

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 3 JULY 2013

REPORT BY HEALTH AND SAFETY OFFICER

HEALTH AND SAFETY: LONG TERM FAULTS AND DEFECTS  
REPORT

**Purpose/Summary of Report**

- This report details high priority concerns identified through a monthly inspection of the Wallfields and Charringtons House offices and Buntingford Service Centre.
- These issues have already been considered by the Safety Committee on 23 May 2013 and actions agreed.

**RECOMMENDATION FOR HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE:**

<b>(A)</b>	<b>To note the long-term faults and defects and the progress made as reported to Safety Committee on 23 May 2013.</b>
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1.0 Background

1.1 The frequency of these inspections was increased following the appointment of the Facilities Team Leader with the full support and attendance of the Union's Safety Representatives.

1.2 Inspection regimes are a commonly used tool to assist management in the efficient and effective management of health and safety in the workplace.

2.0 Report

2.1 The purpose of these inspections is to identify faults, defects and hazards and assess the urgency of the remedy. However, only the most significant risks and breaches of statutory regulations will be reported to Safety Committee . The longer that matters remain unattended to, the greater the risk exposure to legal and financial penalties arising from claims for injury or harm, therefore funding or management support may be needed to rectify the situation.

2.2 Significant progress has been made since the introduction of the inspection regime and the appointment of the Facilities Team Leader

2.3 This report will be submitted to each Safety Committee meeting.

	<b>Defect / Hazard</b>	<b>Consequence</b>	<b>Suggested remedies / and action taken</b>
1.	Empty cleaners cupboard and cleaning materials left in fire escape corridor	Breach of <i>the Fire Safety Reform Order</i> .	<p>This has been reported to IT Manager, Facilities Manager and Head of Service. This has also been reported to Safety Committee.</p> <p>All safe routes must be free and clear of obstructions.</p> <p>Assess storage and space requirements of cleaning contractors. Remove cupboard and ensure corridor is clear.</p> <p><u>Current position:</u> Arrangements have now been made to relocate cleaner's cupboard.</p>
2.	Fire doors wedged open in IT area.	Breach of <i>the Fire Safety Reform Order</i> .	Ensure fire doors are closed at all times.
3.	Weak / Inadequate fire suppression controls in IT server room, old building. Update, there has been a lot of improvement in the server room in terms of housekeeping.	Breach of <i>the Fire Safety Reform Order</i> .	<p>Health and Safety Officer inspected this area with IT Manager and undertook risk assessment identifying a number of weaknesses at the time.</p> <p><u>Current position:</u> (a) Quotations for the suppression system were received several months ago and funding has been approved. However, this work has been put</p>

			<p>on hold pending decision on ICT Shared Services, i.e. potential move of servers to Stevenage.</p> <p>(b) Property Team has completed most of the building related work identified in risk assessment.</p>
4.	Defective fire door due to gap at base of door, access from reception to ground floor, south wing corridor.	Compromised fire safety control measure.	<p>Replace existing doors, fitted to accommodate uneven floor level to achieve an effective fit.</p> <p><u>Current position:</u> This matter was referred to Building Control and efforts are being made to find a cost effective solution to reducing this gap this matter is only regarded as a low risk by their Fire Officer.</p>
5.	Deterioration of floor surface covering in area inspection office, first floor, old building.	Non compliance with <i>the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare Regulations 1992 – Part 12 para 1, 2 and 2 (a) ‘Condition of floors and traffic routes’</i>	<p>Replace existing carpet with hard wearing, durable, <u>non slip</u> easy clean material.</p> <p>Update: CMT have given approval for this to be addressed.</p> <p><u>Current position:</u> Various attempts to provide an interim solution to the torn carpet have been made with limited success. Carpet replacement is the only long term solution, which means this issue will now be addressed in item 6 below</p>

6.	<p>Uneven flooring – Administration office, area inspection room, first floor, old building.</p>	<p>Non compliance with <i>the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 – Part 12 ‘Conditions of floors and traffic routes’</i></p>	<p>A previous problem on this level was overcome by placing a false floor across the existing floor boards to create an even level.</p> <p>Update: CMT have given approval for this to be addressed.</p> <p><u>Current position:</u> Meeting with client has taken place to discuss logistics of moving staff out to allow this work to take place and tentative programme agreed. It was also agreed that whilst room is empty it would also be appropriate to refurbish this office.</p> <p>Various changes to the furniture layouts were also discussed with client in order to improve physical circulation and to address display screen problems.</p> <p>Currently, awaiting response and decision from client.</p>
7.	<p>Shared vehicular / pedestrian access route to Wallfields staff entrance / exit and car park along the length</p>	<p>Non compliance with <i>the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 – Part 12 para 2 (d) Organisation etc. of traffic</i></p>	<p><u>Current position:</u> Facilities Team Leader has sourced costs for getting line demarcating carried out, and arrangements for this work are being now being made.</p>

