

Health and Safety Sub-Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the **Health and Safety Sub-Committee**, facilitated by Microsoft Teams virtual meetings platform on **Monday 11 October 2021** at **4.00pm**

Present: **Councillors**

Chair Gary Quilter (employees' side)

Vice Chair Ian Houlder (employer's side)

Members (employer's side)

Nick Clarke

Elaine McManus

Andy Neal

Robert Nobbs

Cliff Waterman

Staff representatives (employees' side)

Sylvia Bayford

Nigel Dulieu

Stephanie Grayling

Andrew Samson

In attendance

Carol Bull, Cabinet Member for Governance

Ben Smith, Business Partner (Governance)

68. **Substitutes**

No substitutions were declared.

69. **Apologies for absence**

No apologies for absence were received.

However, Lance Alexander (employees' side) was unable to attend the meeting.

70. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2021 were confirmed as a correct record by the Chair.

71. **Declarations of interest**

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

72. **Minutes of the meeting of West Suffolk Health and Safety Group: 1 September 2021**

The Sub-Committee received and noted paper number: HSS/WS/21/006, which were the minutes of the West Suffolk Health and Safety Group meeting held on 1 September 2021.

In response to a question raised regarding the desk booking system at West Suffolk House and the Mildenhall Hub, the Service Manager (Health and Safety) explained that members of staff could book a desk up to 14 days in advance and no less than the day before.

73. **Employee and members of the public incidents**

[Councillor Andy Neal joined the meeting at 4.08pm]

The Sub-Committee received and noted report number: HSS/WS/21/007, which provided statistics relating to accidents/incidents involving West Suffolk Council employees and members of the public from 1 April 2021 to 31 August 2021.

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 on 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 response to a question raised regarding whether officers wore body cameras, the Service Manager (Health and Safety) advised that all Car Park Enforcement Officers wore body cameras and were trained on how to use them to gather evidence if a violent incident occurred. People were made aware when they were being recorded and why. Any information gathered that would be classed as Violence at Work (VAW) could then be passed on to the police to investigate further.

In response to a question raised regarding duty of care, the Service Manager (Health and Safety) explained the Council had a duty of care for anyone on property it owned.

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

74. **Legislation Updates (Verbal)**

The Service Manager (Health and Safety) advised that there were no specific legislation updates to report.

However, the Service Manager (Health and Safety) informed the Sub-Committee that the council had responded to a government consultation document called "Protect Duty", which closed on 2 July 2021. The consultation sought views on how the Protect Duty could make the public safer at publicly accessible locations. This consultation considered how we might use legislation to enhance the protection of publicly accessible locations across the UK from terrorist attacks and ensure organisational preparedness.

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

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

75. **Covid-19 Update (Verbal)**

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

- Rules around self-isolating changed in August 2021, in that you no longer had to self-isolate but must take a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test. If the PCR was positive, you must isolate.
- The Lateral Flow Test mobile test unit organised through Suffolk County Council was still visiting the Waste Hub on Tuesday's and Thursdays to test staff.
- Continue to work with Elections on Covid safety for voters and staff at polling stations for by-elections.
- Desk booking system at West Suffolk House and the Mildenhall Hub monitors the staff numbers working in its buildings.

The Sub-Committee considered the verbal update and did not raise any issues. Therefore, the Sub-Committee **noted** the Covid-19 update.

76. **Health and Safety Training (Verbal)**

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

- 1) IOSH (Managing Safely): The next training course had been arranged for 14, 15 and 16 March 2022.
- 2) Fairground safety.
- 3) Ongoing annual First Aid training.

The Sub-Committee considered the verbal update and asked questions to which responses were provided. In particular discussions were held on fairground safety.

In response to a question raised asking whether circuses fell under fairground safety, officers explained that circuses fell under the responsibility of Environmental Health under the Animal Welfare Act 2006, whereas fairground safety fell under Health and Safety.

In response to a question raised asking what officers were looking for when inspecting fairgrounds, the Service Manager (Health and Safety) explained that officers were trained in carrying out visual inspections; check that equipment was fit for purpose; and certificates were in date. If an issue was found, then this would be reported to the Health and Safety Executive to investigate.

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

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

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) Work continued in supporting staff, contractors and the public who visited council owned buildings during Covid recovery.
- 2) A new member of staff would be joining the Health and Safety team on 18 October 2021 following the retirement of Andrew Catchpole. Whilst a replacement was being sought the number of health and safety audits had been reduced until they started. In the meantime, the Service Manager (Health and Safety) was looking at developing a health and safety programme to catch up on outstanding audits.
- 3) Working with elections on by-elections and canvassing.
- 4) Projects and events: Fire alarm issues being reviewed at the Mildenhall Hub which was work in progress.
- 5) Developing plans for returning to the office through the desk booking system.
- 6) New occupational health provider: From 1 July 2021 Gipping Occupational Health and Wellbeing became the councils now health provider.
- 7) Well fair of staff: On-line events, which included new normal life; parent and careers support group; alcohol awareness week (15 to 21 October); suicide prevention training; mental health first aiders.
- 8) Drug and alcohol testing had reduced during Covid. However, a number of staff members have been trained to carry out testing of staff and contractors on site at the West Suffolk Operational Hub.

The Sub-Committee considered the verbal update and asked questions to which responses were provided.

Councillor Nick Clarke raised concerns as to why the Sub-Committee was receiving a number of verbal reports and not been provided with a written reports as he felt the Sub-Committee should be rigorously scrutinise health and safety, and this could not be done effectively without receiving written reports. In response the Cabinet Member for Governance wished to reassure the Sub-Committee that she was provided with a lot of detail and oversaw health and safety and took onboard Councillor Clarke's comments and would discuss further outside the meeting with the Service Manager (Health and Safety) regarding timing issues in producing written reports.

In response to a question raised on how many health and safety audits were outstanding, the Service Manager (Health and Safety) confirmed that all fire risk audits were up to date. He explained that audits were self-generated and there were 3 outstanding, which were in low risk areas.

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

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

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

- 1) Playground incident: The London Borough of Tower Hamlets had been sentenced following an incident in which a 5-year-old girl died when playground equipment collapsed on top of her in July 2015. The council had failed to carry out an annual inspection of its playground equipment. The playground equipment in question was made from unsuitable wood, which had a lifespan of 3 years. The log was fitted 4 years before. The council was fined £330k and order to pay costs.
- 2) Egger (UK) Limited: Pleaded guilty to not having risk assessments in place for the use of the digger and having no control of people on site. Egger (UK) Limited were fined £910k.
- 3) Freight terminal: An eleven year-old boy who gained access to a freight terminal, climbed on top of a lorry, and touched an electrical cable died. The freight terminal was fined £6.5m as the site was not secure to stop children assessing the site.

The Sub-Committee asked questions to which responses were provided.

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

79. **Dates of future meetings**

The Sub-Committee noted the dates for future meeting(s), as listed below. All dates were Mondays starting at 4pm and would be held as indicated:

- Monday 14 February 2022 (Virtual meeting).

The meeting concluded at 5.15pm

Signed by:

Chair
