

COUNCIL HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 25th May, 2022

Present:-

Donna Reddish (Chair)

Councillor	J Innes	Councillor	Brittain
Vanessa Watson	Housing	Karen Knight	Unison
Heather Spink	HR	Lesley Waller	Unison
Theresa Channell	Service Director – Finance	Liam Rich	Unite
Grant Ilett	HS & Risk Manager	Tony Devereux	Unison
Marc Jasinski	Corporate H&S Advisor	Andrew Grainger	Capital Contracts Manager
Christine Durrant	Executive Director	Trevor Barnett	Unite

*Matters dealt with under the Delegation Scheme

32 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K Falconer and Blank, Ade McCormick, Andrew Fowler, Ian Waller, Neil Johnson and Rachel O’Neil.

33 TEMPORARY COMMITTEE ARRANGEMENTS

The Service Director for Corporate advised the committee that due to current resourcing issues she would be Joint Chair for the committee on a temporary basis.

34 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16TH FEBRUARY 2022

The minutes of the meeting on 16th February 2022 were agreed as a true record.

35 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

36 MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORTS

Written reports were submitted by members of the Council's Corporate Leadership Team to update the Committee on health and safety matters from their directorates during the previous quarter.

The reports provided information on workplace inspections, specific incident investigations, training and communications.

The key points raised from the reports were as follows:

Corporate

- Six monthly health and safety office inspection planned for May 2022
- Joint health and safety inspection with trade unions took place on 4 October 2021
- Democratic and Elections Team completed a lot of planning in the quarter for Civic dinner and parade in May as well as returning full council to the Council Chamber
- Risk assessments developed and regularly reviewed
- Regulatory Law Team working in a hybrid way with Economic Growth taking the lead on the shared office inspections
- Communications & Marketing Team and Policy & Partnerships Office working in a hybrid way with regular checks on previous hazards identified such as trip hazards and untidiness
- Strategic Health, Safety and Risk currently hybrid working with office relocation likely within the next quarter
- Members have returned to the Town Hall for committees and are using the Members areas for admin
- No accidents or incidents reported in the quarter
- Some incidents of Covid 19 cases reported but investigations identified all non-work related and no other employees exposed
- 100% PDR completion rate for 2021/22
- 100% PDR half year check in completion rate for 2021/22
- Two outstanding training elements were reported at the end of the quarter but both were completed in April 2022
- Directorate Management Team meetings programmed for 2022/23
- Directorate DJCC meetings programmed for 2022/23
- A sixth team will be joining Directorate Corporate in 2022/23 – Vision Derbyshire – which will include six new members of staff

Finance

- Working from home continues with only ad hoc attendance in the office but continued regular checks of signage and cleaning product availability
- Six monthly inspection to be undertaken in May 2022
- Annual Health and Safety inspection to be planned for May/June 2022
- All risk assessments were up to date and reviewed regularly
- Zero accidents or incidents reported in the quarter
- All PDR's planned in for May 2022

- Online training was up to date with no outstanding elements
- Team meetings were ongoing with various areas discussed including DSE assessments, working from home, keeping windows open, Covid 19 precautions, employee helpline, mental health and lateral flow tests

Economic Growth

- Six monthly joint health and safety inspection was carried out on 15 October 2021
- An annual inspection was due to take place at the end of October 2021 but had not yet been undertaken
- Risk assessments for site visits were confirmed as up to date and under continual review
- Workplace inspections were carried out this quarter on Innovation Centres and the Corporate Property offices with no issues identified
- Discussions had also taken place to reallocate inspection responsibility going forwards for Legal and Planning offices
- One incident reported in the quarter involving a solar panel being detached from the roof of the Dunstan Innovation Centre in high winds
- All PDR's 2022/23 were booked in for April/May 2022
- Additional training requirements have been identified as part of the Strategic Health, Safety and Risk annual essential training requests process
- Online training was largely up to date with any outstanding training elements being a key focus of PDR's

Housing

- Six monthly inspection completed in March 2022 with a number of advisory points actioned
- Fire drill completed in March 2022
- Investment and Assets Town Hall G28 joint inspection is due May
- The planned Annual Health & Safety Tour was cancelled due to adverse weather conditions but was rescheduled for 18th May 2022
- Covid risk assessments were in place for each category of work and for individuals who are over 60, clinically vulnerable and clinically extremely vulnerable
- Positive Covid 19 cases remained the largest volume of incident type reported in the quarter
- All Managers/Supervisors in Capital Works and Voids have the Site Management qualification
- Continued compliance on online training has been seen but push continued to clear outstanding training elements with training either being undertaken or planned
- Technical staff have now completed the SMSTS and IOSH training sessions
- Works completed on the new build project at Badger Croft
- Works commenced on the Newland Dale project in March 2022
- Works have commenced in preparation for the start of the new build project at Middlecroft on 4th April 2022

