



CORPORATE HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, PENALLTA HOUSE,
TREDOMEN ON MONDAY, 25TH JUNE 2012 AT 10.00 A.M.**

PRESENT:

Councillors:

P.J. Bevan, Mrs C. Forehead, D.T. Hardacre, D. Havard, A.G. Higgs, G.J. Hughes.

Together with:

N. Barnett (Deputy Chief Executive), G. Hardacre (Head of HR and Organisation Development), D. Jones (Health, Safety & Occupational Health Manager), M.S. Williams (Head of Public Services), J. Rowe (Leisure Services Manager), S.M. Kauczok (Committee Services Officer)

Trade Union Representatives:

J. Roberts-Garcia & P. Jones.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor S. Kent, S. Brassinne, P. Jones and E. Townsend (Deputy Health & Safety Manager).

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

2. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

Councillor A.G. Higgs was appointed Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing year. Councillor Higgs took the chair for the remainder of the meeting.

3. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN

Councillor D. Havard was appointed Vice Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing year.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Corporate Health and Safety Committee held on 27th February 2012 (minutes nos. 1 - 8, on page nos. 1 - 4), be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

5. HEALTH AND SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee received a presentation from Donna Jones, Health, Safety and Occupational Health Manager on the Health, Safety, Occupational Health and Risk Management Report 2011/2012. An overview was received of the key health and safety achievements during the year, performance against targets for 2011-12; the Care First Counselling Service; Health and Safety Training and details of civil claims and priorities for 2012-13.

The Authority faced a number of health and safety challenges in 2011; asbestos management, hand arm vibration syndrome, work related stress, legionella management, electrical safety in Council premises and fire risk within flats, were all key issues which needed to be addressed. A number of inspections by the enforcing authorities were undertaken and all had a positive outcome for the Authority with no enforcement action required.

In September 2011 the Authority implemented the RAMIS H&S Management System to manage all statutory compliance issues for the Authority's premises portfolio. The Authority is the first in Wales to implement a system of this nature, which will assist in proactively managing the Authority's assets.

In February 2011 the HSE undertook an inspection of the arrangements in place to manage hand arm vibration exposure. The HSE recommended improvements but no enforcement action was taken. Further improvements are planned in 2012 to eliminate, where possible, the risk to staff who are assessed as vulnerable to vibration exposure.

A Health and Safety Training Team was established in September 2011. The majority of H&S training is now delivered in house, thereby reducing costs and ensuring quality and relevant training is delivered. Collaborations have also been established with Torfaen, Newport and Merthyr Councils to deliver bespoke health and safety training to their staff.

An Asbestos Management Team was established in September 2011. The Team is part of the Health and Safety Division and is responsible for ensuring that asbestos management surveys are undertaken on all Authority premises and uploaded to RAMIS. The Team will also be responsible for setting asbestos policy and guidance as well as investigating asbestos incidents and monitoring works undertaken on high-risk buildings. Formal action has been taken against asbestos companies who have provided a poor service. Two improvement notices from the previous year were closed out during 2011/12. Both related to an asbestos incident during work on a primary school in 2010.

The accident statistics for 2011 show a slight increase in comparison with 2010. The total number of accidents has increased from 391 in 2010 to 401 in 2011. The key issues are highlighted in the report.

Reference was made to H&S proactive inspections/risk assessments, which are undertaken using the mobile RAMIS device. A table detailing the H&S inspection programme for 2011/12 was shown. In an Audit Office survey of all Welsh schools in 2009, it was recorded that Caerphilly was the highest rated Council in Wales for Health and Safety. Since then the service has continued to achieve excellent feedback in school perception surveys. 2011/12 was the third year of operating the SLA Service to schools and the first year that 100% of schools took up the service.

The Occupational Health Service has had a very busy year with additional nurse and doctor time being contracted in to cover absence and reduce waiting list times. 2011/12 also saw an increase in contacts to the Care First Counselling Service. Of the problem categories, 35% were work related and 65% related to personal concerns.

