

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 14 February 2022** at **4.00pm**

Present: **Councillors**

Chair Gary Quilter (employees' side)

Vice Chair Councillor Ian Houlder (employer's side)

Members (employer's side)

Nick Clarke

Robert Nobbs

Andy Neal

Cliff Waterman

Substitutes attending for a full member (employer's side)

James Lay for Elaine McManus

Staff representatives (employees' side)

Stephanie Grayling

Andrew Samson

Substitutes attending for a staff representative (employees' side)

Natasha Holdgate for Sylvia Bayford

In attendance

Carol Bull, Cabinet Member for Governance

80. **Substitutes**

The following substitution was declared:

Councillor James Lay substituting for Councillor Elaine McManus.

Natasha Holdgate for Sylvia Bayford.

81. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Elaine McManus.

Apologies for absence were received from Sylvia Bayford and Nigel Dulieu (staff representatives).

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

82. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2021 were confirmed as a correct record by the Chair.

83. Declarations of interest

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

84. Minutes of the meeting of West Suffolk Health and Safety Group: 5 January 2022

The Sub-Committee received and **noted** paper number: HSS/WS/22/001, which were the minutes of the West Suffolk Health and Safety Group meeting held on 5 January 2022.

85. Employee and Members of the Public Incidents

The Sub-Committee received report number: HSS/WS/22/002, which provided statistics relating to accidents/incidents involving West Suffolk Council employees and members of the public from 1 April 2021 to 30 November 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 the number of days lost due to workplace accidents/incidents and compared them with statistics from the past three years.

The Sub-Committee discussed the report in detail and asked questions to which responses were provided.

Councillor Nick Clarke thanked the Service Manager (Health and Safety) for the written report and the verbal update provided alongside the report, which was reassuring. However, he questioned why that level of strategic detail was not included in the written report, as he felt the Sub-Committee needed to know what the council was doing to then enable it to scrutinise the detail and suggested that relevant trends and issues over the last five years should also be included. In response the Service Manager (Health and Safety) reassured the Sub-Committee that there were no trends in any particular area reported and this was shown in the subsequent slides in the presentation. Regarding the level of detail this had always been a summary, highlighting issues the Sub-Committee needed to know. However, he would take away the comments made for further thought.

In response to a question raised regarding violence at work, the Service Manager (Health and Safety) advised that the majority of cases were verbal abuse. Since officers had been wearing body cameras, it had helped to diffuse the situation, and verbal abuse incidents had subsequently reduced.

In response to a question raised as to whether police action was ever progressed in relation to violence at work in the courts, the Service Manager (Health and Safety) advised that to his knowledge, nothing had been taken to court by the police.

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

86. **Legislation Updates - Highway Code Summary**

The Sub-Committee received report number: HSS/WS/22/003, which provided an update on recent changes made to the Highway Code which came into force on 29 January 2022.

Attached at Appendix A to the report was a summary of the changes and attached at Appendix B was a Toolbox talk for all operational drivers.

The main changes set out in the report were as follows:

- Drivers no longer have priority at junctions.
- All traffic must stop for pedestrians waiting at crossings.
- Cyclists can ride wherever they feel most visible.
- Drivers must wait for a safe gap in the flow of cyclists.
- All users of hand-held mobiles were banned, except in an emergency.
- Poor driving decisions more punishable.
- The "Dutch Reach" was the recommended method of vehicle exit.

In response to a question raised regarding the toolbox and whether this was available to all staff who drove, the Service Manager (Health and Safety) advised that all staff were able to access the toolbox on the Intranet.

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

87. **COVID-19 Update**

The Sub-Committee received report number HSS/WS/22/004, which provided an update on Covid-19 as follows:

- A relaxation of some COVID-19 restrictions came into force on 20 January 2022. Staff were no longer required by law to work from home, and on the 27 January 2022, by law you no longer had to wear a face covering.
- The council had reverted back to Plan A, which we all lived under in the Autumn last year.
- Covid-19 had not gone away. Like all public agencies in the Suffolk Resilience Forum, we were still working under our business continuity plan and monitoring the impact of absence through Covid-19 on our staffing numbers and the impact this had on the delivery of services.
- There was still a legal requirement to carryout risk assessments.
- Last year the council secured a mobile testing unit at West Suffolk Operational Staff (WSOH) with tests being conducted on all operational staff twice a week. Unfortunately, this was withdrawn in December 2021. The council was now asking staff to complete twice weekly

testing (LFD/T) at home or at the depot and report the results to the Operations team.

