

# Health and Safety Sub-Committee

**Minutes** of a meeting of the **Health and Safety Sub-Committee** held on **Monday 8 February 2021** at **4.00 pm** facilitated by MS Teams virtual meetings platform.

Present: **Councillors**

**Chair** Councillor Ian Houlder (employer's side)

**Vice Chair** Goodspeed (employees' side)

**Members (employer's side)**

Robert Nobbs

John Smith

**Staff representatives (employees' side)**

Nigel Dulieu

Gary Quilter

Stephanie Grayling

**In attendance**

Carol Bull, Cabinet Member for Governance

42. **Substitutes**

No substitutions were declared.

43. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Karen Richardson and Cliff Waterman.

Lance Alexander (officer) was also unable to attend the meeting.

44. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2020 were confirmed as a correct record by the Chair.

45. **Declarations of interest**

Members' declarations of interest are recorded under the item to which the declaration relates.

46. **Minutes of the meeting of West Suffolk Health and Safety Group: 6 January 2021**

The Sub-Committee received and noted report number: HSS/WS/21/001, which were the minutes of the West Suffolk Health and Safety Group meeting held on 6 January 2021.

**47. Employee and members of the public incidents (April to November 2020)**

The Sub-Committee received and noted report number: HSS/WS/21/002, which provided statistics relating to accidents/incidents involving West Suffolk Council employees and members of the public from 1 April 2020 to 30 November 2020.

The Service Manager (Health and Safety) drew relevant issues to the attention of the Sub-Committee, including providing details of the types and locations of accidents/incidents of employees and members of the public during the reporting period. He then reported the amount of days lost due to workplace accidents/incidents and compared them with statistics from the past three years.

The Sub-Committee considered the report in detail and asked questions to which the Service Manager (Health and Safety) provided comprehensive responses. In particular discussions were held on the various types of violence at work incidences being reported and which service areas were being affected, to which the Service Manager provided responses.

There being no decision required, the Sub-Committee noted the contents of the report.

**48. Legislation Updates (Verbal Report)**

The Sub-Committee was informed by the Service Manager (Health and Safety) that there was one new update relating to the PAS 79, which used to be guidance but was now a Code of Practice.

The changes made from guidance to Code of Practice, was that the PAS 79-1:2020 gave recommendations on how to carry out fire risk assessments that will protect the occupants of non-domestic premises, e.g. employees, contractors, visitors and members of the public, whilst the new PAS 79-2:2020 gave recommendations for domestic premises.

The PAS 79-1:2020 was for fire safety professionals with knowledge of the principles of fire safety, who were either responsible for one particular organization's fire safety assessment or work for consultancies providing fire risk assessments as a service.

The objectives of PAS 79-1:2020 was to:

- Provide organisations and their advisers with a methodology that can help them meet their legislative responsibilities to undertake fire risk assessments.
- Provide a framework for the assessment of fire risk.
- Promote better understanding of fire risks and fire safety by organizations and non-fire specialists.
- Enable common relevant terminology to be adopted by those who carry out fire risk assessments.
- Provide an understanding of the principles and scope of fire risk assessments.

- Establish a pragmatic, holistic and risk-proportionate approach towards assessment of fire prevention measures, fire protection measures and management of fire safety, for the purpose of conducting fire risk assessments, based upon a fundamental understanding of fire safety principles.
- Establish a satisfactory basis for documentation of fire risk assessments.
- Provide a benchmark for a suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment.
- Promote a consistent approach to carrying out and documenting a fire risk assessment that is likely to be satisfactory to enforcing authorities.
- Dispel misconceptions as to the nature and scope of a fire risk assessment.

The PAS 79-2:2020 was for housing and this had been passed onto our housing enforcement team who also looked after our housing stock.

The Sub-Committee considered the verbal update and did not raised any issues.

There being no decision required, the Sub-Committee noted the verbal report.

#### 49. **Covid-19 Update (Verbal Report)**

The Sub-Committee received a verbal update from the Service Manager (Health and Safety) on Covid-19 as follows:

- Continue to give guidance and advice both on site and working from home.
  - Face coverings in offices: To protect each other additional measures were introduced from Wednesday 13 January 2021, where face coverings will be required (unless exempt) when entering and moving around any West Suffolk Council buildings. This meant face coverings could be removed when sat at a workstation but when you left the desk for example, going to the printer or make a drink, face coverings must be worn.
  - Rapid testing: There was a national initiative encouraging employees who could not work at home to have a lateral flow test for Covid-19 twice a week. This was because one in three people who had Covid-19 showed no symptoms. Businesses and organisations, like the Council, were being asked to look at supporting this national initiative, which alongside vaccination, was the main way to reduce the spread of the infection. In response to this, the council was looking at introducing "in-house" testing.
  - Personal Protective Equipment (PPE): There were no issues with the supply of PPE at the present time.
  - Polices were being updated in line with changing guidance.

The Sub-Committee considered the verbal report and asked questions to which the Service Manager (Health and Safety) provided responses. In

particular detailed discussions were held on the lateral flow test and the logistics involved in organising the May 2021 elections.

There being no decision required, the Sub-Committee noted the verbal update.

#### 50. **Amendments to the Health and Safety Policy**

The Sub-Committee received Report number HSS/WS/21/003, which set out amendments which had been made to the Health and Safety Policy, attached at Appendix A to the report being the "Duty Manager Fire Check Sheet".

The Service Manager (Health and Safety) went through the appendix and provided an explanation as to why changes were being made to the Duty Manager Fire Check sheet, being the inclusion of the following wording:

"During inclement weather additional checks must be conducted in the foyer area and action taken to warn customers of slip hazards due to slippery floor via signage. Appropriate action also needs to be taken to remove access water as far as reasonably practicable".

