UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12 NOVEMBER 2019

Present: Mr A Donaldson (Convener), Mrs V Amakiri, Mrs L Benvie, Dr G Bewick, Ms S Blaney, Mr R Ebel, Mr G Fisher, Mrs C Lawie, Mr D Malcolm, Mr B Paterson, Dr S Pugh, Mr C Scott, Professor C Secombes, Mr K Smith, Mr E Stephen, Mr J Urquhart, Ms C Wallback, Mrs T White, Mrs D Wilson and Dr A Petrie (Clerk).

Apologies: Professor D Anderson, Dr N Curtis, Mrs D Dyker, Mr N Edwards, Mr B Philp, Professor P Fowler, Dr C Harrington, Professor I McEwan and Mrs K Smith

1 MINUTES OF THE MEETING

1.1 The Committee was invited to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 9th May 2019. The minutes were considered accurate and approved.

2 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

2.1 STRESS SURVEY UPDATE (Minute 3.2 refers)

This would be considered at today’s meeting (see Minute 3 below)

2.2 STRESS SURVEY UPDATE (Minute 3.6 refers)

This would be considered at today’s meeting (see Minute 3 below)

2.3 STRESS SURVEY UPDATE (Minute 3.7 refers)

As Mrs Dyker was not present, it was agreed to circulate this information following the Committee meeting.

2.4 FIRE SAFETY REPORT (Minute 4.2 refers)

Mr Fisher feedback to the Committee that he has discussed this with Mr Donaldson and it was more appropriate for Mr Fisher to attend the Estates Management Meetings

2.5 ACCIDENTS AND INCIDENTS UPDATE (Minute 4.5 refers)

Mr Malcolm stated that there had been a review of the Campus Services food hygiene policy and procedures. Starting in 2020 there will be a new e-system to prevent contamination and an electronic information screen at every food outlet which will identify allergens in food that is available.

3 GHQ12 & BENCHMARKING

3.1 The Committee discussed the paper produced by Dr J Allan (HSC19:01, copy filed with principal copy of minutes) which was presented by Mr Fisher. Mr Fisher identified that the data suggested that there was a problem with stress but it was difficult to compare the data between the different studies presented within the paper. This should not prevent practical solutions being implemented to reduce stress and Mr Fisher indicated that there could be blanket recommendations and specific actions to address hot-spots. It was identified that there were 2 workstreams looking into stress and it was suggested that these should be combined.

3.2 There followed a discussion on whether further analysis of the data would be beneficial, the small percentage of returns, the aspect that those with concerns over stress were more likely to respond than those without and whether the low response rate was due to concerns over the potential for identifying individuals.
3.3 Mr Fisher indicated that any further surveys should be based upon the HSE survey which would allow more comparison with other organisations. There followed a discussion on the suitability of the HSE model and it was identified that the HSE model can drive potential recommendations relating to the HSE standards such as demands. It was noted that high workload and associated high stress is an organisational decision, however it was noted that this is not unique across public sector organisations. It was further discussed that practical decisions should be found and that there are unlikely to be ‘quick fixes’.

3.4 There followed a discussion as to whether there could be more analysis of the data e.g. by staff grades, etc. however caution should be taken to ensure that analysis of data is not undertaken at the expense of finding working solutions or potentially identifying individual members of staff.

4  FIRE SAFETY UPDATE

4.1 Mr Fisher outlined the fire safety paper (HSC19:02, copy filed with principal copy of minutes) and indicated that the information contained was self-explanatory. It was queried as to whether the list was up to date and it was identified that there were a small number of incidents that were currently under investigation.

4.2 A query was raised as to what was being done to improve the evacuation times within specific buildings. There then followed a discussion about how to improve evacuation and this considered better information for academics in centrally timetabled lecture theatres and teaching rooms, lack of familiarity of buildings, potential for relevant fire information on IT systems, human nature and ‘flock mentality’ during emergency situations. It was suggested that the new Fire Safety Adviser could review this aspect and fire signage in lecture theatres upon appointment.

   Action: Dr A Petrie

5  PROGRESS WITH AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Dr Petrie gave a brief update on the progress with the audit recommendations (HSC19:03, copy filed with principal copy of minutes). Ms Blaney identified that the final recommendation for the School of Biological Sciences was awaiting quotes and once received this would be closed.

