



# AGENDA

## HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

**Date: TUESDAY, 14 NOVEMBER 2023 at 5.00 pm**

**Venue: Committee Rooms 3, Civic Suite, Lewisham Town Hall,  
London SE6 4RU**

### COUNCILLORS

Councillor Laura Cunningham  
Councillor Paul Bell  
Councillor Chris Best  
Councillor Natasha Burgess  
Councillor Ayesha Lahai-Taylor  
Councillor Carol Webley-Brown

### Unions

#### Directorate Representatives

Dr Catherine Mbema, Director of Public Health  
wayne Wilson  
David Austin, Interim Executive Director for Corporate Resources  
Mick Lear, Service Manager, Benefits  
Rich Clarke, Head of Assurance  
Matthew Henaughan, Head of Business, Infrastructure, Compliance and Education  
Joan Hutton, Director of Operations - Adult Social Care  
Siobhan Da Costa  
Paul Boulton, Interim Director of Public Realm

**Members are summoned to attend this meeting**



**Jeremy Chambers  
Monitoring Officer  
Lewisham Town Hall  
London SE6 4RU**

**Date: 6 November 2023**

**For further information please contact:  
Jasmine Kassim,  
Senior Committee Manager  
Laurence House  
Catford Road SE6 4RU**

**Email: [Committee@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:Committee@lewisham.gov.uk)**

## ORDER OF BUSINESS – PART 1 AGENDA

Item No		Page No.s
1.	Minutes	1 - 7
2.	Declaration of Interests	8 - 11
3.	Corporate Health & Safety Board Update	12 - 17
4.	Emergency Evacuations Report	18 - 23

**Members are summoned to attend this meeting**



**Jeremy Chambers  
Monitoring Officer  
Lewisham Town Hall  
London SE6 4RU**

**Date: 6 November 2023**

**For further information please contact:**

**Jasmine Kassim,  
Senior Committee Manager  
Laurence House  
Catford Road SE6 4RU**

**Email: [Committee@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:Committee@lewisham.gov.uk)**



## Health and Safety Committee

### Minutes

**Date:** 14 November 2023

**Key decision:** No

**Class:** Part 1

**Ward(s) affected:** All

**Contributors:** Chief Executive / Senior Committee Manager

### Outline and recommendations

Members are asked to consider minutes of the meeting of the Health and Safety Committee held on 24 May 2023

#### 1. Recommendation

It is recommended that the Minutes of the Health and Safety Committee meeting held on 24 May 2023, be confirmed, and signed.

**Jeremy Chambers**  
**Monitoring Officer**

**6 November 2023**

# 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

# Agenda Item 2



## Overview and Scrutiny Business Panel

### Declarations of Interest

**Date:** 14 November 2023

**Key decision:** No

**Class:** Part 1

**Ward(s) affected:** All

**Contributors:** Chief Executive

### Outline and recommendations

Members are asked to declare any personal interest they have in any item on the agenda.

## 1. Summary

1.1. Members must declare any personal interest they have in any item on the agenda. There are three types of personal interest referred to in the Council's Member Code of Conduct:

- (1) Disclosable pecuniary interests
- (2) Other registerable interests
- (3) Non-registerable interests.

1.2. Further information on these is provided in the body of this report.

## 2. Recommendation

2.1. Members are asked to declare any personal interest they have in any item on the agenda.

### 3. Disclosable pecuniary interests

3.1 These are defined by regulation as:

- (a) Employment, trade, profession or vocation of a relevant person\* for profit or gain
- (b) Sponsorship –payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than by the Council) within the 12 months prior to giving notice for inclusion in the register in respect of expenses incurred by you in carrying out duties as a member or towards your election expenses (including payment or financial benefit from a Trade Union).
- (c) Undischarged contracts between a relevant person\* (or a firm in which they are a partner or a body corporate in which they are a director, or in the securities of which they have a beneficial interest) and the Council for goods, services or works.
- (d) Beneficial interests in land in the borough.
- (e) Licence to occupy land in the borough for one month or more.
- (f) Corporate tenancies – any tenancy, where to the member’s knowledge, the Council is landlord and the tenant is a firm in which the relevant person\* is a partner, a body corporate in which they are a director, or in the securities of which they have a beneficial interest.
- (g) Beneficial interest in securities of a body where:
  - (a) that body to the member’s knowledge has a place of business or land in the borough; and
  - (b) either:
    - (i) the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or 1/100 of the total issued share capital of that body; or
    - (ii) if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the relevant person\* has a beneficial interest exceeds 1/100 of the total issued share capital of that class.

