



CORPORATE HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN ON
WEDNESDAY, 1ST MARCH 2017 AT 10 A.M.**

PRESENT:

Councillor D. Havard (Chair)
Councillor M. Adams (Vice-Chair)

Councillors:

P.J. Bevan, C. Forehead, D.T. Hardacre, A G Higgs, S. Kent.

Together with:

K. Evans (Occupational Health and Wellbeing Manager), P. James (Health and Safety Manager), R. Phillips (Asbestos Officer), T. Phillips (Health and Safety Manager), E. Townsend (Deputy Health and Safety Manager), C. Edwards (Environmental Health Manager), C. Jones (Head of Property Services), S. Richards (Interim Head of Service – Education, Planning and Strategy), A. Dredge (Committee Services Officer).

Trade Union Representatives:

N. Funnell (GMB), J. A. Garcia (UNISON).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor G.J. Hughes, D. Beecham (Electoral Services Manager), L. Donovan (Acting Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development), D Jones (Service Manager, Health Safety and Welfare), Mark Williams (Head of Community and Leisure), T. Hearne (GMB).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES – 21ST NOVEMBER 2016

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Corporate Health and Safety Committee held on Wednesday, 1st March 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. MATTERS ARISING

Possible Listeria cases in Schools – Minute No. 8

By way of an update, Ms Ceri Edwards, Environmental Health Manager reminded the Committee of the incident that occurred on the 9th November 2016, whereby kitchen staff at a school had noted an odour was present on opening a pre-packed ready to serve chicken product. The cook removed the product from the menu and reported the problem to catering services. Following this incident the same issue was reported by two further schools in quick succession. Catering Services staff immediately telephoned all schools that were due to serve the product that day in order to ascertain if others had experienced the same problem. Catering Services then informed Environmental Health. Environmental Health gave the instruction to remove all chicken products from service, to double bag it and place it on hold. Unfortunately as the issue had only been spotted just prior to the point of serving, by the time the removal notice for the product had been issued to all schools some had been served to pupils. Those that served the product had not detected an odour. It was reported that some cooks had detected an odour and had used discretion to remove the product from service. Environmental Health Officers were sent out to the initial three reporting schools as soon as the issue became apparent and they removed the entire product and sent it for testing. Over the following days, additional sampling was undertaken on product from other schools. Initial testing had shown Listeria was present in some samples and further batch testing was then undertaken, the results of which are expected shortly. The Officer confirmed that the Food Standards Agency is the enforcing authority for standards in the production factory and a joint investigation is on-going. Letters have been sent to parents informing them of the potential for illness, however with an incubation period of between 3-70 days it will be difficult to know the true extent of any possible infection for some time.

In terms of infection it was noted that symptoms were very similar to that of colds and flu and given the time of year it would be difficult to differentiate between the two. Symptoms also include fever and muscle aches, sometimes with diarrhoea and vomiting and again due to the time of year the symptoms could be confused with other community acquired infections. The Officer confirmed that listeria was more dangerous to the most vulnerable, the very young, very old or women in the early stages of pregnancy. The risk of a normal healthy child becoming seriously ill was remote. She confirmed that discussions had taken place with some parents and everything that could have been done was done in a timely manner. Parents with concerns were recommended to contact their General Practitioner.

Ms Edwards was pleased to report that the incubation period has elapsed, during which time there had been no reported cases of human infection associated with the Caerphilly Schools.

The Chair thanked the Officer for the update.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports:

5. AGEING WORKFORCE – IMPLICATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The Occupational Health and Wellbeing Manager introduced the report that was provided in response to a union request. The report considers the implications of an ageing workforce, in particular front line staff who are undertaking physical roles. The report provides an overview of the issues which are likely to affect work as well as some options to consider in supporting an ageing workforce.

Reference was made to the challenges of an ageing workforce, combined with shrinking pools from which to draw new workers. This has been particularly apparent in the public sector as well as other industries. Organisations are facing a number of issues associated with this trend. In response, they are attempting to extend the working career of their employees through alternative work arrangements, preserve organisational memory and balance the work/life needs of multiple generations within the employee population. Details of the health challenges of an ageing workforce, the positive aspects of employing older people and some options in supporting more experienced employees, were set out in the report.

She also delivered a presentation that set out the biological effects of ageing. In terms of functional Impairment, reference was made to the available evidence relating to hearing, eye sight, muscle strength and cognitive function. Comparisons were made within different age groups.

Clarification was sought in relation to eye site tests for employees who frequently use PC's. It was explained that Display Screen Equipment (DSE) users are entitled to vouchers for site tests. Occupational Health always recommends that staff have regular site tests. A Member queried if there have been any reported problems with children using whiteboards as part of the digital curriculum within schools. The Committee were advised that no research has been undertaken as yet. If children complain of headaches, they should be taken to an optician. This would need to be clarified by Welsh Government as this is not a requirement of the Local Authority as this does not fall within DSE.

The Committee queried the position in terms of age related cognitive decline and if offering alternative duties to employees is an option. It was explained that the Council will look at service areas as a whole and would always look at opportunities to allow staff to continue in their employment. Evidence suggests that any marked decrease in cognitive performance doesn't show until after seventy years of age. Before that any deterioration is not likely to affect performance as other attributes i.e. experience, education, motivation, better judgement and job knowledge are likely to compensate. Members discussed the option of employees being offered lower grade posts as an alternative. It was explained that some employees have been on protected salaries for an 18 month period however, this is not carte blanche. A representative from the Trade Unions confirmed that they have worked with Councils, where staff have been medically redeployed, staff can elect to accept positions for 2 grades lower with the 18 month salary protection. A Member queried what the situation would be if an individual's job had contributed to their condition and it was explained that statutory mandatory training is clamping down now to help staff prior to reaching the condition that affects them in their work.

The Chair thanked the Occupational Health and Wellbeing Manager for delivering the detailed report and presentation and for Officers responding to questions raised during the course of the debate.

It was moved and seconded that subject to a copy of the minutes of this meeting be sent to the HR Strategy Group, the recommendation in the report be approved. This was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the Corporate Health and Safety Committee note the content of the report;
- (ii) a copy of the minutes from this meeting be sent to the HR Strategy Group.

6. STATUTORY MAINTENANCE UPDATE

This item was deferred to a future meeting.

7. HSE INVOLVEMENT

This item was deferred to a future meeting.

8. INFORMATION ITEMS

The Committee noted the following items for information, full details of which were included in the Officer's Reports:

1. Accident Statistics Report for October – December 2016.
2. Recent HSE Updates.

The meeting closed at 11.15 am.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 3rd July 2017, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR