

MINUTES OF THE HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 24 May 2023 at 5.00 pm

MEMBERS PRESENT IN PERSON:

Councillors Laura Cunningham, Paul Bell, Chris Best, Ayesha Lahai-Taylor and Carol Webley-Brown.

OFFICERS PRESENT IN PERSON:

Head of Assurance), Corporate Health and Safety Manager, and Senior Committee Officer.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Natasha Burgess.

1. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

It was MOVED, SECONDED and AGREED that Councillor Laura Cunningham be nominated as Chair of this Committee, and Councillor Paul Bell as the Vice Chair.

2. Minutes

The Minutes of 2 February 2023 were agreed.

3. Declaration of Interests

Councillor Paul Bell declared an interest in relation to Item 5 as a Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care.

4. Corporate Health & Safety Update

4.1 In presenting the report to the Committee, the Head of Assurance gave an overview about the Council's Corporate Health and Safety Board's (CHSB) governance arrangements at directorates' level in overseeing and monitoring corporate health and safety operations. The Officer also provided an update to the Committee on matters considered by the CHSB on 28 April 2023 in relation to how the Council was discharging its Health and Safety Policy, and the following were noted:

- a) Violence and Aggression Policy.

The Head of Assurance reiterated statements in the reports and summarised the key points as follows:

- That the CHSB received reports from directorates about incidences where members of the public had behaved with violence and/or aggression towards staff. It was stated that the incidences had not been set out by types, but work was

underway to categorise them for future recording and monitoring, with a view to identify and minimise risk on those matters.

- That discussions were ongoing with HR to determine whether to apply bespoke or general training for recording violent and aggressive incidences by service area.

In response to questions raised on the, the Head of Assurance advised the Committee:

- That there was no systematic data at the present time to assess why members of the public were behaving aggressively or with violence, other than information from officers' assessments about their experiences in dealing with service users. Nonetheless, the matter would be explored at directorates' level to identify reasons for service users' behaviour to determine how to mitigate those risks in a practical way.
- That the impact of interactions would also be assessed for any change in behaviour in the coming months when the Housing department start engaging face-to-face with service users.

b) Outstanding Planned Preventive Maintenance (PPM)

The Head of Assurance reiterated statements in the reports and summarised the key points as follows:

- That the average on-time PPM compliance on the corporate estate rate was 58%. It was stated that although there was no course of a concern, discussions were ongoing to determine how to avoid slippages in the future.

In response to a question, the Head of Assurance advised the Committee:

- That there would be no change in the determination of PPM when Lewisham Homes return to in-house operations because the CHSB's remit was corporate, and therefore the focus would remain in overseeing and monitoring non-residential maintenance.

In a follow-up question, the Corporate Health & Safety Manager added:

- That the 58% figure reported as the average on-time PPM compliance on the corporate estate rate was a result of backlog in the process but the Facilities Management Team were aware of that, and work was underway to engage with the Council's

contractors so that job certificates would be uploaded in time to help improve on PPM reporting.

The Committee also expressed a view that although there had been no concern in the report about performance since the installation of secondary glazing aimed to improve energy efficiency in corporate buildings, officers could engage as the point of maintenance activities on heating equipment by the contractor, with view to check the appropriateness of internal temperature levels.

c) Fire Risk Assessments

The Head of Assurance reiterated statements in the reports and summarised the key points as follows:

- That the Council was consistently keeping up with security issues because fire risk assessments were conducted on a regular basis by its approved contractor.
- That the London Fire Brigade (LFB) had previously raised concerns about fire risk in relation to the Lewisham Library building. However, following a re-inspection on 25 April 2023, the Council obtained a Level One complaint outcome. Thus, although some remedial works had commenced following that re-inspection exercise, the complaint result at Level One indicated that the assessment was a satisfactory outcome.
- That at the present time, fire marshal duties were conducted by Lawrence House security staff. However, with a move to longer-term hybrid working, discussions were underway with directorates to determine fire risks arrangements going forward.

In response to questions, the Head of Assurance advised the Committee:

- That the announcement for people to evacuate Lawrence House due to the fire incident that occurred on the day of the meeting, 24 May 2023, was not a planned exercise, but officers would be looking into lessons learnt for improvement opportunities. It was clarified that the reason the front doors to Lawrence House were shut during that evacuation exercise was because the 'fire curtains' installed to separate the lift facility from the rest of the building was located around the entrance area.

