

Minutes of Safety Committee
Wednesday 07th May 2024,
Meeting Room Mimram / Microsoft Teams

Present: Peter Dickinson (PD), Jackie Bruce (JB), Steven Linnett (SL), Paul Thomas-Jones (P T-J), Chloe Hipwood-Norton (C H-N), John Earley (JE), Benjamin Wood

Apologies: Ian Sharratt (IS), Jeanette Lowden (JL), Emily Tickridge (ET), Rowan Perrin (RP), Dominique Kingsbury (DK), Geoff Hayden (GH)

1.0 Minutes of the last meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on 07th February 2024 were agreed as an accurate record.

Action: (PD) to update Agenda, remove (JF) and S O'H

2.0 Matters Arising from the minutes.

There were none.

Action: None

3.0 Office Housekeeping update – Transformation

The first phase of the transformation project has been completed with Housing & Health now relocated to the west wing, ground floor of the new building after the floor was refurbished. Much of the refurbishment was undertaken utilising fixtures and fittings from Charringtons House, the passive air vents have been sealed permanently to eliminate drafts. Teams asked to ensure that all items required are packed so they can be taken downstairs.

Unwanted and surplus stationery items are to be boxed and taken to Facilities Management.

Surplus chairs will be pooled, checked and if safe offered to staff if they need a chair for home working....please note this does not include any of the new chairs purchased which must remain in the office.

With monitors being mounted on pneumatic arms there is a surplus of monitor risers, once these are documented and compiled a message will be issued through Communications offering them to staff for home working.

(SL) emphasised that there will be monitoring, and inspections undertaken to ensure the clear desk policy is being adhered to and that this would be sent out by Communications.

In response to an enquiry from (JB) Unison, (PD) verified that plants are acceptable in the office and that there is evidence that supports plants can improve the physical atmosphere and the general health and wellbeing of people, it is important to stress that plants will need to be cared for properly and managed.

(PD) and (GH) have examined the door entering the floor and remedial work is required to adjust the door closer to remove potential contact injuries from occurring.

(GH) met with High Oak to review the vacant floor and to discuss options for retaining some furniture.

Phase 2 will be dependant on High Oak seeking to occupy the west wing, second floor, currently occupied by Strategic Finance and Property and Human Resources. The next phase will involve refurbishing and redesigning the east wing, ground floor, with plans to provide Revenues and Benefits and Human Resources with enclosed office space due to confidentiality and the requirement of the Department for Work and Pensions that Revenues and Benefits must be contained due to data security.

UNISON requested that (GH) allows for space to accommodate the need to have a room in which to hold confidential talks as required.

Options are being considered in regard to a desk booking system, this would help to manage numbers and desk availability and would also give options to protect any adapted desks, with proposals to allow High Oak access to Wallfields Staff car park it would also be useful for managing space efficiently and effectively.

As part of the transformation project (PD) and (SL) have developed a new DSE and Workstation Assessment questionnaire utilising MS Tools, the new form has been trialled by the HR and Transformation Teams and rolled out to Housing and Health and Planning, the results can be assessed to monitor compliance and support requirements of the Equalities Impact Assessment.

The DSE and Workstation Assessment form for homeworking is being developed and will help to identify any concerns if homeworkers are finding it difficult to do so, there is no legal requirement for the Council to purchase desks and chairs, but it is still obligated to make reasonable adjustments by offering footrests, monitor stands, risers etc.

Action: (PD) to revise and update Fire Safety and First Aid information. New lockable notice boards will be installed.
(GH) to address door closer issue.

Facilities Management to source a Velux window hook.

There are currently Wi-Fi issues on the ground floor IT to resolve.

4.0 Accidents, Incidents and Near Misses

There were no accidents to report.

Action: None

5.0 Regulatory and Legislative changes (Verbal report)

There have been no regulatory or legislative changes.

Action:

- None

6.0 Health and Safety Inspections and Contract Compliance

6.1 Shared Waste Service – Buntingford Depot

Repair work has been completed to the drainage gully of door 1...doors 2, 3 and 4 to be done when operating times permit.

Action:

(JE), (GH) to update Committee.

6.2 Parks, Open Spaces and Play Areas

Due to absence no updates received.

Action: None.

6.3 Parking Services

Due to absence no updates received.