\*A relevant person is the member, their spouse or civil partner, or a person with whom they live as spouse or civil partner.

### 4. Other registerable interests

4.1 The Lewisham Member Code of Conduct requires members also to register the following interests:

- (a) Membership or position of control or management in a body to which you were appointed or nominated by the Council
- (b) Any body exercising functions of a public nature or directed to charitable purposes, or whose principal purposes include the influence of public opinion or policy, including any political party
- (c) Any person from whom you have received a gift or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £25.

## 5. Non registerable interests

- 5.1. Occasions may arise when a matter under consideration would or would be likely to affect the wellbeing of a member, their family, friend or close associate more than it would affect the wellbeing of those in the local area generally, but which is not required to be registered in the Register of Members' Interests (for example a matter concerning the closure of a school at which a Member's child attends).

## 6. Declaration and impact of interest on members' participation

- 6.1. Where a member has any registerable interest in a matter and they are present at a meeting at which that matter is to be discussed, they must declare the nature of the interest at the earliest opportunity and in any event before the matter is considered. The declaration will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting. If the matter is a disclosable pecuniary interest the member must take no part in consideration of the matter and withdraw from the room before it is considered. They must not seek improperly to influence the decision in any way. **Failure to declare such an interest which has not already been entered in the Register of Members' Interests, or participation where such an interest exists, is liable to prosecution and on conviction carries a fine of up to £5000**
- 6.2. Where a member has a registerable interest which falls short of a disclosable pecuniary interest they must still declare the nature of the interest to the meeting at the earliest opportunity and in any event before the matter is considered, but they may stay in the room, participate in consideration of the matter and vote on it unless paragraph 6.3 below applies.
- 6.3. Where a member has a registerable interest which falls short of a disclosable pecuniary interest, the member must consider whether a reasonable member of the public in possession of the facts would think that their interest is so significant that it would be likely to impair the member's judgement of the public interest. If so, the member must withdraw and take no part in consideration of the matter nor seek to influence the outcome improperly.
- 6.4. If a non-registerable interest arises which affects the wellbeing of a member, their, family, friend or close associate more than it would affect those in the local area generally, then the provisions relating to the declarations of interest and withdrawal apply as if it were a registerable interest.
- 6.5. Decisions relating to declarations of interests are for the member's personal judgement, though in cases of doubt they may wish to seek the advice of the Monitoring Officer.

## 7. Sensitive information

- 7.1. There are special provisions relating to sensitive interests. These are interests the disclosure of which would be likely to expose the member to risk of violence or intimidation where the Monitoring Officer has agreed that such interest need not be registered. Members with such an interest are referred to the Code and advised to seek advice from the Monitoring Officer in advance.

## 8. Exempt categories

- 8.1. There are exemptions to these provisions allowing members to participate in decisions notwithstanding interests that would otherwise prevent them doing so. These include:-
- (a) Housing – holding a tenancy or lease with the Council unless the matter relates to your particular tenancy or lease; (subject to arrears exception)
  - (b) School meals, school transport and travelling expenses; if you are a parent or

guardian of a child in full time education, or a school governor unless the matter relates particularly to the school your child attends or of which you are a governor

- (c) Statutory sick pay; if you are in receipt
- (d) Allowances, payment or indemnity for members
- (e) Ceremonial honours for members
- (f) Setting Council Tax or precept (subject to arrears exception).

# Agenda Item 3



## Health & Safety Committee

### Corporate Health & Safety Board Update

**Date:** 14 November 2023

**Key decision:** No

**Class:** Part 1

**Ward(s) affected:** All.

**Contributors:** Rich Clarke, Head of Assurance

### Outline and recommendations

This report provides information to the Health & Safety Committee on matters of interest raised in previous meetings. It also summarises information raised at the Corporate Health & Safety Board including relevant incident statistics.

We ask Members to note the report.

## 1. Summary

- 1.1. The report includes an update on matters raised previously by this Committee, including details on training offered to Council staff.
- 1.2. The report summarises relevant matters raised at the Corporate Health & Safety Board, including most recent accident and incident statistics.

## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1. We ask that Members note and comment on the report.

## 3. Policy Context

- 3.1. The Council has various legal, regulatory and ethical responsibilities in ensuring the continuing health and safety of all those to whom it owes a duty of care. The work of this Committee in general helps to ensure the Council meets its responsibilities, especially to non-domestic service users. This report contributes to the Committee's understanding of health and safety governance at the Council and so aids in the effective completion of its responsibilities.

## 4. Matters Raised At Corporate Health & Safety Board

- 4.1. The most recent Board meeting was on 19 October 2023. It followed a full set of Directorate-level health and safety meetings, all of which included union representatives. Ex-Lewisham Homes colleagues attended the Corporate Health & Safety Board and the Place directorate meeting as a prelude to starting Housing directorate meetings from January.
- 4.2. The Board's agenda included:
- HR Report on Occupational Health & Welfare
  - Facilities Management Update, including compliance report on the corporate estate.
  - Actions from each Directorate meeting.
  - Statutory compliance report and incident reporting summary provided by the Corporate Health & Safety team.
- 4.3. Principal matters of interest for this Committee included:

### Violence and Aggression Policy

- 4.4. At the last Committee meeting we reported feedback raised in Directorate meetings and by Union colleagues reflecting a view among some staff of increasing aggression from service users. This was somewhat reflected in incident reporting statistics, though not to the anecdotally reported level.
- 4.5. The Board's recommendations were to finalise the already-in-development refresh to the Violence and Aggression Policy, encourage full incident reporting and promote and review support and training on offer.
- 4.6. The October Board received fresh incident reporting statistics that show a sharp increase in verbal abuse or threatening behaviour. However, feedback from colleagues suggest this is primarily (but not wholly) the impact of more comprehensive reporting. The Board also received a refreshed Policy for approval and reviewed the training and support (both online and in-person) on offer to staff and managers directly affected.

### Outstanding Planned Preventative Maintenance (PPM)

- 4.7. The Board noted that average PPM and general health and safety compliance on the corporate estate had improved to 80% from the last report of 58%. There are no individually material items and all statutory and routine inspections are up to date.
- 4.8. The reported performance of the Council's facilities management service to responsive work remains good (95% work completed), with much of the outstanding tasks falling to building occupants.

4.9. Especially with larger Council sites occupied by many services, there can be some uncertainty over responsibility for completing these minor works. Partly for that reason, the Council is currently refreshing the support it gives to building managers, including production of a comprehensive Premises Handbook, to set out clearly how to complete routine health and safety tasks. The Board reviewed a near-complete draft of this Handbook, which will be rolled out to building managers, with accompanying in-person training across the remainder of the year.

**Fire Evacuations**

4.10. The Board received a separate report on evacuations of Laurence House. That report is also on this Committee’s agenda as a separate item.

**Health and Safety Audit Programme**

4.11. We reported previously to Members in May the results of the self-assessment that comprised stage one of the revived corporate health and safety audit programme. Almost 90% of services completed the self assessment, recording on average 71% compliance, weighted slightly more towards ‘practical’ health and safety (84% compliance) than governance (60% compliance).

4.12. The next step was to undertake detailed audits of individual services, both to test the veracity of self-assessment but also provide advice on improving compliance. For that reason our audit programme, which covered 12 service areas, focused on services reporting low compliance or who did not return a self-assessment.

4.13. We’re pleased to report the self-assessment and audit have acted as a spur for services to improve their health and safety compliance. The table below summarises results.

<b>Audit Selection Category</b>	<b>Self-Assessed compliance (May 2023)</b>	<b>Audited compliance (Oct 2023)</b>	<b>Change</b>
No self-assessment return	n/a	85%	+85%
Low reported compliance	13%	80%	+67%

4.14. We continue to work with services to address areas of non-compliance through providing guidance and training. We will continue the audit programme into 2024 starting with a fresh self-assessment exercise in the Spring.



## 5. Incidents

5.1. The Board (and relevant Directorates) also received information on reported incidents and change from last year. The table below summarises:

Directorate	Q2 2022	Q2 2023	Change
Chief Executive's	0	2	+2
Children & Young People (non-school)	4	9	+5
Schools	197	140	-57
Community Services	14	38	+24
Corporate Resources	28	21	-7
Place (formerly HRPR)	18	15	-3
<b>Total (Corporate Only)</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>+21</b>
<b>Total (including Schools)</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>-36</b>

5.2. As we continue to develop our incident reporting approach ahead of new software implementation, we can now also present analysis by primary cause. The below table sets out the (Corporate, non-schools) incidents above by reported primary cause:

Reported Primary Cause	Q2 2022	Q2 2023	Change
Verbal abuse / threatening behaviour	11	26	+15
Assault on employee by public / pupil	12	5	-7
Assault by service user on service user	13	7	-6
Injured by animal / insect	2	0	-2
Electrical / Fire / Heat / Harmful Substance	1	3	+2
Existing Illness / Medical Condition	0	8	+8
Slip / Trip / Fall	5	8	+3
Manual handling	2	1	-1
Contact with object / vehicle	14	11	-3
Other type of accident	2	12	+10
Near Miss	2	4	+2
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>+21</b>

### Is this report easy to understand?

Please give us feedback so we can improve.

Page 15

Go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/send-us-feedback-on-our-reports>

- 5.3. The more serious are called 'RIDDOR' incidents. These come with compulsory reporting to the Health & Safety Executive under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013. The number and nature of such incidents in the quarter to 30 September 2023 is below.

<b>RIDDOR Category</b>	<b>CED</b>	<b>CYP</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>COM</b>	<b>COR</b>	<b>Place</b>
Dangerous Occurrence	0	0	0	0	0	0
Major Injury or Condition	0	0	2	0	0	0
Member of Public to Hospital	0	0	2	0	0	0
>7 Day Absence	0	0	1	1	1	1
Pupil to Hospital	0	0	4	0	0	0
Prescribed Disease	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>

- 5.4. The most serious incidents involved fractures arising from falls or slips. The Council documents all RIDDOR incidents and investigates as appropriate. There is, to the best of our knowledge, no external agency involvement in any of these incidents.
- 5.5. The Board will start fully integrating incident reporting from the Housing Directorate beginning in the period ending 31 December 2023.

## **6. Financial implications**

- 6.1. The report is to note. There are no financial implications arising.

## **7. Legal implications**

- 7.1. The report is to note. There are no legal implications arising.

## **8. Risk implications**

- 8.1. The risk of non-compliance with Health and Safety requirements is recognised in the Council's corporate risk register, along with service-specific related risks within Directorate registers. Operating effective oversight and governance of the Council's arrangements and their performance is a key mitigation in reducing the level of risk.

## **9. Equalities implications**

- 9.1. The report is to note. There are no equalities implications arising.

## **10. Climate change and environmental implications**

- 10.1. The report is to note. There are no climate change and environmental

### **Is this report easy to understand?**

Please give us feedback so we can improve. **Page 16**

Go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/send-us-feedback-on-our-reports>

implications arising.

## **11. Crime and disorder implications**

11.1. The report is to note. There are no crime and disorder implications arising.

## **12. Health and wellbeing implications**

12.1. The report is to note. There are no health and wellbeing implications arising.

## **13. Background papers**

13.1. No background papers.

## **14. Report author and contact**

14.1. Rich Clarke, Head of Assurance. [rich.clarke@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:rich.clarke@lewisham.gov.uk). Telephone (020) 8314 8730 (ext. 48730).

# Agenda Item 4



## Health & Safety Committee

### Emergency Evacuations Report

**Date:** 14 November 2023

**Key decision:** No

**Class:** Part 1

**Ward(s) affected:** All.

**Contributors:** Rich Clarke, Head of Assurance

### Outline and recommendations

Summarising for the Committee the results of work analysing the 24 May 2023 unplanned evacuation of Laurence House and developments in practice and procedure since.

We ask Members to note the report.

### Timeline of engagement and decision-making

Earlier versions of this report have been presented to officer groups at the Corporate Health and Safety Board (17 July and 19 October) and the Corporate Assurance Board (13 July and 29 September).

## 1. Summary

- 1.1. The previous Health & Safety Committee took place immediately subsequent to an unplanned emergency evacuation of Laurence House in response to a fire in the building car park. The Committee requested a report to its next meeting both on the specifics of that incident and evacuation procedures more generally. Similar reporting was requested by senior officers on behalf of both the Corporate Health and Safety Board and the Corporate Assurance Board.