In terms of the priorities for Health and Safety in 2012-13, the Division will continue to develop the Strategic and Operational Plans. In addition, a Health and Safety Monitoring Plan has been developed in order to prioritise resources and monitor high-risk issues within Directorates. Progress on priority actions will be updated quarterly and reported to Corporate Management Team and the Corporate Health and Safety Committee.

The Chair thanked the Health, Safety & Occupational Health Manager for her informative presentation and invited discussion on the issues raised. Discussion ensued in particular on the work that the Health and Safety Division is undertaking in collaboration with, and on behalf of other organisations and the systems in place for assessing and managing cases of perceived work related stress.

Due to the increase in the services provided by the Health and Safety Division, resources will need to be reviewed in 2012/13. Improvements to asbestos management and safety support to schools are also areas to be reviewed. Occupational Health is currently not sufficiently resourced to support the growing needs of the Authority and a proactive approach to absence management has led to an increase in referrals resulting in longer waiting times for both physician and physiotherapy services. Increasing the OH team by one nurse would avoid the need to contract in nursing staff or contract out essential services.

The Corporate Health and Safety Committee noted the content of the Health, Safety, Occupational Health and Risk Management Annual Report 2011-2012.

6. UNISON PROPOSALS FOR WORKPLACE SAFETY INSPECTIONS

Mr Juan Roberts-Garcia (UNISON), gave a verbal update on this matter. He informed the Committee that the Trade Unions would liaise with the Health, Safety & Occupational Health Manager prior to any workplace safety inspections being undertaken.

The Corporate Health and Safety Committee endorsed this approach.

7. HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE INVOLVEMENT/INVESTIGATIONS

The report provided an update on Health and Safety Executive (HSE) involvement with the Authority since the last meeting.

At the beginning of 2011 the Authority was issued with two improvement notices following an asbestos related incident at Fochriw Primary School in August 2010. The improvement notices required a significant amount of work to close them out, including development of an asbestos management system using RAMIS. The HSE was provided with a presentation on 20th February 2011 on the improvements made and closed out the notices in March 2012. The HSE has approved the Authority's Corporate Asbestos Management Plan, which incorporates the RAMIS system.

The HSE is investigating the discovery of asbestos debris in the attic voids of eight sheltered housing properties at Pantside. The debris is likely to date back to work undertaken in roof voids in 2002, which involved the installation of new boilers and associated flues. The removal project was very successful and tenants were kept fully informed. The HSE's investigations are continuing and an update will be given at the next meeting.

Bedwas Leisure Centre was identified as a possible source of a case of Legionnaire's disease in September 2011. The HSE has investigated the issue and is being kept up to date with developments. The showers at the centre have been taken out of commission and will be re-instated as soon as water samples are clear. RAMIS is used to monitor compliance with Legionella Management Controls and further audits have been undertaken on high risk premises including schools, sheltered housing and residential homes to review compliance with management controls in terms of temperature checks and purging of little used outlets.

During a refurbishment project at St Martins School during the Easter holidays, the Asbestos Team sampled dust on ceiling tiles, which were being removed. The results identified widespread asbestos dust in the ceiling void of the school block and remedial work was undertaken to remove and replace the contaminated ceiling by a licensed contractor. Although there was no evidence to indicate that there was an exposure to asbestos above the control limit, the HSE was informed and meetings were held with staff. In addition, letters were sent to schools of similar construction advising them that they had to seek permission from Health and Safety to undertake any refurbishment work on the fabric of the school building due to the risk of asbestos disturbance. In additions schools affected were advised that they were restricted from accessing roof voids in the buildings until further analysis had been undertaken. The arrangements for high-risk schools are detailed in the revised Corporate Asbestos Management Plan.

It was noted that another Asbestos Surveying Contractor had been suspended from use by the Authority for failure to respond adequately to quality concerns raised over several deficient surveys undertaken on Council premises. Health and Safety would continue to monitor the quality of asbestos work undertaken by external contractors.

The Corporate Health and Safety Committee noted the report.

8. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

The following items were reported and noted.

1. Accident Statistics Report for Quarter 4 : January - March 2012.
2. Recent Health and Safety Executive Updates.

The meeting closed at 11.15 a.m.

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

CHAIRMAN