Commenting on the Officer's response, the Committee expressed satisfaction that the Fire Brigade responded in a timely manner to the fire incident but felt that the evacuation exercise was unsatisfactory because people were observed close to the fire after the evacuation, and before the fire was extinguished. It was stated that the

uncoordinated evacuation approach could have resulted in harm to persons had there been flammable explosives in the fire. In view of that, the Committee suggested:

- That Officers should report at its next meeting about the lessons learnt from the recent fire incident, and the time it took to evacuate everyone from Lawrence House building on the day.
- That evacuation procedures should be reviewed to include coverage of routes leading to exits and entrances both inside and outside of Council buildings.
- That fire marshals should receive training on how to communicate with hard-of-hearing persons during planned and unplanned evacuations from Council buildings.

d) Health and Safety Assessments

The Head of Assurance reiterated statements in the reports and summarised the key points as follows:

- That the Council had resumed its health and safety audit programme and would be seeking self-assessments from individual services to help identify where intervention would be required from the Corporate Team at the initial stage of the process.
- That based on the 90% response rate from service areas to corporate exercise on practical governance matters, the Corporate Team were confident that the self-assessment process would serve as a continuous means to drive improvements forward.

In response to questions raised, the Head of Assurance advised the Committee:

- That there was no question on the governance survey questionnaire about experiences in accessing IT systems, but frustrations by users around Microsoft 365 migration, and statement from the IT Team about the pressures they were experiencing due to the volume of contacts were noted.
- That issues relating to intranet guidance would potentially arise during the health and safety audit exercise, which would also address reasons for the lower 40s and 50s percentages response rates to governance questions following the self-assessment exercise.

e) Incidents

The Head of Assurance asked the Committee to note changes in incidents that occurred at directorates' level between Q3 and Q4 for 2023/23 which were logged and collated on the Council's Sharepoint reporting system.

Commenting on statements in the report about an ad hoc incident which occurred outside of the Council property, the Officer stated council staff were likely to act diligently to help others in such situation while on duty.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair, Councillor Laura Cunningham, thanked Officers for the detailed report. The Chair asked that her observation about the dangers of crossing the road from the Council's Lawrence House premises door entrance should be logged as a concern.

RESOLVED that the update report be noted.

5. Draft Defibrillator Policy

5.1 The Chair of the Committee, Councillor Laura Cunningham, introduced this Item, and expressed satisfaction that a Defibrillator Policy had been drafted for adoption. She commented on Councillor Chris Best's initial efforts for requesting the matter as a priority area for consideration by the Committee to confirm similar expectations of councillors across the board.

5.2 The Head of Assurance gave an overview of the draft report for a steer to consolidate ideas from the Committee with a view to formulate recommendations to Mayor and Cabinet for a decision to adopt the Defibrillator Policy. Considering that, Councillor Paul Bell declared an interest as a Cabinet Member, and he remained in the room and took part in the discussion.

5.3. In considering the report, the Committee noted that the Policy aimed:

- To raise an awareness among officers about a defibrillator and dispel myths of accidents when using one.
- To outline the process of support when deciding whether a defibrillator was required, and how to make a purchase.
- To set out how to maintain a defibrillator in good working condition, including arrangements for tracking routine inspections and maintaining maintenance records.
- To use defibrillator as a community asset jointly with the British Heart Foundation via a scheme that would enable collaborative working with the local ambulance services.

- 5.4 In response to a question, the Head of Assurance stated that he would investigate whether there was a minimum age limit for using a defibrillator machine. Nonetheless, a certain amount of physical strength would be expected to administer its use.
- 5.5. After discussing the draft policy, the Committee summed up ideas to help inform recommendations to Mayor and Cabinet for a decision to adopt the Policy:
- To review current locations of defibrillators in libraries, adult learning, and leisure centres, with a view to prioritise a borough-wide approach for implementation, including at local sporting venues, GP surgeries, local parks, Lewisham Way, and Westside Football Club. Thereafter, to develop and publicise a map for the public to know where defibrillating machines were located for use in the event of an emergency.
 - To composition a first-aider network and identify how defibrillators should be organised within that framework.
 - To consider a central co-ordination and programme of checks of defibrillating machines.
 - To deliver appropriate training for first aiders in the use of defibrillating machines.

RESOLVED that the report be noted, with a view to make recommendations to Mayor and Cabinet for adaptation of the Defibrillator Policy.

Meeting closed at 5.58 pm.

Chair