

# 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 20 June 2022** at **4.00 pm**

Present: **Councillors**

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

**Vice Chair** Nigel Dulieu (employees' side)

**Members (employer's side)**

Nick Clarke

Andy Neal

Elaine McManus

Robert Nobbs

**Staff representatives (employees' side)**

Nigel Dulieu

Andrew Samson

Stephanie Grayling

**In attendance**

Carol Bull, Cabinet Member for Governance

92. **Substitutes**

No substitutions were declared.

93. **Appointment of Chair: 2022 to 2023**

It was proposed by Councillor Robert Nobbs, seconded by Councillor Elaine McManus and with the vote being unanimous, it was

**RESOLVED:**

That Councillor Ian Houlder be elected as Chair of the Health and Sub-Committee for 2022-2023.

Councillor Ian Houlder then took the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

94. **Appointment of Vice-Chair: 2022 to 2023**

It was proposed by Councillor Elaine McManus, seconded by Councillor Robert Nobbs and with the vote being unanimous, it was

**RESOLVED:**

That Nigel Dulieu be elected as Vice-Chair of the Health and Sub-Committee for 2022-2023.

95. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Cliff Waterman.

Apologies for absence were received from Sylvia Bayford and Gary Quilter (staff representatives).

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

96. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 February 2022 were confirmed as a correct record by the Chair.

97. **Declarations of interest**

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

98. **Minutes of the meeting of West Suffolk Health and Safety Group: 4 May 2022**

The Sub-Committee received and **noted** paper number: HSS/WS/22/005, which were the minutes of the West Suffolk Health and Safety Group meeting held on 4 May 2022.

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

The Sub-Committee received and noted report number: HSS/WS/22/006, which provided statistics relating to accidents/incidents involving West Suffolk Council employees and members of the public from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.

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. He highlighted that staff incidents had continued to decline compared to the previous two years, and the council had also seen a reduction in days lost due to incidents compared to previous years

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

In response to a question raised on incidents reported to the police, specifically what percentage outcome was reported back to the individual employee, the Service Manager (Health and Safety) advised that about 90% of employees received feedback from the police.

In response to a question raised relating to the two near misses being reported after the event, the Service Manager (Health and Safety) confirmed

that advice had been provided about report near misses/incidents straight away, and not several days later.

Finally, the Service Manager (Health and Safety) updated the Sub-Committee on the outcome of an incident which happened on 8 July 2020 when a lady went down a bank to the stream at East Town Country Park to assist her dog. On her way up she fell up the bank allegedly sustained a broken knee. As expected, the council received a claim from solicitors acting on behalf of the lady stating "had appropriate fencing and/or barriers been present then our client's dog would not have required assistance and the claimant's accident would not have occurred with a settlement figure in excess of £25k.

Having looked at all the circumstances the council defended the claim through its insurers. With the help of the health and safety team, the council's insurers had successfully repudiated the claim. However, the council incurred the loss adjuster's fees of £1,263.60.

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

#### 100. **Background Note on Near Misses**

The Service Manager (Health and Safety) informed the Sub-Committee that the council had six near miss/non-reportable dangerous occurrences reported in 2021 to 2022. It was felt this figure was low, therefore the council was trying to encourage staff to report near misses across the organisations.

A near miss was an unplanned event that had the potential to cause, but did not actual result in human injury, environmental or equipment damage, or an interruption to normal operation.

Charlotte Fuller (Trainee Health and Safety Advisor) explained that she has been working with Craig Masters in Operations, on 4 May 2022 launched a "near miss and safety suggestion scheme". The aim of the scheme was to improve safety conditions and behaviours.

The reasons for reporting near misses was to:

- Enables companies to pro-actively resolve hazards before a tragic or costly incident occurred.
- Engage the workforce in solving problems.
- Increase safety ownership and reinforce workers' self-esteem.
- Expose valuable information that otherwise might not be discussed.
- Develop a positive attitude surrounding safety.

Every operations vehicle had been provided with a pack of suggestion forms and had a toolbox talk which set out the process. All staff had been trained on the process, except those on long-term sick.

Since the scheme was launched in May 2022, in May 10 near misses were reported and three safety suggestions received and in June, four near misses reported, and one safety suggestion received.

The Sub-Committee discussed the near miss and safety suggestion scheme and asked questions to which responses were provided.

In response to a question raised regarding suggesting a reward for the best safety suggestion put forward, the Service Manager (Health and Safety) confirmed he would speak with Unison who were supporting the initiative about a reward. Also, Councillor Carol Bull, Cabinet Member for Governance suggested a reward could be presented as part of the staff awards, handed out at the end of the year.

