



CORPORATE HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN, ON MONDAY, 16TH JUNE 2014 AT 10.00 AM

PRESENT:

Councillors:

M. Adams, D. Havard, A. Higgs, G. Hughes and S. Kent.

Together with:

D. Jones (Service Manager, Health, Safety and Welfare), G. Hardacre (Head of HR and Organisational Development), T. Phillips (Health and Safety Manager), R. Phillips (Asbestos Team Manager), S. Hawkins (Community Leisure Officer), E. Townsend (Deputy Health and Safety Manager), M.S. Williams (Head of Community and Leisure Services), T. Maher (Assistant Director Planning and Strategy, Education) and E. Sullivan (Democratic Services Officer).

Trade Union Representatives:

S. Brassinne (UCATT).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors P.J. Bevan, Mrs C. Forehead and D. Hardacre.

2. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

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

3. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

Councillor S. Kent was appointed Vice-Chair of the Committee for the ensuing year.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

5. MINUTES

Subject to the inclusion of Cllr D. Havard in the list of apologies for absence it was

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Corporate Health and Safety Committee held on 17th February 2014, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

6. ANNUAL HEALTH, SAFETY AND OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH REPORT - PRESENTATION

Donna Jones, Service Manager, Health, Safety and Welfare presented an outline of the Health, Safety, Occupational Health and Risk Management Annual Report for 2013-2014 and a copy of the report was circulated to Members. The presentation detailed Health and Safety Achievements and Performance for 2013/14, Carefirst Services, Health and Safety Training, Civil Claims and the Priorities for 2014-15.

The key Health and Safety achievements were highlighted and reference made to the changes to the Specsavers Eye Care Scheme; the introduction of Health and Safety vetting of Contractors; the development and implementation of a Corporate Asbestos Management Plan; Fire Safety in Residential Homes; Design and Technology/Radiation Sources in Schools and a new Health and Safety handbook for Park Services.

In relation to the Specsavers Eye Care Scheme, the Officer confirmed that staff non-attendance at appointments had led to an issue with unredeemed vouchers. As a result an e-Voucher system had been implemented which allowed any unused vouchers to be reissued. It was noted that since the scheme launched in November 2012, 274 vouchers had been issued.

Members were advised that from 1st January 2014 all construction contractors wishing to work for the Authority must be accredited to one of the Safe Systems in Procurement (SSIP) schemes. This would ensure a consistent approach to Health and Safety pre-vetting to a set standard.

The Corporate Asbestos Management Plan had been further developed in 2013 to support Building Managers and Head Teachers in the management of any materials containing asbestos within their premises. Briefing sessions had been held with 300 employees attending to date. It was noted that the session had been tailored to reflect either school or business management needs.

Following issues identified as a result of the fire service industrial action, residential homes were visited and individual Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans implemented to complement the overall evacuation plan which had also been reviewed and updated. A training programme specific to each individual homes evacuation plan was then delivered to staff.

In relation to Design and Technology Departments in schools specialist external Health and Safety training had been facilitated bringing a further 10 members of school staff to a nationally recognised accredited standard. In addition to this audits had been undertaken with all schools that hold radiation sources required for the delivery of A Level Physics and training sessions held for Heads of Science Departments to raise awareness of good working practices.

Finally working with Park Services risk assessments and procedures were reviewed, updated and streamlined and a new health and safety handbook produced and circulated to Parks employees.

In terms of performance, Members were advised of the work being done by Occupational Health Services in relation to the screening of school caretakers, this had identified a number of staff with symptoms of vibration induced disease. In most cases this was a pre-existing condition however in future all caretaking staff would need to be screened for HAVs prior to placement. The expectations of Head Teachers in relation to the duties and responsibilities of their caretakers was noted and the importance that they should not be required to go over and above their remit was emphasised.

Members were referred to the notices received from the South Wales Fire Service for Ysgol Ifor Bach and Rhiw Syr Dafydd. In relation to Ysgol Ifor Bach a conflict in the recommendations received at the school had become apparent as the Fire Service required the number of displays to be reduced due to the amount of combustible material they contained, whereas ESTYN had recommended the increased use of displays as part of their recommendations.

Accident statistics for 2013/14 were confirmed and were noted to be similar to the previous year. The Officer highlighted a decrease in the number of 3 day lost time periods which had fallen from 23 in 2013/13 to 13 in 2013/14. However there had been an increase in the number of 7 day lost time periods which had risen from 19 in 2013/14 to 26 in 2013/14.

The number of proactive inspections carried out in 2013/14 were confirmed and compared to the figures for 2012/13. Members were advised that these were carried out on a rolling programme and noted that the number of inspections carried out had increased.

Occupational Health performance for 2013/14 was confirmed and Members noted that 2413 appointments had been made during the year, of these 567 had been with physiotherapist. It was noted that the majority of the physiotherapy appointments had been made by people in work to try and avoid the need for sickness absence. Members noted the Health Screening programme and the various health checks had been undertaken in order to ensure that people were fit enough to fulfil their post requirements.

The Carefirst Support Services contact analysis was summarised and highlighted the decrease in work related problems recorded falling from 273 in 2012/13 to 215 in 2013/14. However both the Support Service and the Occupational Health team had noted an increase in mental health related conditions being reported.

Health and Safety training events throughout 2013/14 were confirmed with a total of 296 training events providing training for 2893 employees.

