

Health and Safety Group Meeting

20 October 2022

Present:

Kelland Dickens, HR Manager
Dyfan Evans, Woodland Supervisor
Tegryn Jones, Chief Executive
Liz Rooney, Unison Representative
Libby Taylor, Ranger Service Manager
Sharron Thomas, Administrative Assistant (DM)

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Andrew Muskett, Building Projects Manager and Daisy Hughes, Visitor Services Manager (South).

2. Minutes and Matters Arising

It was reported that all H&S Group documents are now available on the HR / Health & Safety public folder on the shared F drive. Work is being done with Mair Thomas to migrate to Sharepoint in due course.

Action completed.

Group members who had provided comment on the drafting of the Annual Health & Safety Report were thanked and subject headings were amended following feedback.

Action completed.

Kelland Dickens confirmed that he was still awaiting information from some Officers to complete the Annual Health & Safety Report, and it would not be ready in time for the next Audit & Corporate Services Committee. It would therefore be postponed until the next available Committee meeting.

Action carried over until completed – KD.

Kelland Dickens confirmed that the revised Terms of Reference for the group would also be carried over to this meeting.

Action carried over until completed - KD.

It was confirmed that the updated information for the Fire Safety Policies for Carew, Oriel y Parc, Milton, Cilrhedyn and Withybush had been sent to Kelland Dickens and once minor adjustments had been made, they would be live in December.

Action carried over until completed – KD.

Fire Marshall Training had been organised for 25 October 2022.

Action completed.

Kelland Dickens commented that the number of Fire Marshall had been increased, post-Covid, and a series of evacuation training would be completed at Llanion.

First Aid Training had been carried out in September and further training was being planned.

Action completed.

It was confirmed that Off-Road Training had been included in the Training Matrix and had been delivered.

Action completed.

Kelland Dickens reported that managers had not fully engaged with requests to detail mandatory training for staff. He would therefore meet with managers as part of the Pay and Grading Review to capture this information along with new Job Descriptions and Person Specifications.

Action carried over until completed - KD.

3. PROTECTION OF STAFF AGAINST ABUSE

Sharon Thomas commented that the Authority previously had a system which enabled mapping of challenging client/public behaviour for Officers attending site.

She said the concerns remain within the team, but the system is no longer used. She acknowledged that it may have GDPR issues, but wanted to know if this can be explored once again as there had been an increase in challenging behaviour directed towards staff.

Tegryn Jones commented that Sharon was correct to pick this up from a Planning perspective but also raised that it would be an issue for any member of staff representing the Authority, including both Wardens and Rangers. Tegryn Jones commented that FOI issues should also be explored.

Libby Taylor advised that group that a GIS layer used to exist for the purpose of listing incidents (not individuals) and Sharon commented that MapInfo was previously used for this purpose.

Kelland Dickens confirmed that any list must comply with GDPR such that there would need to be a legitimate and justified interest, e.g., genuine concerns regarding the health, safety and wellbeing of staff. Kelland Dickens confirmed he would liaise with the DPO, Phil Barlow and other relevant Officers to develop a solution.

Action – KD

4. ANNUAL HEALTH & SAFETY REPORT

Kelland Dickens commented that actions were still outstanding from three areas of the Authority, and he would continue chasing these down. He confirmed that due to the slipped deadline, the report would be unavailable until the end 2022.

No further comments were put forward by group members.

Action carried over until completed – KD

5. HAND ARM VIBRATION SYNDROME (HAVS)

Kelland Dickens confirmed that approval had been given and money was available within the HR budget, to enable an Officer of the Authority to be engaged on the project full time. This would enable work to be completed on testing vibration levels for all Authority machines. Measurements would then begin with staff operating vibrating equipment.

6. INCIDENT REPORTING

Kelland Dickens confirmed that the report sent to group members was now split between incidents involving staff and those involving members of the public; this followed a request from the group at the last meeting.

He asked members to review the report, so that any learnings could be put forward for action.

Kelland Dickens commented that advice had already been provided in many cases, to improve training and / or processes, therefore reducing the likelihood of incidents recurring.

Tegryn Jones commented that the number of incidents felt low and asked if Officers were recording all incidents.

He said he would be organising a staff meeting in the next few weeks and wanted to remind staff of the need to report near miss

Tegryn Jones said that if near misses were not recorded, than the Authority could not react effectively. He also commented that incidents involving verbal abuse against Officers of the Authority should be reported, as it can have a serious impact on the health and wellbeing of staff.

Kelland Dickens responded by saying that Committee had raised the issue previously - commenting on the low number of near misses.

He said, as a result, it was included in the last 'all staff' meeting and was followed up through the Staff Newsletter.

Kelland Dickens said that further communications would be done to continue reinforcing the message. He said he would redraft the communication to encourage further recording of verbal abuse incidents.

Action – KD

Kelland Dickens said that he felt the Authority needed to be more disciplined in its approach to health and safety and requested that line managers raise these issues at their regular team meetings, and almost as a standing agenda item.

He said a cascade of information from Leadership down was required to embed key messages across the Authority.

He said managers should be asking questions in meetings such as “have there been any near misses this month?” and “have there been any issues regarding verbal abuse?”. He said talking about it was necessary, to increase staff engagement.

Libby Taylor commented on a verbal abuse incident in her area and asked if the Authority should be giving Rangers more support and training. She said that new

staff were not always equipped to deal with such issues and that longer standing members were used to dealing with such incidents, as part of the job.

