

Minutes of Safety Committee
Wednesday 06th November 2024,
Meeting Room Beane / 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), Dominique Kingsbury (DK), Benjamin Wood (BW), Ian Sharratt (IS), Emily Tickridge (ET), Geoff Hayden (GH)

Apologies: Rowan Perrin (RP) Ezra O'Neill (E O'N)

Announcements:

PD informed the Committee that this will be SL's last attendance as the chair. PD would be assuming the chair of the Committee.

PD expressed his thanks to SL for the positive support and contribution to promoting health and safety.

BW thanked SL for provision of new office chairs which will be a legacy to his support and commitment.

PD advised that BEAM have been invited to attend meetings of Committee and that he now has a monthly meeting with the team.

E O'N is the new UNISON Branch Health and Safety Officer, PD said he looks forward to carrying on the successful working relationship with UNISON.

1.0 Minutes of the last meeting

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

Action: None

2.0 Matters Arising from the minutes.

The Committee noted the following actions:

Action: Door access to Housing and Health / Planning, Ground Floor, West. The door can now be secured but the closer assembly still need raising to prevent contact injuries.

H&H Lab door – This is still outstanding but can't be resolved easily, one solution is being considered but this is not ideal. H&H will monitor the situation.

Action: Air quality – Housing & Health / Planning Ground Floor, West.

Several options have been considered to resolve this issue, proposals included installing air service heat pumps (which is costly), utilising air conditioning units salvaged from Charringtons House, installing Expelair vents tied into the mains lighting and linked to identical units on the ground floor east where Revenues and Benefits are currently located.

GH has sought quotes for works.

The main issue is a lack of cross room ventilation with a reluctance to open windows to allow fresh air to circulate. It was argued that the central seating pods obstruct free flowing air, negating any circulation. CO2 levels are consistently high due to the lack of fresh air and reluctance to opening the windows.

GH further advised Committee that when the ground floor was refurbished the passive air vents were opened and sealed to eliminate draughts, one option is to remove the infill allowing air to stream through the vents and returning the air and temperature levels to those experienced on the first and second floors and providing oil filled portable radiators.

A draft proposal and timetable for action is recommended by Committee to be referred to the Head of Housing and Health, interim Head of Property and Facilities Management.

Action: colleagues are complaining about the reduction of natural light due to considerable growth of the shrubs and trees on the area outside, due to the design of the building this wing sits lower down and is therefore overshadowed.

PD advised Committee that he has spoken to Operations and can inform members of the following:

A request has been submitted for an assessment of the beech and cedar trees to determine the structural integrity of the braces and branches.

The grounds maintenance contractor has been asked to undertake work to sympathetically manage and reduce any obstructive foliage and undergrowth.

3.0 Office Housekeeping update – Transformation

Second floor, East wing is virtually clear, remaining furniture to be assessed for suitability and redeployment with some items being taken to Buntingford Depot for reuse.

Phase 2 of the transformation will be dependent on who takes occupancy of the second floor east.

UNISON requested that (GH) allows for space to accommodate the need to have a room in which to hold confidential talks as required. In accordance with Section 4A para2 Without prejudice to regulations 5 and 6 of these Regulations, every employer shall provide such facilities and assistance as safety representatives may reasonably require for the purpose of carrying out their functions under section 2(4) of the 1974 Act and under these Regulations.

Action: None - Standing Item

4.0 Accidents, Incidents and Near Misses

There were 4 non reportable, minor accidents reported between 05 August and 31 October 2024, none were related to any system or procedural failure and no further action was required.

1 Incident was reported in October.

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

C H-N reported the following issues at Buntingford Depot:

- Cleaning on site is still poor and it has been observed that the cleaner hasn't entered the building. Standards remain very poor.
- The water cooler on the ground floor refreshment area leaked saturating the carpet which is leading to unpleasant mould smell.
- The site and buildings require an extensive deep clean prior to Veolias occupation to clear a build-up of cobwebs/rubbish/dust and clutter etc.
- North Herts IT are going to fix the TV in the meeting room to the wall and dispose of the defective stand.
- C H-N asked if it could be confirmed if there are heat/smoke detectors concealed by the ceiling panels in the first-floor kitchen. GH to verify and advise C H-N

C H-N briefed the Committee on the rising number of fire outbreaks at waste transfer stations and in waste collection vehicles caused by the ignition of batteries and NOX canisters in waste, this poses an ongoing risk across the waste collection and recycling sector. There are fire detectors and monitors in the tipping hall at Buntingford and CCTV monitoring coverage across the site. Using both Councils media platforms to promote

understanding and guidance on the disposal of such items was proposed.

GH advised that the current cleaning contractor is due to be replaced. Once this has taken place appropriate steps can be taken to address the long-term position of the standards of cleaning.

GH has also offered to provide furniture items for the office and meeting room on the first floor.

Action: (JE), (GH) to update C H-N on the following:

- Heat / Smoke detection in the first-floor kitchen

GH advised he would ask the fire safety contractor to inspect and report back.

6.2 Parks, Open Spaces and Play Areas

(IS) Nothing to report in respect to any safety issues across parks, open spaces and play areas.