		<i>routes''</i>	
8.	<p>Accumulations of rubbish in main staff entrance.</p> <p>Position of old vending machine in this location.</p>	<p>Non compliance with <i>the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 – Part 2 Reg 14 (1) 'Emergency Routes and Exits'</i></p>	<p>Consider decommissioning old vending unit and replacing it with a smaller model and relocating it to the ground floor staff room.</p> <p><u>Current position:</u> Rubbish has been removed, and any reoccurrence of this problem will be dealt with quickly.</p> <p>Replacement and relocation of vending machine currently under consideration. As Building Control's Fire Officer only sees this as a low risk; we are treating this matter as a low priority.</p>
9.	<p>The windows in the call centre, old building are broken, the sash cords have been painted over and one window does not remain open unless an object is put underneath to prevent it from slamming shut</p>	<p>Non compliance with <i>the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992- Part 14 and 15.</i></p>	<p><u>Current position:</u> Decision deferred in 2012 on the proposed refurbishment of old building.</p> <p>This is now being progressed.</p>
10.	<p>The lighting in the old building is old and delivers a poor quality and uneven spread of light.</p> <p>The lighting levels are uneven and illumination varies. The call centre still has two up lights but these are now redundant and were removed as part of the C3W programme, when the bulbs reach their life expectancy replacements cannot be obtained. It is my opinion that existing lighting falls short of being suitable and sufficient.</p>	<p>Non compliance with <i>the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992- Part 14 and 15: Cleanliness and waste materials 9.—(1) Every workplace and</i></p>	<p><u>Current position:</u> Decision deferred in 2012 on the proposed refurbishment of old building.</p>

	<p>The building interior is shabby and scruffy and in a poor state of decorative care.</p>	<p><i>the furniture, furnishings and fittings therein shall be kept sufficiently clean.</i></p> <p><i>(2) The surfaces of the floors, walls and ceilings of all workplaces inside buildings shall be capable of being kept sufficiently clean.</i></p>	
11.	<p>Customer Service Desk, Reception Wallfields. Exposure to unpleasant drafts and extremes of hot and cold.</p> <p>During the recent cold spell the team were subjected to unacceptable levels of extreme cold, it is not possible due to building control and fire safety regulations to close the inner door. Staff resorted to wearing outdoor clothing and complained of feeling unwell due to the cold.</p>	<p><i>The Workplace (Health Safety and Welfare) Regulations Ventilation and Temperature in indoor workplaces.</i></p>	<p><u>Current position:</u> Efforts to reduce impact of cold draughts were made immediately, including reactivation of decommissioned air curtain. Changes to automatic door controls were also made to minimise the frequency of cold draughts.</p> <p>Currently considering changes to entrance doors design to minimise impact of draughts; and aim to make these improvements before winter sets in.</p>
12.	<p>Interview Room 4 – Charringtons House</p> <p>This is being occupied by the Fraud Investigation Team (Benefit and Revenues) service due to a lack of desks. The room has a standard built in counter and chairs but also houses two tall cabinets</p>	<p>Non compliance with the following Regulation:</p> <p><i>The Workplace (Health Safety and Welfare)</i></p>	<p><u>Current position:</u> Interim solutions were introduced but because of the building's design this had very limited affect.</p> <p>As the ventilation system is the Landlord's responsibilities their FM</p>

	<p>and other furniture items housing the team's secure documents.</p> <p>This room is also used for the purposes of conducting interviews under caution, during which there can be up to 6 people present.</p> <p>There has been a long term and ongoing issue with the environmental conditions. There is no natural ventilation or air conditioning which has meant that the indoor temperature has reached temperatures in excess of 90°. A free standing, water filled condenser air cooling unit has been supplied but after a time a layer of moisture begins to cover the surfaces. It is not possible to use a unit with hose as there is no means to open a window.</p> <p>As this room is used by the team to conduct interviews, some under caution, they are mindful of the conditions in which they carry out interviews; however, it is not always possible to schedule interviews in the morning during the cooler periods.</p> <p>It should be noted that none of the interview rooms in the area occupied by East Herts have any form of ventilation.</p>	<p><i>Regulations Ventilation and Temperature in indoor workplaces.</i></p> <p>These conditions also compromise the requirements of</p> <p><i>The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 Code Of Practice (COP) C 12.4.</i></p>	<p>team have been asked to upgrade the ventilation in Interview room 4.</p>
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2.4 Additional concerns were also raised at Safety Committee about staff safety in interview rooms. The Director of Neighbourhood Services agreed to take this matter forward and confirmed that CMT supported moving forward issues detailed above.

### 3.0 Implications/Consultations

3.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within Essential Reference paper 'A'.

### Background Papers

Minutes of Safety Committee 20 December 2012.

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