Civil claims for 2013 were outlined with only 16 new employment liability claims being filed in 2013/14 at a cost of £191k compared to costs of £440k in 2012/13. Members were also advised that no employment liability claims had been taken to court in 2013/14. Changes to Employment Liability Law were noted with the deadline for court submission reduced from 90 to 30 days. The Officer confirmed that this authority already worked to a 20 day report deadline.

The key priorities for 2014/15 were confirmed as Mental Health Support and Training, Asbestos Removal Programme in Schools, Completion of Disaster Recovery/Education Continuity Plans for all Schools, Premium Health and Safety SLA Service to Schools and General Inspections to Residential Homes/Day Centres.

The Chair thanked the Officer for the very informative presentation and full discussion ensued.

Clarification was sought with regard to the assessment of school caretakers with pre-existing health conditions and the impact that these would have on their ability to carry their roles. The Officer confirmed that risks were assessed to the point at which an individual was unable to continue in their role, at this point a medical redeployment would be a consideration. Assurances were given that Officers would work closely with the individual members of staff to secure the best outcome possible. Members were advised that due to increasing budgetary pressures School Heads were relying heavily on caretakers and in some instances expectations had far exceeded the remit of the post and the need to bring this back into line was emphasised. It was noted that Heads Teachers were being consulted on using the caretaker role appropriately and they were mindful of striking the right balance. The implications of failing to detect health issues with regard to employer liability were discussed and noted.

Members fully recognised the difference a good caretaker made to a school but were mindful that any demands placed on them should not go beyond their job description. Officers confirmed that five caretakers had been identified with vibration induced disease and although they had been restricted from using certain equipment it had not prevented them from carrying out their duties.

Members discussed the opting out of schools from Service Level Agreements for ground maintenance and the further implications this could have on the caretaker role. The importance of regular use and training on specialised equipment was discussed and Officers emphasised the need to reinforce good working practices through training to a nationally recognised standard as evidence of competency levels.

The Corporate Health and Safety Committee noted the presentation and the Health, Safety, Occupation Health and Risk Management Annual Report 2013-2014.

7. ASBESTOS REMOVAL PROGRAMME - CCBC SCHOOLS

Donna Jones, Service Manager, Health, Safety and Welfare introduced the report which updated the Committee on the current position of asbestos in all schools where the Council is the duty holder and advised of the work undertaken to date to implement a planned programme of asbestos removal works.

The programme would work across 37 schools over the next two years and remove all amosite asbestos from occupied areas of schools buildings. The project required a budget of £800,000 and would be completed in two phases.

It was noted that a programme of air quality monitoring had been undertaken in various schools and the samples taken analysed using fibre discrimination techniques. Members were advised that 6 of the samples taken had been returned with fibre levels below 0.0005 f/cm³. This level of amosite fibres in the air was regarded by the Medical Research Council as a satisfactory level in schools with asbestos in good condition. Members were assured that the authority was in a very positive position as a result of the survey and monitoring processes already completed.

The Chair thanked the Officer for her report and full discussed ensued.

Members congratulated Officers on the work already done and sought clarification on the amount of disruption that would be caused to schools during the removal works. Officers confirmed the works programme would be sensitively managed to ensure there was little or no disruption to the schools.

Clarifications was sought as to the nature of the contractors that would be used for the works and Officers confirmed that asbestos removal required a specialist licensed contractor.

The Corporate Health and Safety Committee noted the report.

8. RECENT HSE UPDATE

The report informed the Committee of recent updates in Health and Safety information, advice and guidance.

Members were referred to section 4.2 of the report which outlined an issue raised at the last meeting in relation to free standing walls and referenced a recent collapse in a school in Edinburgh.

Officers confirmed that the Health and Safety Team conducted general inspections in all schools and any structural issues would be picked up and taken forward for review. Condition Surveys and remedial actions are always highlighted and assurances given that Health and Safety would have picked up any issues and progressed as appropriate.

In addition Building Condition Surveys are undertaken by Corporate Property on school buildings, which would highlight structural issues requiring remedial action. This information is shared with Education Officers and Headteachers for appropriate action.

The Chair thanked the Officer for her report and full discussion ensued.

The Corporate Health and Safety Committee noted the report.

9. DARREN VALLEY TRAFFIC ISSUE

Donna Jones, Service Manager, Health, Safety and Welfare confirmed that this item had been placed on the agenda at the request of Councillor D. Hardacre who had, unfortunately given his apologies for this meeting.

Members were advised that Councillor Hardacre's concerns stemmed from the impact the recent road closure between Pontlottyn and New Tredegar had on traffic through the Darren Valley. Particular concerns had been raised in relation to Council owned vehicles travelling at speed through the area and requested that a reminder be sent to staff on driving safely.

Driving safety concerns were discussed at length and particular issues in relation to speeding, the use of mobile phones and blue tooth or hands free devices whilst driving were debated. Members agreed that the drop in concentration levels experienced when a driver is engaged in a conversation would be detrimental to their capacity to drive safely and therefore before accepting a call a driver must find a suitable and safe place to stop before answering any call.

Having considered the concerns raised by Councillor Hardacre the Corporate Health and Safety Committee recommended that a communication be sent to all staff using corporate vehicles reminding them of their responsibility to drive safely and legally particularly in terms of speed and mobile phone use.

10. INFORMATION ITEMS

The following report was received and noted:

1. Accident Statistics Report for Quarter 4 - January - March 2014.

The meeting closed at 11.07 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 November 2014 they were signed by the Chairman.

CHAIRMAN