- Works to commence on the block refurbishment at Willow Garth in May 2022
- In response to a member's question, it was confirmed that all RTA's are investigated fully and drivers are/can be assessed or requested to complete driver assessment if required
- It was also confirmed that more details regarding follow up actions of incidents would be included from next quarter with "Project Safety" currently working on all risk assessments
- All risk assessments should be available on PDA's and covered in Toolbox talks but any gaps should be highlighted if employees feel this is not the case

Leisure, Culture and Community Wellbeing

- Joint quarterly inspections were completed in January 2022 (HLC) and March 2022 (QPSC)
- Risk assessments were up to date and QPSC commencing annual review of risk assessments and Venues to update risk assessments and safe systems of work
- A number of incidents reported on SHE in Q4, including a various Covid positive cases and one RIDDOR reportable incident
- Training needs had been identified across all areas via Training Matrix
- Appropriate training allocated to specific roles via e-learning as identified through PDR process
- Staff and Team Leaders were to be reminded of team members' outstanding training though some aspects of training not required for some posts
- Review of staff list and outstanding training elements being undertaken
- Over the next 6-12 month a review of all risk assessments and safe systems of work were being reviewed, concentrating on Environmental Services, Venues and Leisure
- Work commencing on Stephenson's Memorial Hall, with health and safety an ongoing top priority
- Redesign of the two Leisure Centre's receptions area with new risk assessments in place for July
- Toolbox talks/training taking place throughout April on Sharps in Environmental Services
- Examples of future program for Joint Health and Safety inspections for 2022/23 include Cemeteries (April, July and Sept) and Crematorium (Sept, Dec and Feb)

Digital, HR and Customer Services

- No joint inspections completed in the quarter
- All risk assessments were up to date and all Health and Safety messages were cascaded to the teams via Manager briefings
- One workplace inspection carried out in the quarter in the OD office, with no risks identified
- No incidents or accidents reported in the quarter
- No training elements outstanding

37 **OCCUPATIONAL ILL HEALTH STATISTICS**

The Human Resources Business Partner presented a report detailing the occupational ill health statistics for the quarter 1st January to 31st March 2022.

The average days lost per occurrence for MSK within the quarter was 26 days, with 3% of days lost being work related which is a significant reduction since last quarter. However, the number of days lost to this absence reason had increased by 45%, which can be attributed to a small number of long-term sickness absences.

There had also been an increase in staff undergoing operations and completing their recovery and being able to return to work in this period. This could be attributed to the easing of the Covid-19 restrictions and planned procedures commencing.

During the quarter, the absence reasoning with the most days lost categorised as 'work related' was 'Stress/Depression/Anxiety/Mental Health'. An increase in mental illness was emerging as the effects of Covid-19 and changes to day-to-day life continued. In order to support staff HR were continuing to work closely with Line Managers to monitor sickness absence, upskill and coach managers on how to deal with mental health conditions and how to support staff in the workplace that suffer with mental illness.

HRBP's were continuing to promote the newly introduced Mental Health First Aider programme, the Employee Assistance Programme and ensure the relevant support mechanisms were in place to support employees returning to work.

Where deemed appropriate an occupational health referral was undertaken to identify appropriate adjustments to reduce periods of sickness absence and prevent recurrence. Staff have also been supported with access to a counselling provider and positive feedback had been received on the effectiveness of the counselling service currently in place.

Sickness absence relating to both Viral Infections and Coronavirus was high this quarter and most instances of absence within this quarter were as a result of these reasonings. This was over a 40% increase from last quarter. It could be concluded that this was the result of seasonal illness following on from the seasonal period and due to the easing of Covid-19 restrictions.

38 **INCIDENT/ACCIDENT INFORMATION**

The Corporate Health and Safety Advisor presented a report on the number of incidents/accidents over the period 1st January to 31st March 2022. The number of incidents reported for the quarter was 211 which was an increase of 38% on the previous quarter. It was reported that even when Covid 19 incidents were discounted, there had still been an increase in incidents of 21% from 67 to 81.

There had been 6 RIDDOR reportable incidents over the quarter compared to 5 the previous quarter, 3 of these were employee incidents, 2 were non-employee and 1 was a gas incident. The 3 employee RIDDOR's lead to a total of 61 lost days.