5.2 The final recommendation for the Rowett Institute of Nutrition and Health was discussed and since there was no immediate requirement from the Institute for the issue to be resolved and it is also being addressed through the building ‘snagging’ list it was agreed that this could be removed from the update list and progressed through the snagging process.

6. REVIEW OF UNIVERSITY HEALTH AND SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

6.1 Mr Fisher gave an overview of the paper (HSC19:04, copy filed with principal copy of minutes) and his review of the University Health and Safety Management System had led to 9 recommendations which were identified in the paper. The most significant were to address identified gaps in Policies and rationalisation of relevant H&S forums. Mr Paterson identified that that there was a reference to adopting NHS policies and that there may be issues with this as a result of the different Unions. Mr Fisher clarified that this was as a result of University staff working in NHS premises and therefore should adopt their policies. It was discussed that there should be more centralised policies which Schools/Departments can refer to and where required, Schools/Departments should have more specialised policies specific to their needs.

6.2 There followed a discussion on the benefits of a central repository of general Policies for most regulations and activities conducted and Schools/Departments should only have their own policies for their specific needs.
6.3 It was discussed as to whether mental health was non-statutory and it was highlighted that wellbeing and mental health activities are considered best practice and exceed health and safety regulation and these obviously have benefits for employees and employers. There was a short discussion on the benefits for following the principles of recognised health and safety management systems.

6.4 There was agreement on the recommendations contained within the paper and it was queried as to what was the proposed timeline for implementation of them Mr Fisher identified that an action plan will be developed and brought to the Committee.

Action: Mr G Fisher

7. REVIEW OF UNIVERSITY HEALTH AND SAFETY FORUMS

7.1 Mr Fisher presented a paper (HSC19:05, copy filed with principal copy of minutes) which reviewed a number of working groups across the University which are associated with Health, Safety and/or Wellbeing.

7.2 There was discussion over which forums and working groups should report to other groups. The discussions specifically considered the Workload Review Group and where this reports into. It was agreed that this should be discussed out with the Committee by Mrs T White and Mr G Fisher to agree the optimal reporting structure in consultation with Dr S Pugh.

Action: Mr G Fisher & Mrs T White

8. UNIVERSITY TRAVEL POLICY

8.1 Dr Pugh raised a concern that staff and postgraduate students who complete the travel risk assessment do not have it reviewed and whether completed assessments are fit for purpose. It was discussed that academics should be trusted to undertake an appropriate assessment but for PhD students there are ongoing discussions with on whether training is required for overseas travel.

8.2 Dr Pugh also raised a concern that the current policy advises to consult the FCO website and for those countries categorised as Red or Amber that approval by the University Secretary is required. Dr Pugh identified that not all countries are colour coded. It was discussed that there was relevant good information available from both the Diversity Travel and University Insurers (AIG) websites. Ms Blaney highlighted that the School of Biological Sciences has undertaken significant work in this area and was willing to share their best practice with Dr Pugh.

8.3 It was agreed that the Health, Safety & Wellbeing Team will review the Policy and associated guidance.

Action: Mr G Fisher

9 AOCB

9.1 Mr Fisher identified that the University must submit to Healthy Working Lives (HWL) early next year to retain its Silver accreditation and wished the Committee to consider an updated version of the University Smoking Policy required for the submission. There followed a discussion on the Policy and the issues concerning accountability and enforcement of the Policy. It was discussed that there was poor signage, perceived lack of smoking shelters or identification of their location, lack of enforcement and the potential issues with properties that abut onto non-University land.

9.2 It was agreed that the amendments would be adopted but the Policy be reviewed again after the HWL submission.

Action: Mr G Fisher

9.3 Mrs Benvie stated that some library staff had recently received asbestos training which was very beneficial to the individual’s roles. She queried as to whether there was any update from the Asbestos Management Group. Mr Donaldson informed that the group is meeting on a regular basis.
ACCIDENTS AND INCIDENTS UPDATE

10.1 The Committee took note of the incidents in the report (HSC19:06, copy filed with principal copy of minutes) and actions taken in response to them.

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

11.1 The Committee noted the next meeting would be held on Tuesday 28th January 2020.