Kelland Dickens said that Authority should be providing training and commented that HR were working on an Induction Plan across the Authority and certain roles should have 'essential' training on how to handle difficult situations and conflict. He said it should be done to protect both the employee from stress and the Authority from any potential PI claims.

Libby Taylor commented that training had been delivered in the past.

Tegryn Jones said he agreed with Libby Taylor but did not accept that longer standing members of staff should accept abuse as part of the job. Tegryn Jones, Libby Taylor and Kelland Dickens commented about the shift in society and the work place since Covid-19.

Tegryn Jones asked if verbal abuse incidents could be categorised. Kelland Dickens said he would explore the merit of doing this.

Tegryn Jones confirmed that staff training had taken place in the past, which had been delivered by two retired Cardiff police officers.

Kelland Dickens said he would explore and organise further training.

Action – Kelland Dickens

7. Staff Sickness

The group were asked if they had reviewed the sickness statistics provided.

Kelland Dickens informed the group that Covid-19 and more importantly Stress, Anxiety & Mental Health were recorded to be the highest causes of absences across the Authority.

He said that the figures indicated that some staff may be predisposed to mental health problems and may have less resilience to deal with conflict; highlighting again the need to run training on conflict management and continue running the resilience training organised for DM.

Tegryn Jones asked if the figures could be presented to show long term and short-term absence separate, because long term absence may have skewed some statistics.

Action – Kelland Dickens

8. Fire Safety

Kelland Dickens confirmed that new Fire Marshalls had been appointed for the Llanion building, due to staff withdrawing their support, as a result of increased numbers of staff now home working.

He confirmed that training had been organised and fire evacuation training would be carried out from November onwards at Llanion.

Action completed

No further comments were made by the group.

9. Legislative Updates

Kelland Dickens reported that HSE have announced that visits would be carried out on woodworking businesses across the UK, to ensure controls are in place to mitigate against work related lung disease. He commented that he had discussed this with Geraint and respiratory testing had been carried out with staff as one of the measures.

Dyfan Evans confirmed that the Dust Extraction System had recently been serviced and flow testing would be looked at before the end of the year.

Tegryn Jones commented that some mandatory training had slipped because of Covid-19 and asked if this had been rectified.

Kelland Dickens and Barbara Bevan responded to say mandatory training identified by managers had been carried out, such as 'Abrasive Wheels' training. Kelland Dickens confirmed that a full review of all health and safety training was being conducted to confirm if other training should be mandatory.

10. Training

Kelland Dickens confirmed that the ELMS e-learning package would be rolled out to all staff, week commencing 31 October. Manual Handling, First Aid and Fire Awareness will be scheduled to be completed first.

Tegryn Jones confirmed that he had completed the Safer Recruiting module through ELMS along with other staff and asked if the 'all staff' meeting should be used to update staff on ELMS. Tegryn asked if it was available at all sites.

Kelland Dickens confirmed that he had spoken to IT to provision some laptops for training, as the Wardens were unable to access Parcnet on their phones, so alternative ways in accessing e-learning training were being explored. He said the ideal would be for the Authority to have a dedicated training suite.

11. A.O.B.

Sharon Thomas asked if staff were to continue signing in at the staff entrance, as some staff were now accessing the visitor entrance and not signing in.

Kelland Dickens confirmed that this was a Covid-19 measure due to the limited number of Fire Marshalls in the building and was a way to comply with fire regulations.

It was agreed that a reminder would be sent to staff to ensure staff signed in and out of the building. It was also agreed to maintain a register at both entrances.

Action – KD

Sharon Thomas also commented that clarity needed to be provided on the opening and closing times for Llanion, as some staff were being pressurised to leave earlier.

Kelland Dickens said he was aware of the situation and was drafting a communication for James Parkin to send out.

Action – KD

Libby Taylor confirmed that James Parkin had communicated to his team that a revision of Covid-19 rules was being considered. She asked whether Covid-19 should be included as a standard line in all Risk Assessments rather than having a separate RA for Covid-19.

Tegryn Jones commented that transmission rates were going back up in Pembrokeshire and care had to be taken and asked for patience over the next two months to ensure that measures were in place prior to opening Llanion back up.

Libby Taylor asked if the Authority would consider procuring Covid-19 tests to make it easier for staff to test.

Kelland Dickens said that due to the wider availability of testing at the start of Covid-19, a decision was taken to put the responsibility on employees but would explore Libby Taylor's request.

Kelland Dickens confirmed that the Authority were in the process of updating Risk Assessments to incorporate Covid-19 and other contractable diseases as one of a number of risks to be considered when writing a Risk Assessment. He commented that the Authority were moving away from separate Covid-19 risk assessments.

Liz Rooney asked if a date had been set for the next Staff Reps Meeting. Kelland Dickens said he would confirm this outside of the meeting.

Tegryn Jones said a review would be carried out of the group composition in light of the new structure, to ensure it was fully representative of all functional areas.

Action – KD

Kelland Dickens commented that he would raise the Cleaning Contract with Andrew Musket, as complaints had been raised to him by both male and female staff about the toilets and general cleanliness.

Kelland Dickens also commented that the cleaning arrangements for Cilrhedyn may also need to be reviewed and he would discuss this with Geraint Harries.

12. Date of Next Meeting

Dates for 2023 to be arranged and circulated by Kelland Dickens