

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

MINUTES of the HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE, which was open to the press and public, held in Committee Room 1 Civic Suite Catford Road London SE6 4RU on TUESDAY 14 NOVEMBER 2023 at 5pm.

Present

Councillors Laura Cunningham (Chair) Chris Best (Vice Chair), Paul Bell, Natasha Burgess, Ayesha Lahai-Taylor and Webley-Brown.

Also Present

Health and Safety Adviser – Rich Clarke – Head of Assurance
Marta Matowska – Corporate Health and Safety Manager

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1. Minutes

It was agreed that the Vice Chair should have been noted as Councillor Chris Best in the minutes of 24 May 2023. With this amendment it was;

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Health and Safety Committee held on 24 May 2023 be confirmed and signed.

Matters arising from the minutes.

Defibrillator policy – Members were advised that this had been considered by the Corporate Health and Safety Board and the Director of meetings. It had been Incorporated into the premises handbook which would be distributed to all premises responsible officers. However, the policy was not centralised as discussed and agreed at the last meeting of this Committee. This would require a change of responsibilities which had been manager lead. A draft report recommending a revised health and safety policy that would allow for this change, was with the Corporate Assurance Board and would be considered at their meeting on 15 November 2023. If this policy was agreed for the whole Council, it would allow for discussion for the policy changes as discussed at the last meeting of this Committee, provided senior management could identify the funding.

In response to a question about who would be responsible for knowing the position of all the defibrillators, members were advised that Executive Directors would be encouraged to liaise

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with partners, e.g., the London Ambulance Service, to ensure that the list of defibrillators in the borough, was as comprehensive as possible. Corporate Health and Safety would have a centralised list of all defibrillators.

The Chair said that some defibrillators were in schools so were not accessible to the public when these buildings were closed. She asked officers for an overview of where defibrillators were located, and when a comprehensive list would be available. Officers agreed to provide this information.

2. Declarations of Interest

None.

3. Corporate Health & Safety Team Update

3.1 The Head of Assurance presented the report.

3.2 In response to questions raised, the Head of Assurance advised the Committee of the following matters.

- The Chief Executive had asked Executive Directors to identify premises responsible officers by the end of the calendar year. It was expected that the premises handbook and associated training would be rolled out at the end of this financial year.
- The 26 incidences of threatening behaviour in the report, were mostly associated with libraries. The Head of Assurance agreed to contact Lewisham's libraries to find out what specific arrangement they had in place for managing threatening behaviour. He agreed to submit a report on the result of his investigation to the next meeting of this Committee. He also agreed to send Cllr Best more information regarding the 'other type of incident' that had increased by 10.
- The Health and Safety Self-Assessment form was explained. There were 12 questions on the self-assessment form. To be 50% compliant, the answer 'yes' had to be given to 6 of those questions. 71% compliance, meant that, across the whole Council, between 9-10 of the answers to these questions was 'yes'. Six of the questions were related to practical matters, the other six were related to governance. Officers found slightly more of a compliance to the practical matters.

3.3 The Chair said that a full audit of health and safety had been undertaken over the past 18 months and had been a huge amount of work for officers. She thanked them for their efforts

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and the progress reports submitted to every meeting of this Committee. She asked whether threatening behaviour was generally face to face. Residents were living in challenging times, but dealing with aggression was challenging for officers. The Head of Assurance said that the violence/aggressive was not limited to face-to-face encounters. He always encouraged members of his team to report, as an incident, any aggressive phone calls received. However, he did not believe that staff always reported incidents. He hoped that streamlined reporting, to be rolled out in the next year would improve future reporting and that the violence and aggression policy would become well known throughout the Council. Reporting incidents was important because it showed where best to direct mitigating actions and support.

- 3.4 The Head of Assurance said that members had not reported threatening behaviour. The portal for reporting incidents was open to members and he encouraged them to report any incidents. He explained how members should report an incident on council premises and when out in the borough on council business. It was agreed that members be reminded about how incidents should be reported.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the report be noted,
- (ii) the Head of Assurance to contact Lewisham's libraries to find out what specific arrangement they had in place for managing threatening behaviour; and
- (ii) members be reminded about the procedure for reporting incidents of violence/aggression.

4 **Emergency Evacuations Report**

- 4.1 The Head of Assurance presented the report.
- 4.2 In response to a question about the steps to be taken to ensure that the number of fire marshals on site and fire evacuations were the same every day of the working week, members were advised that the new procedure for Laurence House was for 6 evacuations to be held every year. They would cover every weekday and an out of hours session. An evacuation strategy would be devised for each building depending on how it was used, and the aim was to ensure that every member of staff would be part of one evacuation.
- 4.3 Councillor Best asked about fire evacuation at adult learning centres. She referred to centres at Brockley Rise, Granville and Grove Park where there had been a programme of building

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works recently. A number of students with disabilities attended courses at these centres and she considered it important that the safety of these vulnerable residents was considered. The Head of Assurance did not have information about the evacuation procedures for these centres but agreed to speak to colleagues to obtain the information. He agreed that whatever practice was in place, it should reflect the use and users of the building and would also refer this matter to colleagues.

4.4 In response to several questions about the evacuation procedure in Laurence House, the Corporate Health and Safety Manager advised that there was a fire curtain that comes down between lifts in the lobby and the front entrance to protect the staircase. Anyone within the reception area would evacuate via the front entrance, anyone else would evacuate via the back of the building. Data was collected on fire evacuations within all corporate buildings, and it was recommended that this should be carried out every six months. The compliance team checked this when officers visited the buildings. The site officer would arrange specific visits.

4.5 In conclusion, the Chair said that she was pleased that the change in working patterns was now considered as part of evacuation procedures in Laurence House and that these new practices would be rolled out to other corporate buildings. She thanked officers for the work that had been done.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the report be noted and
- (ii) the Head of Assurance contact Adult Learning Centres for information about their evacuation procedures.

The meeting ended at 5.54pm

Chair