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

#### 101. **Legislation Updates - Verbal Report**

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

#### 102. **Covid-19 Updates - Verbal Report**

[The Chair, Councillor Ian Houlder left the meeting at 4.59pm, prior to the consideration of this item, and the Vice-Chair, Nigel Dulieu took over chairing the remainder of the meeting]

The Service Manager (Health and Safety) informed the Sub-Committee that this would be the last time Covid would be a standing item on the agenda.

Covid-19 had not gone away, and people were still falling ill with it albeit with not the same fatal or hospitalisations. Whilst the guidance had been lifted around social distancing, the council was asking staff to take personal responsibility to look after one another and show consideration to all. Staff were being asked to remain at home if they were ill so they did not pass it on, and if you had to go out to wear a face covering as government guidance on living with Covid-19. This guidance was set out on the Intranet for staff along with a risk assessment.

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

#### 103. **Health and Safety 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 Safety course – This course was for managers and supervisors equipping them to know how to manage health and safety within their teams.
- 2) Drug and alcohol collector training – This training enables staff to take drug and alcohol samples following strict chain of custody procedures,

enabling the council as an authority to keep its drug and alcohol testing in-house.

- 3) Manual Handling training (Train the Trainer) – Provides staff with the ability to train others the correct techniques in moving loads.
- 4) E-learning modules
- 5) Ongoing first aid requalification's and refreshers.

This year the council would repeat the training with the exemption of the manual handling and introduce either "event safety" or "fayre ground safety".

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

#### 104. **Health and Safety Corporate Update including Health and 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 council to date during 2022 had been working with Gipping Occupational Health in carrying out mini health checks alongside the free NHS health checks:
  - Mini health checks: two sessions were held in May 2022. The health checks covered body weight; fat percentage; fat mass (kilograms); muscle mass (kilograms); total body water content (kilograms and percentage); bone mass (kilograms); basal metabolic rate (BMR); daily minimum energy or calories the body requires when resting; etabolic age (compares BMR to the average age associated with metabolism); visceral fat (fat in the abdominal cavity surrounding the vital organs).
  - In total 41 people attended the mini health checks.
  - The main health concerns identified from the health checks was mental health.
- 2) NHS health checks – these were available to adults aged between 40 to 74; anyone who had not had an NHS health check with their GP practice, pharmacy or with OneLife Suffolk; a resident of Suffolk.

In response to a question raised asked who attended the mini health checks, the Service Manager (Health and Safety) advised that a cross-section of staff attended from operational to office-based staff.

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

105. **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) North-West Company: Two employees of a soft furnishings company had been instructed to sew and pack duvets by the company's Managing Director. The machine was being trialled by the company. One of the employees using the machine was not authorised to operate it or trained in using it. Whilst that employee was using the machine to pack the duvets he was able to reach into the machine through a gap in the door guard in order to adjust the duvet being rolled. As he did, he made contact with moving parts inside sustaining injuries to his hand, including severing part of his middle finger.

The Managing Director failed to take action when he observed unauthorised use of the machine by the untrained employee and was unaware that the sensors had been overridden despite being present in a supervisory role at the time. The company and its Director failed to provide a safe system of work and to recognise the way in which their employees were working. In addition, sufficient training had not been provided to employees. The company was fined £13,600 and ordered to pay costs of £17,260.

- 2) Housing Company: A worker at a housing company was carrying out work at height from a ladder, removing beading to an external first floor window on a residential home. The worker fell a distance of three metres suffering serious injuries including four fractured vertebrae.

A Health and Safety Executive investigation found that the housing company had failed to properly plan, supervise and carry out external work at height. The company was fined £50,000 and ordered to pay costs of £7,327.

- 3) Bakery: A Hull based bakery was fined after a self-employed contractor died when he fell from a stepladder. The worker was wiring a motor situated above a machine whilst standing on a stepladder. The company agreed this work activity could be completed using a stepladder, which it had provided. The employee fell from the stepladder and suffered fatal injuries.

The Health and Safety investigation found that the company failed to properly plan the activity from the beginning including access arrangements to be made for installation of motors to use to carry out this work activity. The company was fined £1m and ordered to pay costs of £30k.

- 4) Arborists: An employee arborist suffered a chainsaw laceration to the back of his left leg during tree pruning work. His employer had provided him with chainsaw protective trousers which only had protection material on the front of the legs. Arborists working in trees should always use chainsaw protective trousers with protective

material covering the full length of both the front and back of the legs and extending up to the waist at the front.

The Health and Safety Executive was still investigating the incident.

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

106. **Dates of future meetings**

The Sub-Committee **noted** the dates for future meetings, as listed below. All dates were Mondays starting at 4pm as indicated:

- 10 October 2022 (Venue to be confirmed)
- 13 February 2022 (Venue to be confirmed)

The meeting concluded at 5.13 pm

**Signed by:**

**Chair**

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