The year-to-date incident totals had risen in all areas in the reporting period except for slight decreases in contractor incidents. The year-to-date total to the end of March 2022 was 465 which was an increase of 186 incidents when compared to the 279 year-to-date incident totals reported in the previous quarter. This indicated a rise of 67%. However, it was noted that 2020/21 and 2021/22 included significant periods of Covid-19 restrictions which limited many activities.

The Corporate Health and Safety Advisor confirmed that the existing reporting format allowed for additional details about incidents e.g. root causes, actions taken etc to be recorded and that further training on SHE reporting and incident investigation was available.

It was also noted that Unions could provide reports prior to the Health and Safety Chairs meeting so that responses could be shared in the committee.

In response to a member's question regarding 2 reported RTA incidents which showed no follow up action the Corporate Health and Safety Advisor agreed an action to review these incidents and refer back to managers for comment.

The member for Unite shared details of a recent audit into incidents, investigations and risk assessments within the Housing Directorate. The Executive Director confirmed that the report has been shared with Unison.

39 RPE POLICY

The Executive Director presented an update to the committee on the proposed new RPE (Respiratory Protective Equipment) policy.

The briefing was the start of a consultation process with staff and trade unions in relation to a Draft RPE policy. The policy was particularly important for Housing Property Services due to the tasks involving silica/ dust and asbestos and the consultation period will run until Monday 20 June 2022.

Following the updating of face-fit tests for use of RPE with silica/ dust and asbestos in Autumn 2021, concerns were raised by unions and staff about the policy position and requirement to use face-fit masks and be clean shaven. An interim approach to the use of RPE was introduced in Feb 2022 to ensure safe working practices were in place.

Work to develop the policy was underway with trials of alternative RPE (air-fed hoods), a review of operational service requirements, consideration of the types of work that employees carry out and flexibilities required by the service, discussions with specialist asbestos contractors, discussions with Institution of Occupational

Safety and Health & Chartered safety and health practitioners, review of H&S legislation and HSE guidance and gathered information from other authorities.

Key findings were that results of the trials with three members of staff were mixed, air-fed hoods cannot be safely used when asbestos fibres may be present due to cleaning down requirements, housing property services require a flexible workforce to maximise productivity where all employees were able to work where asbestos fibres may be present and information from other authorities suggested a move to the use of face-fit masks and confirmation that air-fed hoods were not appropriate for asbestos.

Key principles of the proposed RPE policy included where RPE was identified as a requirement through a risk assessment, the use of half or full face respirators would be our main standard policy approach, meaning that RPE must be tight fitting RPE. Tight fitting respirators would require employees to be appropriately clean shaven and for the avoidance of doubt this covers any work involving asbestos containing material (ACM) and silica/ dust.

There may be reasonable exemptions, with regards to medical conditions or religious grounds and reasonable adjustments would be appropriately considered and where employees were not prepared to be clean shaven, and there was no reasonable exemption, this would be considered a failure to follow a reasonable management instruction and was likely to lead to action through the council's disciplinary procedure.

Other key points covered in the draft policy were reinforcing the priority that we should all give to following Health and Safety legal requirements, setting out an understanding of respiratory hazards, use of RPE should be a last resort and should be clearly set out in Risk Assessments, Manager and employee responsibilities in use of RPE, face-fit testing requirements for tight fitting RPE and requirements for keeping records of testing and training.

For the next steps it was confirmed that consultation on the draft policy would run until 20 June 2022, an Assessment report had been written and a set of FAQ's developed, consideration at both the Health & Safety Committee and Employment & General Committee and the implementation date to be considered as the detailed timetable for policy approval was developed.

The member for Unison commented that employee engagement had been good but questioned if the consultation period was sufficient. The Executive Director agreed to review the consultation end date with the Housing Directorate.

40 **SHE ACCESS**

The member for Unison raised a concern around SHE access for unions. It was said that recent changes to SHE access/permissions meant that the Unison chair no longer had access to SHE and this was affecting Unison's ability to assist in investigations. The question was asked if this access would be granted once again.

The Director for Corporate advised that Data Protection concerns had been raised so an access permissions review had been launched. This work was ongoing to review and understand how the appropriate access should be granted for Health & Safety representatives.

The Strategic Health, Safety and Risk Manager highlighted the need for a robust process to be developed ensuring proper controls were in place, but that would not prevent Union involvement in investigations.

41 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was raised.

42 DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Committee would take place on Wednesday 17th August 2022 at 9.30am.