The Sub-Committee considered the report and asked questions to which the Service Manager (Health and Safety) provided responses. In particular discussions were held on the length of time CCTV footage was kept.

Councillor Robert Nobbs the proposed the recommendation, this was duly seconded by Stephanie Grayling, and with the vote being unanimous, it was:

#### **RESOLVED:**

That the amendments as set out in Appendix A of the Health and Safety Policy, attached to Report number HSS/WS/21/003, be approved.

#### 51. **Training (Verbal Report)**

The Sub-Committee received a verbal report from the Service Manager (Health and Safety) on the following training updates:

- 1) IOSH (Managing Safely): This was originally planned for February 2021 but had been postponed until April 2021 due to current Covid restrictions.
- 2) Mental health and wellbeing courses: Training was being provided virtually. The aim was to explore how to recognise and understand signs and symptoms of poor mental health and provide you with the confidence and skills to openly discuss concerns.
- 3) Lone working training: Training was being provided virtually, in-house by the health and safety team.

- 4) Joint pain advisors: 13 members of staff had been trained across West Suffolk Council and ARP. The new advisors would be publicised shortly and would form part of the wellbeing team.

In response to the update on joint pain, Councillor Carol Bull, Cabinet Member for Governance was pleased to hear the joint pain initiative had been worthwhile.

There being no decisions required, the Sub-Committee noted the verbal update.

52. **Health and Safety Corporate Update including Wellbeing (Verbal Report)**

The Sub-Committee received a verbal report from the Service Manager (Health and Safety) on health and safety corporate updates and wellbeing as follows.

- 1) The service continues its normal job of providing health and safety advice by conducting audits; FRA's and incident investigations.
- 2) Over the last few weeks, the winter maintenance plan had been activated on a number of occasions.
- 3) Along with HR we have been working on Wellbeing and continue to support staff via our wellbeing champions and Mental Health First aiders on the following:
  - Coffee Morning with Wellbeing Champions
  - Support Group caring for others at a distance
  - Staff support group feeling isolated
  - 12-week weight loss (oneline)
  - Suicide prevention training
  - Supporting parents and carers of children during covid-19
  - Occupational Health clinics twice monthly on phone
  - Home and working alone support group
  - Remote Bouncebackability
- 4) Virtual Physio sessions – These were held in January 2021, and due to the popularity the Council will be running them again in February.
- 5) Pilates sessions: We will be offering a six-week course of Pilates via MS Teams. The 40-minute sessions will take place at 12.30 to 1.10pm, every Tuesday from 9 February until 16 March.

There being no decision required, the Sub-Committee noted the verbal report.

53. **Health and Safety Lessons Learnt (Local Authority Specific) (Verbal Report)**

The Sub-Committee received a verbal report from the Service Manager (Health and Safety) on the following health and safety updates:

- 1) Health and Safety Executive (HSE): The threat of prosecution and potential costs of damages was one of the reasons why companies invest heavily in health and safety, and with a harder line being taken by the HSE, this trend was likely to continue into the future. Prosecutions brought by the HSE were a matter of public record and could be viewed on the register of convictions and notices. The HSE was carrying out a view of its prosecutions to ensure they were more successful in the future.
- 2) UKCA: Between now and 31 December 2021, it would be possible to place and buy on the UK market products carrying the UKCA mark or a CE mark. However, where the CE mark needs to be supported by certification from a notified body (that was, for category II and III PPE), that body must be based in anyone of the 27 EU member states. During 2022, it would only be possible to place on the UK market products carrying the UKCA mark on the outer packaging. From 1 January 2023, it would only be possible to place on the UK market products carrying the UKVA mark. The UKCA mark must ordinarily be affixed to the product. However, if this was not possible, the UKCA mark could be placed on the packaging instead of the product.

Note: PPE that was already in circulation, for instance, company stock, was still fit for use.

- 3) The Waste Industry Safety and Health (WISH): The forum had redesigned its website and updated its guidance and information regarding health and safety in the waste industry. Included, was a set of copyright-free questions to help assess an employee's engagement with their company on health and safety issues. With the introduction of the new worker engagement tool that had been developed to help in these areas, attendees were encouraged to take the tool back to their organisations to trial, prior to launching a finalised tool next year.
- 4) Dorset Council Waste Depot: It had been alerted by a member of the public after plumes of black smoke was seen across Weymouth and several explosions occurred. 21 waste vehicles were destroyed or severely damaged, of which 16 were used in collections and five for cleansing and maintenance. The cause of the fire was unknown and was being investigated by the fire service. The cost of the fire was still being estimated but was expected to run into several million pounds.
- 5) London Borough of Tower Hamlets Council: The Council was fined after the death of a child in a playground back in 2015. The HSE investigation found that the Council had failed to ensure that an annual playground safety check was carried out. Investigators also found the post was made from wood that was unsuitable and had decayed. The Council had previously implemented a system of inspections to ensure that play equipment was safe to use. However, the play equipment at Mile End Park had not been inspected by a playground inspector since September 2013. If the equipment had been inspected and tested for signs of rot, the risk might have been identified and appropriate action taken to remove and replace the equipment. The Council pleaded guilty

to breaching Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Etc. Act 1974 and were fined £330,000 and ordered to pay costs of £6,204.

The Sub-Committee considered the verbal report and asked questions to which the Service Manager (Health and Safety) provided responses. In particular discussions were held playground equipment. Officers explained that inspections on the council's playgrounds were up to date. The council had a dedicated play officer, and annual ROSPA inspections were carried out.

There being no decision required, the Sub-Committee noted the verbal report.

The meeting concluded at 5.15 pm

**Signed by:**

**Chair**

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