and residents from inclement weather.

Members discussed the report and asked whether more schools had now taken up the offer of the snow clearance kit to keep school footpaths and entrances clear. Officers advised just 22 schools out of 90 have taken up the offer. The Health and Safety Manager had met with the Corporate Director and Senior Management Team to try to progress this. Members questioned whether the prioritised list used in the clearing of school entrance roads could be sent to them and whether it could be seen by the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee. The Chairman agreed that an adapted list, with additional information, should be presented to the Scrutiny Committee.

The UCATT trade union representative advised that their call out staff had yet to be issued with YakTrax shoe attachments, despite over 1000 being issued to staff that deliver front line services in the winter months. Officers advised a further delivery had just been received and arrangements would be made for the appropriate staff to receive them.

The Corporate Health and Safety Committee noted the contents of the report.

7. ASBESTOS IMPROVEMENT NOTICE ACTION PLAN

The report gave Members, Management and Trade Union Safety Representatives an update on the Asbestos Improvement Action Plan, following the asbestos incident at Fochriw Primary School in August 2010.

Members were asked to note that work was ongoing and progressing as planned.

The Corporate Health and Safety Committee noted the contents of the report.

8. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2012

The report informed Members, Management and Trade Union Safety Representatives of the difficulty in obtaining consistent attendance, particularly in the month of August and officers suggested revising the number of meetings held in the reporting year.

Members discussed the report and general support was given to the officer's suggestion. In addition, the Chairman highlighted the importance of the Committee and stated that each directorate within the Authority should be represented.

The Health and Safety Manager agreed to review future meeting dates to ensure the inclusion of accident statistics in a timely fashion and to take into consideration Member's comments.

The Corporate Health and Safety Committee noted the contents of the report and welcomed a review of meeting dates.

9. INFORMATION ITEMS

The following reports were received and noted without discussion:

- (1) Accident Statistics Report for Quarter 2 July - September 2011;
- (2) Recent HSE Updates.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Deputy Chief Executive expressed his thanks to the Health and Safety team for their hard work and assistance in what had been a difficult year.

The meeting closed at 11.15 p.m.

Approved as a correct record, and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the next meeting, they were signed by the Chairman.

CHAIRMAN