

**MINUTES OF THE SAFETY COMMITTEE
HELD ON**

1 May 2014

1.30 - 2.25 pm

PRESENT

Committee Members

Brian Keane (Governance) (Chairman)
David Cottrell (Health and Safety)
Jackie Davies (Health and Safety)
Karl Carr (Housing)
Richard Greaves (Building Control)
John Harty (Playhouse)
Chanry Lui (Policy and Performance)
Wendy Makepeace (Housing)
Carl Metcalf (Housing)
Scott Merry (Senior Steward)
Kim Middleditch (Contact Harlow)
Stuart Moseley (Insurance)
Angela Street (Community Wellbeing)
Lisa Purse (note taker)

APOLOGIES

Donna Beechener (Revenue and Benefits)
Sandra Farrington (Civic Centre / Latton Bush)
Amanda Mann (Legal)
Natasha Terrell (HR Manager)

56. **MINUTES OF LAST MEETING 23 JANUARY 2014**

AGREED that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2014 are a correct record.

57. **MATTERS ARISING - ACTIONS COMPLETED**

- a) Internal Audit Report on Health and Safety Procedures (Ref minute 51)

David Cottrell informed the Committee that he had recently received the draft report from Internal Audit.

AGREED that Natasha Terrell will send the report to Brian Keane.

- b) Safety Coordinators

Ref minute 54 (e) 23 January 2014 – The Committee agreed that the Council no longer has a requirement for the role of Safety Coordinators.

58. **HEALTH AND SAFETY UPDATE**

a) Accident Statistics

The Committee received a verbal report on the health and safety statistics for the period 1 January 2014 to 31 March 2014 which compared the first quarter, to previous years. It was noted that this in line with the national trend.

b) Aggressive Incidents

David Cottrell reported that there had been six reported incidents of aggressive behaviour toward Council employees in the period 1 January 2014 to 31 March 2014.

c) Accidents Reported by Members of Public

Stuart Moseley presented facts and figures on the number, and types of, insurance claims made to the Council year on year from 2009 to 2014 as at 31 March 2014. The report stated that the two main underlying causes of claims are housing issues and highways defects. It also detailed the cost of claims during the period, which has seen improvement by following the Council's procedure for dealing with claims quickly.

Stuart explained that the Council's Modern Homes Programme is expected to reduce the number of claims relating to damp. He also explained that the number of claims successfully repudiated by the Council had increased from 52% to 85%.

The Committee was informed that the Council will be tendering for its long term insurance agreement later on in the year as the current contract is due to expire in March 2015.

The Committee enquired what, if anything, the Council can do better to improve these statistics in future. Stuart reported inspections and record keeping is key in repudiating insurance claims.

AGREED that Stuart Moseley and Carl Metcalf explore the possibility of a reserve for asbestos provision considering the increased risk attributed to the asbestos removal involved in the Council's Modern Homes Programme.

59. **HEALTH AND SAFETY END OF YEAR REPORT**

The Committee received the Health and Safety end of year report which provided an overview of Health and Safety provision during 2013/14 and set the proposed strategy for future continual development in 2014/15. The Committee was asked to comment on the report particularly on the aims and targets for 2014/15.

AGREED that the report be presented to CMT in mid May subject to any further comments from members of the Safety Committee.

60. **STATUTORY TESTING POLICIES**

a) Housing Statutory Inspections

Carl Metcalf presented a list of housing statutory inspections policies to the Committee. Carl explained that a review of the policies listed has commenced.

AGREED that Housing Statutory Inspections Policies is a standard agenda item for future meetings of this Group.

b) Harlow Council Asbestos Management Plan

Karl Carr presented the final draft of the Harlow Council Asbestos Management Plan to the Committee. He explained that the policy will be the revised asbestos management policy the Council has in place except for buildings let by the Council for tenants to manage asbestos i.e. discharge of duty.

AGREED that the policy is recommended to Head of Housing for approval and publication and reported regularly as a standard agenda item for future meetings of this Group.