- 1.2. This report extracts information from reports presented in both forums on the 24 May evacuation of Laurence House those since. The initial reporting in June identified a number of improvements needed to procedures, primarily to ensure the procedures remained fit for a workplace now used for hybrid working as much as a permanent base.
- 1.3. These improvements were made across the summer, involving revisiting and revising procedures and working to increase awareness among staff and building users. We had opportunity to test these revised arrangements in two evacuations a week apart in September: one planned, one unplanned. Both those evacuations were effective and reflected positive progress. We will continue monitoring evacuation exercises and providing feedback reports to the Corporate Health and Safety Board.

## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1. We ask Members to note this report.

## **3. Policy Context**

- 3.1. This report aligns with Lewisham's Corporate Priorities, as set out in the Council's [Corporate Strategy \(2022-2026\)](#):
  - Cleaner and Greener
  - A Strong Local Economy
  - Quality Housing
  - Children and Young People
  - Safer Communities
  - Open Lewisham
  - Health and Wellbeing
- 3.2. The Council has various legal, regulatory and ethical responsibilities in ensuring the continuing health and safety of all those to whom it owes a duty of care. The work of this Committee in general helps to ensure the Council meets its responsibilities, especially to non-domestic service users. This report contributes to the Committee's understanding of health and safety governance at the Council and so aids in the effective completion of its responsibilities.

## **4. Background**

- 4.1. Laurence House in Catford is Lewisham Council's principal office accommodation. A five-storey tower built around 1970, it provides a workplace for typically 500 or more people during the working day. It also contains a reception area serving members of the public. For general office accommodation, standard practice is to conduct fire drills twice per year.

## **5. Unplanned evacuation 24 May 2023**

- 5.1. The evacuation was instructed at 16:35 following a fire starting in the bin area at the back of the building, outside the central staircase fire exit. The London Fire Brigade (LFB) arrived on site 4 minutes after the start of the evacuation and extinguished the fire to prevent its spread. In total 646 staff and other building users were evacuated in around 7 minutes. There were no injuries reported. The cause of fire was established as a carelessly discarded cigarette some minutes earlier that developed into the fire.
- 5.2. Once the fire was discovered, security first requested through the building's address system to move vehicles parked nearby while they made attempts to tackle the fire with extinguishers. However, as the fire started rising, the fire alarm was activated, triggering a full building evacuation. At the time there were four security officers present in Laurence House who deployed to assist the east and west staircases, front door main entrance and evacuation lift. There were also three trained evacuation marshals present on site who help in evacuating their floors.
- 5.3. Subsequent investigation of the incident reported various failures in evacuation process. These included non-compliance from staff on in the instruction to evacuate, including delaying by packing belongings, visiting toilets or completing washing up. On exiting, staff were seen taking footage of the fire, not fully assembling at muster point and entering vehicles to leave the car park. This disrupted the evacuation and hindered LFB access. Also many building users, in the absence of direction otherwise, evacuated using the central staircase fire exit which led them near to the source of the fire through smoke. A building user was also able to access the basement during evacuation as no marshal or security officer was deployed at the basement door. Lack of evacuation management was observed, in part because no building controllers happened to be present at the time.

## **6. Planned Evacuation 1 June 2023**

- 6.1. A planned evacuation for Laurence House on 1 June 2023 had been scheduled for weeks but acquired greater salience after 24 May. We intended to observe and review response to a controlled event, and also took the opportunity to practice an evacuation where the central staircase was unavailable at ground level. Staff were instead directed to the west end of the building. Evacuation of 348 building users took 7 minutes; not materially different to 24 May.
- 6.2. There were six security officers and four Corporate Health and Safety Team members present plus the building controller. No trained evacuation marshals were present, but one employee acted on their own initiative to step in as an evacuation marshal having previously held the role.

- 6.3. This planned evacuation highlighted many recurring issues from 24 May, including those around prompt staff compliance. However, it also identified the lack of evacuation marshals on site. This meant a separate building sweep was needed by security, extending time outside to near 20 minutes.