The Sub-Committee considered the report and did not raise any issues. There being no decision required, the Sub-Committee **noted** the verbal update.

88. **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) Drugs and alcohol testing – in December 2021 a third party provided refresher training on how to conduct the tests and subsequent chain of custody.
- 2) IOSH (Managing Safely) – This had been arranged to take place in March 2022.
- 3) Currently awaiting dates for the event safety / fairground safety training.
- 4) First aid training was ongoing.

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

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

89. **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) The Health and Safety team was now fully operational.
- 2) All audits and fire risk assessments were up to date.
- 3) Health and safety priorities: Whilst continuing to promote a health and safety culture across the organisation, in the next 6 to 9 months the health and safety team would be looking at:
 - Risk assessments
 - Safe Systems of Work (SSoW), and whether they were being adhered to.
 - Hand and Arm Vibration (HAV) monitoring and distribution of equipment.
 - Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations (LOLER).
- 4) Health and wellbeing: The council was committed to the wellbeing of staff and had a number of initiatives in place to raise awareness,

signpost or provide practical tools so employees could manage their own wellbeing or recognise signs that others might need help. Since the last meeting the council had held:

- Staff awards: a celebration and recognition.
- Flu vouchers
- Understanding the new normal sessions
- A disability group meeting
- Manager's peer support group meeting
- Alcohol awareness session
- Dementia information and supporting older people
- Working on menopause guidance
- Men's health and women's health webinars
- Christmas walk and talk

5) Wellbeing plans/activities to be held over the coming months:

- Wellbeing calendar for 2022 focusing on a different health and wellbeing topic each month.
- Wellbeing webinar available to all staff, developed by Westfield Health, to take place before the end of March – topics yet to be determined.
- Continue with the 'understanding our new normal life' – staff group sessions on a monthly basis.
- Introducing new Menopause and Domestic Abuse policies.
- Engaging with occupational health regarding health checks for staff such as cholesterol and blood pressure checks.
- Support embedding the Domestic Abuse champions in the organisation.
- Continue to engage and support the wellbeing champions and mental health first aiders.
- Continue with the manager's peer support group.

In response to a question raised regarding buildings being disability friendly, the Service Manager (Health and Safety) advised the Sub-Committee that the Disability Forum was an outside agency which was involved in the building of the Mildenhall Hub. The issue highlighted about having sheltered covers as standard for wheelchair users would be picked up under the Western Way Development.

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

90. **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) A waste management and skip hire company were fined £180k after a worker suffered multiple injuries when he was crushed by a reversing vehicle. The Health and Safety Executive investigating the incident found the system of work to control risks from transport was not fully adequate and not monitored; and as a result, was not being followed

therefore exposing workers to risks. At the time of the incident the inner banksman, who was responsible for managing traffic at the site, was not present at his station and there were not any measures in place to prevent new vehicles from accessing the site.

- 2) A tree surgeon was fined £10k after his 16-year-old employee was left with a life changing injury after being cut in a chain saw incident. The teenage employee was not wearing the proper protective gloves.
- 3) Staffordshire County Council was fined £300k over the death of a man killed by the falling bough of an oak tree in October 2019. The authority had now reviewed its systems of checks and maintenance after admitting a breach of the Health and Safety at Work Act.

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

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

91. **Dates of future meetings**

The Service Manager (Health and Safety) informed the Sub-Committee that the calendar of meeting dates for 2022 to 2023 would be approved by Council at its meeting on 22 February 2022.

There being no decision required, the Sub-Committee **noted** the following future meetings, as listed below. All dates were Mondays starting at 4pm and would be held as indicated:

- June 2022 (Virtual meeting)
- October 2022 (Virtual meeting)
- February 2023 (Virtual meeting)

The meeting concluded at 5.15pm

Signed by:

Chair