Action: None

7.0 Capital Project updates/contractor Health & Safety Compliance

Hartham Swimming Pool and Gym

New gym and changing rooms now open.

Action: None

Hertford Theatre Growth and Legacy Project

(BW) reported that Practical Completion (PC) has not been signed off as of this date.

(BW) further reported the following:

- 200 minor snagging issues
- Section 38 to be signed by Theatre Director
- Security arrangements to be put into place following handover.

- Training – Theatre management developing staff/volunteer training sessions. (PD) arranging First Aid training.
- Additional staffing required to safely operate kitchen and bar.
- H&S procedures, normal operating procedures, emergency action plans etc to be developed using documents already in place that can be modified and updated to reflect the change in size and use of the facility. (PD) will be supporting Theatre team.

Action: None

Old River Lane, Bishop's Stortford

(BW) briefed committee on proposals for Old River Lane.

The Development Agreement is expected to be signed in June 2024

City Hart are aiming to submit a planning application in Autumn.

Public consultation will take place on proposals to develop an area known as civic plaza, this would be an event and entertainment space.

Consideration needs to be given to the management of future events e.g., licensing, Health and Safety, Insurance, and resources to manage and oversee events, resources for upkeep, maintenance, and repair.

8.0 Property – Premise's Maintenance and Repairs

(PD) reported that work is ongoing to rectify the issue of raised block paving in the staff car park (Wallfields)

Action: (GH) / (JE) to update Committee at next meeting.

9.0 Facilities Management

No issues in respect to Facilities Management.

Action: None

10.0 List of Issues

10.1 Employee side (UNISON)

(JB) informed Committee that UNISON is working closely with HR & H&S on revising and streamlining policies in line with legislative changes ready to be viewed by Local Joint Panel and Human Resources Committee

No issues or concerns raised.

Action: None

10.2. Management side

Nothing to report.

Action: None

11.0 Health and Safety Training

PD arranging refresher first aid training and first aid training for new employees who will be working at the theatre.

Evacuation Chair Operator training will be coordinated with the theatre.

Evacuation Chair 'Train the Trainer' is to be arranged for Wallfields.

A proposal has been submitted to ask for volunteers to be trained as DSE and Workstation Assessor Champions, each team would have a dedicated support assessor who would be supported by the H&S Officer.

Action:

PD to source options for DSE and Workstation Assessor training and will provide an update at next committee meeting.

12.0 AOB

Health and Safety Organisational Roles and Responsibilities

In accordance with the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 the Council has a Health and Safety Policy.

The Policy has three core components:

1. The Statement of Intent

The Health and Safety Statement, also known as a Statement of Intent, is the first step in a business' management of health and safety. It is signed by the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council and is the organisations affirmation that it will comply with the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 which is the basis for all health and safety in the UK.

2. Organisational Roles and Responsibilities

This explains how an employer, will manage health and safety in the organisation. It clearly identifies who does what, when and how.

3. Health and Safety Policy Arrangements

These are the operational policy frameworks that covers the Councils management of accidents, first aid, fire safety, dse and workstation etc.

It has come to the attention of Safety Committee that it appears that officers are not acquainting themselves of the Organisational Roles and Responsibilities section of the policy and assuming that full responsibility rests solely with the Health and Safety Officer.

It is incumbent on Heads of Service to understand their health and safety specific duties in regard to their services and how they manage the delegation of duties to senior officers. It is also the responsibility of

managers to ensure that health and safety management is lead from the top down, not just delegated, but fully invested to ensure the Council as an organisation undertakes its health and safety duty of care seriously.

Committee discussed options to address this:

- Mandatory training aimed at Heads of Service and Service Managers to explain the aim and purpose of the roles and responsibilities and what needs managing and in what way.
- Include a review of Senior management understanding through the Shared Internal Audit Service programme of Health and Safety auditing.
- An overhaul and review of compliance, monitoring and inspections to ensure a joined-up process. (PD) and (SL) are currently designing new inspection processes using Microsoft Forms.

Action: UNISON to contact IT to enquire about Microsoft tools that are free but have been locked down.

JB advised Committee that the East Herts Together group is being relaunched no terms of reference are currently available.

Meeting ended: 15.03pm

Date of Next Meeting: 07 August 2024

Time: 10.00am

Location: Mimram Room, Rivers Suite

Teams: Microsoft Teams meeting
Join on your computer, mobile app or room device.