

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN  
HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 13 NOVEMBER 2013**

Present: Professor P Morgan (Convener), Mr A Donaldson, Dr R Ebel, Dr C Harrington, Mrs A Innes, Dr S Lawrie, Mr M McCorkell, Miss D MacKinnon, Dr C Sands, Ms P Williams with Mr I Cowe, Mr G Hope, Mr R Philp, Mr G Robertson, Ms J Sewel, Ms J Tuckwell, Mrs J Walker and Mr N Corby (Clerk)

Apologies for absence were received from: Ms M Dunn, Mrs S Lodge, Mr S Napier, Professor P McCaffery, Ms D Massie, Mrs E Robertson, Professor C Secombes, Ms A Shipley and Mr E Stephen

The Convener welcomed Dr Harrington, Mr Hope and Mr McCorkell to their first meeting of the Committee. The Convener noted, with sadness, the death of Mr Chris Lodge who, as Asbestos Coordinator, had played a key role in the University's health and safety arrangements.

1 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 May 2013 (*HSC13:01 copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*) were received and approved as a true record.

2 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

The Committee noted the actions taken in respect of matters referred for action at the last meeting and not considered elsewhere on the agenda for this meeting (*HSC13:02 copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*).

The Committee asked if staff in Schools and Support Services responsible for raising purchase orders for hire cars could have access to the database of approved drivers to enable them to confirm that members of staff were authorised to drive under the University's motor insurance.

**Action: Mr N Corby**

The Committee asked to be kept informed of progress in extending the remit of the University's GM Committees to cover work with wild-type organisms in Hazard Groups 2 and 3.

**Action: Mr N Corby**

The Committee noted that the College of Physical Sciences would be looking more closely at the part of the Rowett's QA software package used for equipment maintenance to see if it could be used by the College. The Committee felt that if it was feasible to use the software, it would result in more robust arrangements for managing maintenance. The Committee asked to receive a further report on the matter.

**Action: Mr E Stephen**

The Committee noted that a completion date of end November 2013 had been set for updating the plans for the fire service showing the location of hazardous materials in Meston Building, Fraser Noble Building and St Mary's. However the Committee was informed that the Schools concerned considered end December to be a more realistic completion date. The Committee asked to be kept informed of progress. The Committee also noted that it was essential that robust arrangements were then put in place to keep the plans up to date.

**Action: Mr N Napier**

### 3 REMIT AND MEMBERSHIP

The remit and membership of the Committee were noted (*HSC13:03 copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*)

### 4 CONVENER'S REMARKS

The Convener informed the Committee of the increasing interest which the University Court had been taking in health and safety and of the reports which would be made to both the Operating Board and Court in the coming weeks on:

- The recent accident at the CHP Station;
- Arm's Length Organisations;
- The swimming incident at the mouth of the River Don which had resulted in a large-scale rescue operation and six students being taken to hospital;
- Health and safety culture in the University.

The Convener invited members of the Committee to reflect on what the term "health and safety culture" meant to them and to put forward their views on the adequacy of the University's health and safety arrangements and what improvements could be made. During the subsequent discussion it was noted that:

- Several members who were in a position to contrast the University's health and safety arrangements with those of other HE institutions felt that the University's arrangements compared favourably;
- The results of the most recent staff survey had been compared with those of other institutions and the comparison of the responses to the question on health and safety had been favourable;
- Considerable improvements had been made to the University's arrangements over the past 10 years but we should not be complacent and should recognise that more needed to be done particularly around improving the robustness of arrangements;
- Leadership was critical in shaping health and safety culture with the role of senior managers in being visible and proactive regarding health and safety being particularly important;
- The role of the University in working alongside and supporting the Students' Association had been welcomed by the Association and it was commented that such support was not provided in some universities;
- The remit of the Committee contained a requirement that it should "promote a culture of consciousness of health and safety and of continuing improvement in those areas".

The Committee noted that an Investors in People assessment would be carried out shortly and that this might provide an opportunity to probe staff perceptions of the University's health and safety culture. The University Safety Adviser was asked to liaise with HR on this matter.

**Action: Mr N Corby**

### 5 CAMPUS SERVICES VIDEO

The Committee watched a short video which had been commissioned by Campus Services to provide an introduction to living in halls of residence and to safety matters which students were encouraged to consider. The video had been shown at number of informal gatherings for students when they arrived at the University and also at meetings which had been held for parents. Members of the Committee expressed their views that it was a well made video which communicated its main messages in an effective manner and avoided the pitfall of coming over as patronising. The Committee noted that there were a range of other initiatives to communicate safety messages to students involving both the University and the Students' Association and that the Convener would shortly be meeting the Head of Student Support to get an overview of what is currently done to encourage students to be aware of safety issues.

## 6 INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT ON HEALTH AND SAFETY

The Committee noted the report on the internal audit of health and safety (*HSC13:04 copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*), that the auditors had provided "Substantial Assurance" that the University's health and safety risk controls were working effectively and that there had been just one recommendation in the in the lowest grading which had now been implemented.

