

MINUTES OF THE HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 2 February 2023 at 5.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Chris Best, Paul Bell, Laura Cunningham, Stephen Hayes and Aliya Sheikh

ALSO PRESENT:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Aisha Malik-Smith

1. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

RESOLVED that Councillor Cunningham be elected Chair and Councillor Best be elected Vice Chair of the Health and Safety Committee for the remainder of the municipal year 2022/23.

2. Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Health and Safety Committee held on 4 October 2019 be confirmed and signed.

3. Declarations of Interest

None.

4. Corporate Health and Safety Team Update

- 4.1 The Head of Assurance presented the report. He said that the information had been drawn from the Corporate Health and Safety Board work programme and was focused on issues that had been raised by members formally and during informal discussions.
- 4.2 Members were advised that a meeting of the Corporate Health and Safety Board had been scheduled for Thursday 26 January 2023, but had been postponed until Monday 6 February. The Board was out of sync with this meeting, but the subject matter to be discussed had been included in the report.
- 4.3 The Head of Assurance gave an overview of the incidents for each directorate. He said that data for incidents involving staff and members of the public could not be separated at the present time. The remit of this Committee was the safety of members of the public and he acknowledged that this information should be available. Data collection would be modified over the coming year to ensure that this information was available.
- 4.4 In a response to a question about the large increase in incidents across

directorates, the Head of Assurance said that there had been movement of service between the directorates. He gave an example that in 2021 Corporate Resources did not include passenger services but was included in 2022. In addition, more staff were working from home and would not necessarily report a trip or fall. Staff had returned to offices, and this could be a reason why reports of incidents had risen. In addition, reporting had changed so that the information had been amalgamated onto one page. It was difficult to determine whether there were more incidents or more reporting. He considered that there was more reporting; the severity of the incidents had not increased. Monitoring of incidents would continue.

- 4.5 The 3 RIDDORS mentioned in the report related to fractures and broken bones. There were various 7-day absences. This included one for Corporate Resources when someone exited a vehicle and was concussed.
- 4.6 Members were advised that the GMB representative had sent apologies for this meeting. There had not been a response from any of the other unions. The Chair said that she was keen for union representatives to attend this Committee and suggested that this be considered outside this meeting. The Head of Assurance said that union representatives were invited to and attended the Corporate Health and Safety Board.
- 4.7 In response to a question about how easy it was to report an incident, the Head of Assurance said that information was included in the introduction to health and safety training. There was a simple dropdown menu to complete on the intranet. Reporting of incidents was encouraged and in the next few months an audit programme would be rolled out which would be looking at individual services. Line managers were encouraged to report any staff incidents. The Health and Safety team then had confirmation that the manager was aware of any incidents within their team.
- 4.8 Community libraries were being used as warm hubs. The Head of Assurance agreed to find out whether staff had been trained to manage incidents that could occur with an increase of people on the premises.
- 4.9 Members were advised that defibrillators were provided on request. If a service area considered that there was a benefit to having the equipment, a request could be made to facilities management. Members did not consider this ad hoc system to be acceptable and agreed that the Council should adopt a policy for all the defibrillators in council owned buildings. The four sites referred to in the report were not always open and signage for the equipment was not clear. There was information about where defibrillators were in schools. The Chair asked officers to investigate provision of defibrillators and policies in other authorities.
- 4.10 In response to a question about eLearning courses, the Head of Assurance agreed to check the figures for the display screen equipment and Introduction to Health and Safety courses which were considered low.
- 4.11 The Chair said that she would attend the next meeting of the Corporate Assurance Board and report back to this Committee about how they were

operating and how the directors fed into the overall health and safety message. She said she would write to members and submit a report on her findings to the next meeting of this Committee

RESOLVED that

- (i) the report be noted,
- (ii) a policy for defibrillators be adopted and the policies and practises of other authorities be investigated and included in the Health and Safety Forward Plan,
- (iii) the Chair send a report to members of this Committee following her attendance at the Corporate Assurance Board;
- (iv) information about whether staff in libraries had received sufficient training to manage the potential increase of residents in buildings used as community hubs be sent to members of the Committee,
- (v) figures for the display screen equipment and Introduction to Health and Safety courses be checked because they were considered to be low; and
- (vi) further attempts be made to encourage unions to attend future meetings of this Committee.

