



CORPORATE HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN,
ON MONDAY, 17TH JUNE 2013 AT 10.00 A.M.**

PRESENT:

Councillors:

P.J. Bevan, D. Havard, S. Kent.

Together with:

D. Jones (Service Manager, Health, Safety and Welfare) L. Donovan (Human Resources Manager), K. Evans (Occupational Health Manager), T. Phillips (Schools Health & Safety Manager), R. Phillips (Asbestos Team Manager), J. Mynott (Principal Engineer), S.M. Kauczok (Committee Services Officer).

Trade Union Representatives:

N. Funnell (GMB), D.A. Williams (UNITE), G. Parr (UCATT).

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Mrs C. Forehead, D.T. Hardacre, A.G. Higgs and G.J. Hughes; Mr S. Brassinne (UCATT); Mr N. Barnett (Acting Chief Executive), Mr G.Hardacre (Head of HR & Organisation Development), Mr T. Shaw (Head of Engineering) and Mr M.S. Williams (Head of Community & Leisure Services).

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

2. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

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

3. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

Councillor S. Kent 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 18th February 2013 (minutes nos. 1 - 10; page nos. 1 - 4), be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5. MATTERS ARISING

Minute No. 8 - Violence at Work Register

The Trade Unions advised that there had been no issues since the last meeting.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following.

6. HEALTH, SAFETY, OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & RISK MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT - PRESENTATION

Donna Jones, Service Manager, Health Safety and Welfare, presented the key issues within the Annual Report 2012-2013, copies of which were circulated at the meeting.

The Committee was advised that RAMIS continued to be implemented in 2012, with school management teams being trained from September. It has quickly become a key management tool in terms of information on statutory compliance of any premises owned by the Authority.

A specialist Asbestos Officer has been appointed and seconded to support Housing colleagues in dealing with asbestos surveys, monitoring of asbestos works and retention of information on asbestos in housing stock. An officer has been allocated on a full time basis to support the extensive cabling required to provide wi-fi for use in schools and this is on course for completion by September 2013.

Health and Safety training continues to be a key area of service with 2538 employees receiving training in the reporting year. In addition, six new Health and Safety courses have been added to the portfolio. The Training Team has been reduced by one member of staff due to a reduction in the requirement for Health and Safety training from neighbouring authorities. The Committee was pleased to note that the Authority had been awarded the Gold Award in Corporate Health.

In terms of Health and Safety performance, no enforcement action had been received from the Health and Safety Executive in the reporting period. A HSE investigation into a wall collapse between two domestic properties found that the Council acted appropriately in line with its legal duties. The HSE report from the investigation into asbestos management at Cwmcarn High School has not yet been issued. The Committee expressed appreciation of the professional manner in which officers had dealt with this matter. Improvements had been implemented by Housing to address fire notices issued in 2011/12 and only three Fire Action Notices had been issued by the South Wales Fire Service during 2012/13.

Appendix 1 provides a final update on the Service Improvement Plan for 2010-2013 and Appendix 2 shows progress against the H&S Monitoring Plan for 2012-2013. The accident statistics show a reduction in accidents across the organisation for 2012 in comparison with 2011. The total number of accidents has reduced from 401 in 2011 to 356 in 2012, representing an 11% reduction in the total number of accidents recorded. The total number of reportable accidents has reduced from 69 in 2011 to 49 in 2012, which represents a 29% reduction in the total number of reportable accidents. It was acknowledged that the figures for the Directorate of the Environment were very commendable.

A review of the Occupational Health Service had been undertaken, the main findings of which are set out in the report. The Authority had subsequently appointed an OH Manager and a Senior Nurse. Plans are in place to deliver drop in clinics for health screening in 2013/14. "Feel Good Friday" will be launched allowing staff to book an appointment to have a range of screening tests to include blood pressure, cholesterol, glucose, seasonal flu vaccinations etc. This reporting year has seen excellent usage of the Care First Counselling Service with a total of 1032 contacts generated.

The number of wellbeing risk assessments is similar to numbers in previous years with Social Services and Education having the highest number of cases undergoing formal assessment. Last year was a very busy year for training delivery with 20 different Health and Safety courses on offer. A reduction in training required by neighbouring authorities resulted in the loss of a training officer post. During 2012/13 the Authority received 25 new employer liability claims, which is slightly up on last year. The cost of the claims is substantially higher compared to last year. The imminent risk to employers' liability claims is the reduced timescales within which the Authority is expected to admit or deny liability upon receipt of a claim. Currently there are 90 days in which to investigate and provide a decision but under new EL protocols this will be reduced to 30 days.

The Health and Safety Division manages all FOI responses on Health and Safety issues. The majority of these relate to Education. In terms of priorities for Health and Safety in 2012-13, a new service improvement plan for 2013-2016 (Appendix 3) details the planned improvements in the H&S Service. The new H&S Monitoring Plan for 2013-14 provides an overview of monitoring, inspection and auditing priorities for the coming year.

Following a full discussion on the issues raised, the Committee noted the content of the Health Safety Occupational Health and Risk Management Annual Report 2012-2013.

7. OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH - PRESENTATION BY KATH EVANS, OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH MANAGER

The Committee welcomed Kath Evans, who had been appointed to the post of Occupational Health Manager following a review of the Occupational Health Unit. Following a brief introduction, Kath outlined the role of the Occupational Health Unit and its importance within the workplace. Details were received of the services that the Department already provides together with those, which it hoped to provide in the future.