The Committee asked whether the risks involved in the work undertake by contractors working for Schools and Support Services other than Estates would warrant six-monthly reviews of health and safety performance similar to those which had been instigated for the Estates Section. **Action: Mr N Corby**

## 7 SAFETY BULLETINS – OCTOBER 2013

The Committee welcomed the latest safety bulletins (*HSC13:05 copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*) but asked why they were sent only to Local Safety Advisers and that consideration should be given to sending them to all staff through the "dept-info" email list and also to Arm's-Length Organisations. The Committee also asked that consideration be given to rewording the part of the Bulletin dealing with use of hands-free phones which referred to use of hands-free phones as being "equally" dangerous to hand held-phones and that it might be better to state that hand-free phones were "almost as dangerous". **Action: Mr N Corby**

## 8 HEALTH AND SAFETY PRIORITIES 2012/13

The Committee noted the progress with the health and safety priorities for 2012/13 (*HSC13:06 copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*). Noting that there had slippage with completion of a number of the priorities, the Committee asked that consideration be given to whether there was adequate resourcing of priority initiatives. **Action: Ms J Sewel**

## 9 HEALTH AND SAFETY PRIORITIES 2013/14

The Committee noted the priorities which had been set for 2013/14 (*HSC13:07 copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*) but asked whether consideration had been given to the resources which would be required. **Action: Ms J Sewel**

## 10 PROGRESS WITH AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee noted the progress which had been made in implementing audit recommendations (*HSC13:08 copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*) but expressed concern about the delay by the CLSM Teaching Facility in implementing what appeared to be a relatively simple recommendation. The Committee asked that this concern be communicated to the Teaching Facility. **Action: Mr N Corby**

The Committee noted that the Estates Section had set a revised target of June 2014 to fully commission the new computer system used to support planned preventive maintenance and for an independent audit to be carried out of the Section's maintenance arrangements.

## 11 ARM'S-LENGTH ORGANISATIONS

The Committee noted the progress made with implementing the recommendations for health and safety in Arm's-Length Organisations (*HSC13:09 copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*).

The Committee noted that four Arm's-Length Organisations had been identified in the paper but that there were likely other organisations which should be brought under this heading and that these would be considered in due course.

## 12 ACCIDENTS AND NEAR MISSES IN THE UNIVERSITY

The Committee noted the numbers of accidents reported to the University Safety Adviser and also the change in the reporting period (*HSC13:10 copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*). The Committee agreed that, while it was encouraging to note that the number of lost-time accidents had remained low, accident numbers were a crude measure of health and safety performance and low numbers of accidents did not necessarily indicate satisfactory control of risks.

The Committee considered the report on the accident in the Combined Heat and Power Station and the letter which had been received from the Health and Safety Executive (*HSC13:18 copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*). The Committee noted the steps which were being taken by the Estates Section to address the findings of its investigation into the accident. The Committee agreed that there were generic points arising from this incident which should be considered by other parts of the University:

- That instructions provided for the operation and maintenance of safety critical items of equipment should always be followed unless alternative arrangement devised by a competent person were implemented in their place;
- When assessing the risks associated with operation of plant and equipment, the risks from having to deal with foreseeable emergency situations should always be considered.

## 13 CHILDREN WITHIN UNIVERSITY BUILDINGS

The Committee considered the proposed guidance on bringing children into University buildings (*HSC13:11 copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*). The Committee asked that the following changes be made to the guidance before it was issued:

- It be made clear that the guidance is not intended to apply to halls of residence;
- The bullet point in Section 2 concerned with the number of adults available to supervise children be changed to read "The numbers of children".

**Action: Mr N Corby**

## 14 CORPORATE RISK REGISTER

The Committee considered and approved the updated health and safety entry for the corporate risk register (*HSC13:12 copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*) and confirmed that there should no changes to the gross and net risk scores.

## 15 AUDIT REPORTS

The Committee considered the reports on the audits in the Institute of Medical Sciences (*HSC13:13 copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*), the Research Institute for Irish and Scottish Studies (*HSC13:14 copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*), the School of Language and Literature (*HSC13:15 copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*) and the Business School (*HSC13:16 copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*).

While noting that the report on the audit in the Institute of Medical Sciences had been completed before the current discussions on health and safety culture had begun, the Committee remarked that statement in the report that the Institution had a strong health and safety culture did not sit comfortably with the audit findings relating to Containment Level 2 laboratories.

## 16 MINUTES OF THE RADIATION HAZARDS SUB-COMMITTEE

The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting of the Radiation Hazards Sub-Committee (*HSC13:17 copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*). The Committee noted with concern the minute which referred to a member of staff handling radioactive sources before having been registered as a radiation worker. The Committee asked for further information on the steps which were being taken to prevent a recurrence of this type of incident.

**Action: Mr N Corby**

## 17 DATES OF FURTHER MEETINGS

The Committee noted that further meetings were scheduled for  
Thursday 30 January 2014  
Thursday 8 May 2014