61. **STAFF SAFETY REGISTER (LONE WORKING)**

Further to minute 50 of 23 January 2014 meeting, David Cottrell informed the Committee that he had visited Epping Forest District Council and circulated a report to the Committee proposing that the Council adopts a No Lone Visits policy. Wendy Makepeace reported that a system exists in Housing and asked whether it is suggested that the proposed new system will replace the one in existence. The Committee agreed that the Council should have only one central database.

AGREED that this item is deferred to the next meeting of this Group following discussions between David Cottrell and Wendy Makepeace.

62. **FIRE SAFETY UPDATE - HOUSING**

Wendy Makepeace provided a verbal report to the Committee on fire safety. Wendy stated that there had recently been a successful meeting between the Council and the Fire Service. The success of this meeting was attributed to the Councils enhanced inspection regime and other works particularly in flat blocks.

AGREED that the minutes of the recent meeting of the Council and the Fire Service are shared with the Councils Health and Safety Officers.

63. **DSE ASSESSMENTS - HEALTH AND SAFETY**

Jackie Davies referred to the 5 February edition of Weekly Information Sheet (WIS) and asked that managers remind and encourage staff to carry out a Display Screen Equipment (DSE) self-assessment. A copy should be forwarded to the Health & Safety Team and Human Resources Team for record. The checklist and guidance can be accessed using the following link:

<http://www.harlow.gov.uk/infonet/dse>

AGREED that Brian Keane will discuss with Natasha Terrell how new and existing staff can be encouraged to complete a DSE assessment e.g. in induction/PPP.

64. **DRUGS AND ALCOHOL POLICY - HEALTH AND SAFETY**

David Cottrell circulated Uttlesford Council's Drug and Alcohol Policy to the Committee and explained that Harlow Council does not currently have a similar policy.

AGREED that David Cottrell will bring a draft policy to the next meeting of this Committee for comment before it is presented to CMT.

65. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

a) Supported Housing Lighting

David Cottrell explained to the Committee the concerns that had been raised by staff in Sheltered Housing since Essex County Council switched off the street lighting in Harlow at midnight. The Committee was informed that the Health and Safety Team had reviewed the personal protective Equipment (PPE) and training provision.

AGREED that David will present a report to the next meeting of this Committee.

b) Playhouse Roof Update

Ref minute 54 (a) 23 January 2014, John Harty reported that the Playhouse roof repair is now complete and that an inquiry is underway into why it took two and a half months to complete and why it cost so much money. John explained that he had repeatedly discovered serious Health and Safety issues caused by the contractors including blocked fire exits and unsecured chemicals.

AGREED that John will present an update on the inquiry at the next meeting of this Committee.

c) Smoking Shelter

Ref minute 54 (d) Kim Middleditch reported that despite new signage going up in the area the problems surrounding to the smoking shelter have not been resolved.

AGREED that Kim will report each incident to David Cottrell in order for him to take direct appropriate action.

d) Fire Service Strike

It was reported that Essex Fire Brigades Union members, along with fire fighters across the country, will be taking industrial action at various times between Friday 2 May 2014 and Sunday 4 May 2014. An email has been sent to all Council staff which asked them to re-familiarise themselves with exit routes out of the building, and to be more vigilant about their environment and housekeeping duties.

e) False Fire Alarm Incident

Scott Merry reported an incident which took place at the Latton Bush Centre in February which involved sounding of the alarms and the evacuation of the building which was a false alarm, however the Fire Service did not and does not automatically respond. Jackie Davies reported that she had written to the Fire Service explaining the use of the building and explaining that it is the Council's view that all fire alarms at the Latton Bush centre should be automatically responded to.

AGREED that Jackie Davies will progress a response from Essex Fire Authority regarding automatic Fire Service response to the Latton Bush Centre.

f) Council Contractor Health and Safety on Site

Carl Metcalf reported that the Council's health and safety requirements of contractors should be reviewed.

AGREED that Carl Metcalf will present a report to the next meeting of the Safety Committee.

66. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

17 July 2014, 14:00

CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE