

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 13 February 2023** at **4.00pm**

Present: **Councillors**

Chair Ian Houlder (employer's side)

Members (employer's side)

Nick Clarke
Andy Neal

Robert Nobbs
Cliff Waterman

Staff representatives (employees' side)

Stephanie Grayling
Gary Quilter

Andrew Samson

Substitutes attending for a staff representative (employees' side)

Natasha Holdgate

119. **Substitutes**

The following substitution was declared:

Natasha Holdgate substituting for Sylvia Bayford (staff representative).

120. **Apologies for absence**

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

Apologies for absence were also received from Councillor Carol Bull, Cabinet Member for Governance.

Councillor James Lay and Lance Alexander (staff representative) were also unable to attend the meeting.

121. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2022 were confirmed as a correct record by the Chair.

122. **Declarations of interest**

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

123. Minutes of the meeting of West Suffolk Health and Safety Group: 4 January 2023

The Sub-Committee received and **noted** paper number: HSS/WS/23/001, which were the minutes of the West Suffolk Health and Safety Group meeting held on 4 January 2023.

124. Employee and members of the public incidents

The Sub-Committee received and **noted** report number: HSS/WS/23/002, which provided statistics relating to accidents/incidents involving West Suffolk Council employees and members of the public from 1 April 2022 to 30 November 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.

The Sub-Committee discussed the report and asked questions to which responses were provided. In particular detailed discussions were held on the injury involving a member of staff grazing their leg on a heating pipe. The Service Manager (Health and Safety) advised that back in 2011 when the council took over the building this was highlighted as a hazard. At the time solutions were looked into, however no feasible solution could be found to eliminate the hazard.

The Sub-Committee suggested that a review should be carried out on how the council could better protect staff from injury from these heating pipes and that it looks again at possible new solutions with a report of the review being presented to the Sub-Committee's next meeting in June 2023. In response the Service Manager (Health and Safety) agreed to progress this request with Property Services.

125. Legislative Update - Verbal

The Sub-Committee was informed that there were no legislative updates to report at the present time and nothing expected in the near future.

However, the Protect Duty, otherwise known as "Martyn's Law" was going through Parliament and further details would be released in the coming months.

126. Health and Safety Training - Verbal

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

- 1) Drug and alcohol safe chain of custody training.
- 2) IOSH Managing Safely: 29 to 31 March 2023.

- 3) Ongoing first aid training; annual refreshers and 3-yearly requalification.

In response to a question raised as to whether Verse custodians were first aid trained, the Sub-Committee was informed that all Verse custodians must be first aid trained as they provide the main cover for all West Suffolk Council buildings.

There being no decision required, the Sub-Committee **noted** the health and safety training update.

127. **Health and Safety Corporate Update (including 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:

- Occupational health – mini health checks
- NHS health checks
- Men’s health events
- Atrial fibrillation testing
- Flu vaccination vouchers
- Intranet articles
- Organisational engagement sessions
- Webinars on – sleep; menopause; woman’s and men’s health
- CPR training
- Fire risk assessments/Audits: 25 out of 32 planned audits had been completed and 22 out of 23 fire risk assessments completed and informal visits providing advice.

The Health and Safety team is a small team of 3. Unfortunately, the Senior Health and Safety Adviser had found another job and left the Council last week. Moving forward the Service Manager (Health and Safety) would be prioritising work according to risk until a suitable replacement was found. Also, the Service Manager (Health and Safety) had decided to leave the Council and retire with his last day being 6 April 2023.

The Sub-Committee considered and **noted** the verbal update, including Service Manager’s news that he was retiring on 6 April 2023.

128. **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) Newcastle City Council: Fined over a 6-year-olds death from a falling tree. The young girl was hit by a falling tree at Gosforth Park First School on 25 September 2020, and subsequently died the following morning in hospital.

The tree had become an “accident waiting to happen” after the council failed to properly investigate its condition following an inspection in

February 2018 which identified the need for another detailed look at it within six months.

Newcastle City Council pleaded guilty on 10 January 2023 under Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and were fined £280,000 and ordered to pay costs of £8,020.

- 2) BUPA: On 8 January 2021 a girl was out for an evening jog with her father. As she was running on a pavement outside the entrance to the care home, a lime tree fell on her. She suffered serious crush injuries and her leg had to be amputated. It was subsequently found that the tree was diseased with a common fungus and had likely been rotting for several years prior to the accident.

Bupa Care Homes pleaded guilty to a breach of Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and received a fine of £400,000. The company was also ordered to pay costs of £3,275 and an undisclosed victim surcharge.

- 3) Stress: Absence from work resulting from stress continues to be the highest cause of sickness absence and increasingly employers were introducing or consolidating steps to address both work related and non-work related stress.

The estimated number of workers in Great Britain suffering a work-related illness was 1.8 million with stress, depression, and anxiety making up around half of cases, new figures showed.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) had published its annual statistics on work-related ill health and workplace injuries. The figures from Great Britain's workplace regulator showed there was an estimated 914,000 cases of work-related stress, depression, or anxiety in 2021/22.

An estimated 17 million working days were lost due to work-related stress, depression, or anxiety in 2021/22. This is over half of all working days lost due to work-related ill health.

The HSE Stress Working Group which will identify its priorities within this work strand going forward.

The Sub-Committee considered the lessons learnt and asked questions to which responses were provided.

In particular detailed discussions were held tree inspections, and whether the council was confident that its own trees had been inspected and were safe. The Sub-Committee was advised that all trees owned by the council were inspected and logged on an electronic system called Arbi-trace. Tree inspections were generated, and any defects were recorded and put into a scheduled of works.

In response to a question raised about trees and parish councils, the Sub-Committee was informed that the council's tree officers worked with parish councils but did not have the resource to carry out additional tree inspections.

The Service Manger (Health and Safety) advised that he was happy to provide the locality officers with the slides for information. It was also suggested whether some advice could be provided to SALC on trees to be circulated to parish councils to make them aware of the dangers of not inspecting trees regularly.

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

129. **Dates of future meetings**

The Service Manager (Health and Safety) informed the Sub-Committee that the calendar of meeting dates for 2023 to 2024 would be approved by Council at its meeting on 21 February 2023.

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 2023 (Virtual meeting)
- October 2023 (Virtual meeting)
- February 2024 (Virtual meeting)

Prior to closing the meeting, the Chair on behalf of the Sub-Committee wished the Service Manager (Health and Safety) all the best in his retirement as this would be his last meeting.

The meeting concluded at 5.20pm

Signed by:

Chair