5. Corporate Estate Health and Safety

- 5.1 The Head of Assurance presented the report. He referred to Appendix A in the report which detailed all the corporate estate assets that were part of a routine inspection programme. He wanted to make clear that none of the actions were severe. They were being monitored because they were minor and the objective was to encourage staff to complete the tasks.
- 5.2 Councillor Best referred to Appendix A and said that Champion Hall was in Sydenham ward and agreed to email officers with regard to the correct ward for Kirkdale Centre.
- 5.3 A question was asked about how officers could assure members that there was health and safety compliance response in all council owned buildings. Concern was expressed about recording incidents in swimming pools, the use of school facilities by the community, facilities in parks and whether Lewisham homes would be coming into the corporate estate. The Head of Assurance said that the answer to these questions was in development. In a trial run exercise, a sample of 20 properties were looked at last Autumn and all were found to be compliant. However, officers still needed to consider the compliance for another 280 properties. The Head of Assurance said that he was looking into how information could be gathered in a way that gave assurance. Officers had information about contracts and leaseholders but needed to develop ways of finding out the activity that takes place in these council buildings.
- 5.4 The Head of Assurance said that Lewisham Homes had their own Corporate Health and Safety team. He had met them recently and he would continue to work with them.

- 5.5 It was noted that when Lewisham Homes was brought in house, all of the assets and buildings would become the responsibility of Lewisham Council. This Committee would oversee all of those assets, including staff, once they were transferred back.
- 5.6 There was discussion about risk assessment and members were advised that a professional external risk assessor was engaged to undertake risk assessment in Lewisham. Risk assessments, shown as high medium and low, reflect the true use of a building to ensure that the remedial actions in place were proportionate. A library, for example, had a medium risk because of the nature of its use.
- 5.7 The Head of Assurance said that Deptford Lounge was not included in the list of Corporate Estates premises in the appendix to the report because Health and Safety requirements were overseen by a trust that occupied this building. He believed that the Albany oversee the health and safety for Deptford Lounge but he said that he would check this information and advise members accordingly.
- 5.8 The Albany was one of Lewisham's library hubs. Catford library had moved to Catford Mews. Members were aware of changes to the hubs and agreed to email the Head of Assurance with any information they received. Downham Health and Leisure Centre was part of a shared building the library part included Lewisham staff. Members were mindful of where staff were working, and that proper health and safety checks were being carried out. The Chair suggested that members should email the Head of Assurance and the Committee Officer if any anomalies were found in this report. This was agreed.
- 5.9 The Head of Assurance said that the information he had received was that the upkeep of the fabric of the buildings listed in the Appendix, was the responsibility of this Council. This list did not include buildings that were not the responsibility of this Council. These properties had a contractual arrangement and officers were looking into ways of monitoring how effective these contracts were in practice.
- 5.10 In response to a question, members were advised that introductory training was generic, but fire wardens and fire risk assessment in person training was specific to the building where staff were fulfilling those roles. The Head of Assurance said that the fire risk assessment for the Broadway Theatre since its recent renovation, had taken place and he agreed to provide this information as part of this Committee's Forward Plan.
- 5.11 Housing management services currently provided by Lewisham Homes would soon be brought under the control of Lewisham Council. The Head of Assurance agreed to report back to the next meeting of this Committee on the health and safety of staff transferred to this Council.
- 5.12 The Chair thanked the Head of Assurance and his staff, for all their hard work in producing these reports for this Committee

RESOLVED that

- (i) the report be noted;

- (ii) the Head of Assurance will investigate who was responsible for Health and Safety at Deptford Lounge and advise members accordingly; and
- (iii) information on the fire risk assessment for the Broadway Theatre be sent to members of this Committee and included in this Committee's Forward Plan.