

Health and Safety Sub-Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the **Health and Safety Sub-Committee** held on **Monday 12 October 2020** at **4.00pm** facilitated by MS Teams virtual meetings platform.

Present: **Councillors**

Chair Councillor Ian Houlder (employer's side)

Vice Chair Paul Goodspeed (employees' side)

Members (employer's side)

Robert Nobbs

John Smith

Karen Richardson

Cliff Waterman

Staff representatives (employees' side)

Nigel Dulieu

Gary Quilter

Stephanie Grayling

In attendance

Carol Bull, Cabinet Member for Governance

31. **Substitutes**

No substitutions were declared.

32. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from the following officers - Lance Alexander and David Green.

33. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2020 were confirmed as a correct record by the Chair.

34. **Declarations of interest**

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

35. **Minutes of the meeting of the West Suffolk Health and Safety Group: 2 September 2020**

The Sub-Committee received and noted paper number: HSS/WS/20/003, which were the minutes of the West Suffolk Health and Safety Group meeting held on 2 September 2020.

36. Employee and Members of the Public Incidents Statistics (1 April 2020 to 31 July 2020)

The Sub-Committee received report number: HSS/WS/20/004, which provided statistics relating to accidents/incidents involving West Suffolk Council employees and members of the public from 1 April 2020 to 31 July 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 that there had been no days lost due to workplace accidents/incidents for the period April – July 2020 and compared this with statistics from the past three years.

In response to a question raised about the mental health of staff during lockdown the Sub-Committee was informed that the health and safety and human resources teams were responsible for the mental health of all staff. The Council also had members of staff who were mental health first aid trained staff that were also key in supporting staff at this time.

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

37. Legislation Updates (Verbal Report)

The Sub-Committee was informed by the Service Manager (Health and Safety) that there was nothing specific to report on legislation updates, but provided a verbal update Covid-19 as follows:

- Guidance/RA
- Occupancy of building – 22% occupancy in West Suffolk House, with a one-way system in place.
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) – the biggest use was hand sanitiser.
- Face covering and opening of buildings.
- Mental Health First Aiders.
- Re-deployments – supporting colleagues.
- Working from home
- Vulnerable employees – risk assessments had been put in place to enable vulnerable employees to return to the office.
- Test and Trace locations - Copdock, Ipswich and Stansted
- Preparing for second wave for staffing
- The new normal
- <http://westsuffolkintranet/news/coronavirus/> - Information was constantly updated on the Intranet.

In response to a question raised about the wearing of face shields and their effectiveness, the Service Manager (Health and Safety) explained that he had seen nothing official from Government to say that face shields were not effective. Council staff who were required to wear face shields had been trained on their use, and if Government advice changed then the Council would change its guidance and inform staff.

Councillor Karen Richardson informed the Sub-Committee she had done a mental health training course organised by her employer, which was useful and informative and felt this would be good for all councillors to do. In response Councillor Carol Bull, Cabinet member for Governance informed the Sub-Committee that she sat on the East of England Local Government Association for member training and was interest in what the course covered. Councillor Karen Richardson agreed to forward the course link to Councillor Bull and the Service Manager (Health and Safety) to look into further.

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

38. **Amendments to the Health and Safety Policy**

[Councillor Karen Richardson left the meeting at 4.49pm, prior to the vote being taken on this item].

The Sub-Committee received Report No: HSS/WS/20/005, which set out amendments which had been made to the Health and Safety Policy, attached at Appendices A – C to the report, these being:

- Appendix A, Annex C: Duty Manager Check sheet.
- Appendix B, Annex D: Fire Evacuation Procedure.
- Appendix C: Apex Fire Safety Management and Fire Emergency Plan.

The Service Manager (Health and Safety), went through each of the appendices and provided detailed explanations as to why changes were being made.

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 Appendix A and who was the Emergency Controller in the event of a real fire, to which the Service Manager provided a response.

In response to a question raised about some punctuation errors identified in Appendix A, Councillor Cliff Waterman agreed to forward these to the Service Manager (Health and Safety) so these could be corrected.

Paul Goodspeed then proposed the recommendation, this was duly seconded by Councillor Cliff Waterman, and with the vote being unanimous, it was:

RESOLVED

That the amendments as set out in 1-6 of the Health and Safety Policy, attached as Appendices A – C to Report No: HSS/WS/20/005, be approved, subject to the punctuation errors being corrected in Appendix A.

39. **Health and Safety Corporate Update (Verbal Report)**

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

- 1) Wellbeing events which had/were taking place:
 - Coffee morning with Wellbeing Champions.
 - Support Group caring for others at a distance.
 - Staff support group feeling isolated.
 - 12 week weight loss (One Life).
 - Suicide prevention training.
 - Supporting parents and carers of children during Covid-19.
 - Flu vouchers.
 - Occupational Health clinics held twice monthly by phone.
- 2) 10 October 2020 was mental health awareness day. On 12 October 2020 the council held a virtual coffee morning where 40 – 50 staff dropped in during the hour duration.
- 3) Councillor Carol Bull had provided a link to a webinar regarding joint pain by Health Innovation Network, with the idea that it might be useful to staff. Having looked into it further, the council would be getting 10 wellbeing champions signed up to undertake the training. The idea was to train advisors so they could have a 1 to 1 conversation about supporting people to understand, manage and support the condition. People would then have a 1 to 1 over a period of six months on at least four separate occasions.
- 4) Events: Octoberfest was taken place in Nowton Park at the end of October. Staff would ensure that social distancing was observed.
- 5) Events: Gia (earth artwork) was taking place at the Apex, with over 6,000 tickets being booked this meant last minute changes were made to ensure social distancing was managed and observed.
- 6) Lone working: Training was being carried out in-house. The course was 2½ hours and would be provided MS Teams.
- 7) Emergency evacuation Covid style: A reminder was sent out to all staff via the Intranet on 12 October 2020 regarding emergency evacuation procedures during Covid.

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

40. **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: The Department for Work and Pensions appointed Sarah Newton as the new Chair of the Health and Safety Executive Board. The appointment commenced on 1 August 2020 for a five-year term. She replaced Martin Temple at the conclusion of his term.

- 2) Key statistics from the Health and Safety Executive and Labour Force Survey in 2018-2019:
- 1.4m workers suffering from work-related ill health.
 - 497,000 workers suffering from a new case of work-related ill health.
 - 23.5m working days lost due to work-related ill health.
 - 13,000 deaths each year estimated to be linked to past exposure at work, primarily to chemicals or dust.
 - 12.8m working days lost due to work-related stress, depression, or anxiety.
 - 147 workers killed at work.
- 3) Tower Hamlets Council: The Council had been charged with breaching the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 in that it had failed to organise annual inspections of play equipment and the wood used was unsuitable for 18 months, which contributed towards the death of a child. The hearing was due to be held in October 2020 at Westminster Magistrates' Court.
- 4) Wirral Borough Council: Expectant mother had been seriously injured by a branch from a falling tree whilst driving. The Council had not inspected the tree, which was located within the boundary of a park, adjacent to the highway for at least 13 years. The Council admitted to breaching Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act in that it failed to protect the safety of members of the public and was fined £100,000 and order to pay £49,363 in costs.

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 accidents involving trees/branches falling. Officers explained that the Council's arboricultural team inspected several thousand trees each year. Tree inspections were carried out via a rolling schedule and was in line with the council's policy. The team were trained in the types of trees, their maintenance and also replanting. Trees were also tracked on the GIS database.

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

41. **Dates of future meetings**

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

- 8 February 2021.

The meeting concluded at 5.24pm

Signed by:

Chair