Action: (JB) to seek clarification on the situation regarding S106 issues. **UPDATE:** (JB) Reported that this has now been resolved.

6.3 Parking Services

(DK) reported that antisocial behaviour remains an issue at Northgate End MSCP and Jackson Square MSCP where fireworks were discharged.

DK has spoken to APCOA in regard to proposals to relocate them to Wallfields. APCOA to provide GH with requirements and specifications. DK advised that APCOA will require 6 weeks' notice before leaving Buntingford Depot.

Action: Urgent DK to liaise with GH and APCOA on requirements and specifications for Wallfields and to arrange a site visit so APCOA can see the office and the arrangements.

7.0 Capital Project updates/EHC Contracts - Health & Safety Compliance and Management

Swimming Pools and Gyms – Sport and Leisure Management (SLM)

(ET) advised that there were no health and safety related issues or concerns to report.

Action: None

BEAM Hertford

BEAM is now open and operating well.

PD and GH have assisted with the deployment of signage and addressing desking and chair issues.

GH advised that the provision of IT hardware is with BEAMS IT service provider and not East Herts Shared IT service.

Action: None

Old River Lane, Bishop's Stortford

(BW) updated Committee of the following:

- Development Agreement has been signed with City Heart.
- BW now has delegated authority for all matters relating to Charringtons House and adjacent car parks.

Glendale – Grounds Maintenance

Glendale have expressed concerns about the proposed site at Amwell End. GH has been carrying out work on site, Glendale have advised Property of their specific concerns and have asked if there are any alternative sites available.

Action: GH to discuss with Head of Operations

Contract Compliance

In order to support Contract Managers a new inspection form is being developed utilising MS Forms the aim is to improve communication between teams, provide an effective tool to record

issues of concern and keep a tracked record and audit of action carried out.

In regard to car park inspections an issue of concern e.g., deep holes, surface degradation or root intrusion that is encroaching on a public access or parking space should be managed at the time of inspection by closing the parking space or walkway using appropriate measures e.g., cones, hazard / barrier tape. A photo should be taken of any mitigating controls and the time and date that action was taken, the fault/defect is reported to the appropriate team, and they must undertake work to correct the issue and then advise the reporting officer, in some cases a more specialist inspection may be required especially if there are structural defects, so it is important that intermediate action is taken before there is an accident and injury. Compliance across the Councils high risk services is carried out thoroughly but there are areas of weakness which the reporting tool aims to help with.

If, due to reasons of preservation or protection orders it is not possible to address the issue without the threat of damaging a tree root etc then consideration must be considered for closing off the section permanently. The Council may wish to explore options of alternative materials for car park surfaces that allow for undulations, but any major capital projects are subject to scrutiny and financial impact assessments to determine viability.

If the only option is to take a parking bay or footpath out of use on a permanent basis the reasons for doing so must be detailed and documented to support this decision.

Action: DK and GH to meet and discuss the best approach to addressing the concerns raised in respect to faults and defects within the Councils Car parks and multi storey car parks.

8.0 Property – Premise's Maintenance and Repairs

Ground floor automatic door closer assembly to be raised.

Action: GH / JE to arrange for adjustment to be carried out.

9.0 Facilities Management

No health and safety issues reported in respect to Facilities Management.

Action: None

10.0 List of Issues

10.1 Employee side (UNISON)

UNISON welcomed the decision of Leadership Team to commission an access audit.

Action: None

10.2. Management side

Leadership Team have approved the request to commission an Access Audit of Wallfields. An Access Audit is also known as an Equality Act Audit or Disabled Access Audit (DDA audit involves conducting a comprehensive inspection and assessment of the building assessing the current level of accessibility and ease of entry, navigation, usability, and ease of exit of premises by people with different impairments and levels of disability.

These Audits help employers by highlighting non-compliance issues and to understand how to adapt a building to meet the access needs of disabled people, and so to fulfil their duties and obligations under the Equality Act legislation.

The purpose of the audit will be to test the accessibility of Wallfields working environment against best-practice standards to benchmark its accessibility for disabled people, it will also provide a framework for Leadership Team on the future options of the Councils base of operations in terms of accommodation in order to avoid acquiring a building which may have the very obstacles the audit seeks to highlight.

Action: Commission an accessibility audit service.

11.0 Health and Safety Training

PD has advised that the following training has been arranged:

- Online Personal Safety and Lone Working Courses booked for the 21st, 28th, 29th November and 04th December 24
- Evacuation Chair 'Train the Trainer'. 06 December 24

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 Policy Review

PD advised Safety Committee that a Policy review work plan is being drawn up and that members of the Committee and UNISON will be invited to participate in the review of the policies.

This work also ties in with a review of the Human Resources Policies that UNISON are supporting.

Reaffirmation

UNISON East Herts Branch reaffirmed the request for the Council to establish a Safety Committee in accordance with the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977.

Safety Committee recognise and acknowledge the reaffirmation.

Meeting ended: 11.45 am.

Date of Next Meeting: 05 February 2025

Time: 10.00am

Location: Beane Room, Rivers Suite

Teams: Microsoft Teams meeting

Join on your computer, mobile app or room device.

Meeting ID: **334 740 738 70**

Passcode: **DTGQLU**