Occupational Health plays a vital role in assisting the Authority care for and understand the needs of its employees, enabling it to reduce sickness absence levels and risk of injury or ill health. Occupational Health advises management, employees and their representatives on all matters relating to the effect of work on health and health on work, with the aim of preventing ill-health and promoting general health and wellbeing. The Department also undertakes health surveillance where employees exposed to specific workplace hazards, such as chemicals or noise, are seen periodically to detect early signs of a work related health condition.

The Department is looking at various initiatives in terms of increasing health promotion. It is also hoping to increase the physiotherapy service, which it currently provides on one day a week, by an extra day once a fortnight and plans were in place to employ an additional nurse to help reduce the current waiting list for appointments.

The Chair thanked Kath for her very interesting presentation and for responding to the various issues raised by Members.

8. RETAINING WALLS - PRESENTATION BY JACQUELINE MYNOTT, PRINCIPAL ENGINEER

The Committee received a presentation from Jacqueline Mynott, Principal Engineer, on the management of retaining walls within the County Borough.

It was noted that the Authority had only been able to inspect 5% of the 400 plus recorded walls last year due to resource and cost implications. Slides were shown of various examples of highway walls in various parts of the County Borough. If a wall is found to be in a poor or dangerous condition, the area is made safe, statutory undertakers are contacted and local property owners are notified. Consideration is given whether to repair or replace the wall if it is in the Council's ownership. Sometimes it is decided to monitor the situation. Replacement removes the risk but at substantial cost. Funding is limited and the 2012/13 budget of £120k had been reduced to £80k for 2013/14.

Details were received of the highway prioritisation system for the risk management strategy. There are three areas of management i.e. Safety management, Time management and Customer management. Safety management, which assesses the numbers at risk from the defect, the level of injury and the possibility of risk occurring, is weighted the highest. Repairs are prioritised based on the Management score, which for the example given had been calculated as 10.5. This related to a scheme in Cwmfelinfach, scheduled to be undertaken this year due to the risk to the public.

In terms of risk reduction, asset management is being introduced. Ideally CCBC will locate and record all highway walls, more inspections are planned and planned programmes of replacement would reduce the risk further. However, all this has major resource and cost implications.

The Chair thanked Jacqueline for her informative presentation, which was followed by a question and answer session.

9. GENERAL HEALTH, SAFETY AND OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH UPDATE

The report updated the Committee on Health, Safety and Occupational Health issues and investigations. It was noted that it has been a particularly challenging period for Health, Safety and Occupational Health Teams. There are a number of health and safety investigations ongoing, which will be reported to the Committee once completed.

Since the closure of Cwmcarn High School in October 2012, the Council has reviewed all high risk schools i.e. those of a similar build and construction age as Cwmcarn. The review included the inspection of all known heating cabinets in those schools, which were similar to the design of heater cabinets in Cwmcarn High School where asbestos debris/dust was found. In addition, reassurance air testing was undertaken in several schools. The environmental air testing is ongoing and will be completed in all relevant schools by the end of the summer term. The test results and any remedial action taken will be provided to Corporate Management Team, Members and Trade Union representatives and an update provided at the next meeting of the Committee in November 2013.

An update was then received on the Occupational Health Department and the appointment of Kath Evans, Occupational Health Manager; the work being undertaken to increase awareness of the services provided by Care First and the new Specsavers Eye Care Scheme, which was launched on 1st November. It was noted that under new rules introduced in February 2013, Police are able to take immediate action against a motorist for failing a roadside eyesight test, by notifying the DVLA electronically with details. The licence will be revoked by the DVLA until such time as a driver can demonstrate that their eyesight meets the required standard.

The report also informed the Committee of the proposal to introduce a flu vaccination programme; the health and safety vetting of construction contractors and an ongoing HSE investigation.

The Committee noted the report.

10. TRADE UNION QUESTIONS UPDATE

The report updated the Committee on progress with the questions raised by Trade Union Safety Representatives at the Corporate Health and Safety Committee meeting held on 18th February 2013.

At the Corporate Health and Safety Committee held in February Trade Union Safety Representatives raised questions on the Authority's position on vaccinations for front line staff and the development of the joint union stress questionnaire.

Donna Jones, Service Manager, Health Safety and Welfare, advised that very productive meetings have been held with the Trade Unions and it was proposed to continue with these and provide feedback to the Corporate Health and Safety Committee.

The Health and Safety Team met with Trade unions following the last meeting of the Committee to discuss their questions and concerns regarding the provision of vaccinations to identified members of staff. It was agreed that robust control measures must be implemented to avoid exposure as providing vaccinations carries its own risk and is not 100% effective. It was also agreed that guidance would be prepared setting out the Authority's position on providing vaccinations (attached at Appendix 1).

Following the last meeting of the Committee the draft Joint Union Stress Survey was reviewed and questions and evaluation re-worded by Health and Safety. Amendments to the survey were agreed by HR and the draft document returned to Unison. Officers were currently discussing the most appropriate way the information could be circulated to staff. It was reported that both H&S and HR would welcome the results of the survey responses, as this would assist the organisation in its ongoing efforts to support the wellbeing of employees.

The Trade Union representatives thanked Donna for her contribution to the development of the questionnaire.

The Committee noted the report.

11. INFORMATION ITEMS

The following reports were received and noted:

1. Accident Statistics Report for Quarter 4; January - March 2013;
2. Recent Health and Safety Executive Updates.

Before the meeting closed, discussion took place on the disappointing attendance at this meeting. In addition, it was felt that more departments should be represented in view of the importance of the issues on the agenda.

The meeting closed at 12.55 pm.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 11th November 2013, they were signed by the Chairman.

CHAIRMAN