## **7. Initial Investigations and Reporting – June/July 2023**

- 7.1. The Corporate Assurance Board (CAB) and Corporate Health and Safety Board (CHSB) both requested investigation reports following each evacuation. The reports were presented on 13 and 17 July respectively, following an initial briefing to senior management in early June. The report presented a 'gap analysis' in contrasting planned procedure with practical observations. Key gaps in procedure versus practice included:

- Staff not responding to alarm in good time, including packing belongings.
- Drivers attempting to leave the car park during the evacuation.
- Staff failing to gather at the appointed assembly point.
- Lack of clarity on presence and availability of fire marshals and security staff.

- 7.2. The report included a number of recommendations for improvement. Both CAB and CHSB endorsed the recommendations, which all fell due for implementation over the summer (i.e. before the next planned evacuation). Key recommendations included:

- Refresh and roll out fire awareness safety training to all staff, accompanied by publicity through Chief Executive messages.
- Specific additional training to senior management to greatly broaden the pool of potential evacuation marshals and reduce reliance on individual people who may not be present on the day.
- Full review of current evacuation marshal list.
- Revise evacuation drill procedure with the aim of ensuring each employee experiences at least one per year, e.g. by scheduling on different weekdays.
- Clarify governance by reporting outcomes of each exercise to CHSB.

## **8. Planned Evacuation 7 September 2023**

- 8.1. On the day there were six security officers, five Corporate Health and Safety team members plus the building controller present. Evacuation marshals were present on all floors. All 509 building users evacuated in a little under 6 minutes.
- 8.2. We performed an additional check, a building sweep by two facilities management engineers to survey doors, which added some time to the exercise. However, overall time outdoor was less than ten minutes.

- 8.3. We noted Managers and Evacuation Marshals consistently reporting floor clearances to the building controller, as per procedure. The majority of staff assembled appropriately, some who initially mustered near the bike racks were requested to move and complied swiftly. One vehicle attempted to leave the car park but was advised to remain and complied. Two staff members with mobility impairments were present onsite, both of whom were successfully evacuated using the methods set out in their Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs).
- 8.4. The facilities management sweep identified two defects to doors; one that initially released and then closed and another that seemed unusually heavy to push open. Both defects were reported to facilities management to remedy.

## **9. Unplanned Evacuation 14 September 2023**

- 9.1. A week later, Laurence House underwent an unplanned evacuation after a member of the public activated the fire alarm at 6:15pm. As this was out of normal hours there were no listed evacuation marshals present and a security officer acted as building controller. However, all 124 people present in the building evacuated in a controlled and prompt manner with people on each floor stepping successfully into the role of Evacuation Marshal. Occupants were allowed to re-enter the building at 6:30pm after final checks were completed.

## **10. Updated Investigations and Reporting – October 2023**

- 10.1. General consensus on review of both September evacuations was that the revised procedures, publicity and training had the desired effect. In particular, staff compliance was much improved, evacuations both planned and unplanned were more controlled and the larger pool of possible marshals ensured even out of hours with minimal staff we successfully and promptly cleared the building.
- 10.2. We intend to retain post-event reporting to CHSB to ensure even relatively minor improvement areas receive appropriate focus. We also intend to consolidate the initial expansion of training by inclusion among a standard 'mandatory' set of annual training topics currently being developed in consultation with the Learning and Development Team. Also we are aware the focus here has been on Laurence House. We are currently reviewing procedures and approaches across the corporate estate for inclusion in a revised Premises Handbook for distribution to all relevant officers.

## **11. Financial implications**

- 11.1. The report is to note. There are no financial implications arising.



## **12. Legal implications**

12.1. The report is to note. There are no legal implications arising.

## **13. Risk Implications**

13.1 The risk of non-compliance with Health and Safety requirements is recognised in the Council's corporate risk register, along with service-specific related risks within Directorate registers. Operating effective oversight and governance of the Council's arrangements and their performance is a key mitigation in reducing the level of risk

## **14. Equalities implications**

14.1. The report is to note. There are no equalities implications arising.

## **15. Climate change and environmental implications**

15.1. The report is to note. There are no climate change and environmental implications arising.

## **16. Crime and disorder implications**

16.1. The report is to note. There are no crime and disorder implications arising.

## **17. Health and wellbeing implications**

17.1. The report is to note. There are no health and wellbeing implications arising.

## **18. Background papers**

18.1. No background papers.

## **19. Report author and contact**

19.1. Rich Clarke, Head of Assurance. [rich.clarke@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:rich.clarke@lewisham.gov.uk). Telephone (020) 8314 8730 (ext. 48730).