



CORPORATE HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON MONDAY, 21ST NOVEMBER 2016 AT 10.00 A.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor D. Havard (Chair)
Councillor M. Adams (Vice-Chair)

Councillors:

P.J. Bevan, D.T. Hardacre, A G Higgs

Together with:

D Jones (Service Manager, Health Safety and Welfare), T. Phillips (Health and Safety Manager), P. James (Health and Safety Manager), E. Townsend (Deputy Health and Safety Manager). Mark Williams (Head of Community and Leisure). L. Donovan (Interim Head of Human Resources), R. Phillips (Asbestos Officer), E. Townsend (Health and Safety Manager), M.S. Williams (Head of Community and Leisure Services), D. Beecham (Head of Electoral Services), A. Edmunds (Building Maintenance), C. Jones (Head of Performance and Policy), B. Hopkins (Assistant Director Education), S. Richards (Principal Finance Officer) and E. Sullivan (Interim Scrutiny Officer)

Trade Union Representatives:

N. Funnell (GMB), J. Garcia (UNISON) and D.A. Williams (UNITE)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from G.J. Hughes, S. Kent and R. Munn (UNITE).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the commencement or during the course of the meeting.

3. MINUTES – 11TH JULY 2016

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Corporate Health and Safety Committee held on Monday 11th July 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. MATTERS ARISING

Minute No. 3 – Health and Safety Annual Report (Page 5).

Donna Jones (Service Manager Health Safety and Welfare) provided an update on radon testing in schools. The three schools noted in the report have since completed all the further testing required with results showing less than 400 becquerels present. Public Health Wales have advised that no further testing is needed and no remedial works are required.

Minute No. 6 – Safety of Automated Gates – Update

Members were advised that since the last meeting the final school audit had been completed and all remedial actions had been undertaken.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

The Chair sought the Committee's approval to bring forward Agenda Item No. 6, Tree Survey's Within Schools and this was unanimously agreed.

Consideration was given to the following reports:

5. TREE SURVEYS WITHIN SCHOOLS

Donna Jones, Service Manager Health Safety and Welfare and Paul Harris, Tree Officer introduced the report which updated the Committee on the latest developments regarding the recent county borough wide tree survey at school sites.

Mr Harris explained the tree survey framework agreement and advised that the survey inspections which began in early 2016, have now been completed at all schools across the borough. Trees' conditions, any significant defects, general details and any recommended or necessary maintenance had been recorded in a specialised database. Using the Arbortrack system, a report of the survey data, tree location plan and a list of works was sent to each school. The plan and works list had also sent to the school's appointed contractor with a view to pricing said works. Members were advised that only routine maintenance was required at most schools with very few major problems identified.

The Committee were advised of the schools legal duty of care with regard to the maintenance and safety of the trees within their grounds and their responsibility to ensure that recommendations were being followed through.

The Chair thanked the Officer for his report and full discussion ensued.

Clarification was sought as to whether the school or authority would pay for the works required and the Officer confirmed that the responsibility would lie with the individual school. Concerns were expressed that given present budgetary constraints, schools would be unable to fund any emergency works identified. A Member requested that consideration be given to offering some form of separate funding facility that would allow emergency works to be carried out without immediate financial cost to the school and this was discussed at length.

Mr B. Hopkins, Assistant Director Education, confirmed that Fair Funding Regulations laid out a clear set of financial responsibilities with maintenance being the responsibility of the school. It would not be possible or practical to implement a cost deferral system. However Mrs S. Richards, Principal Finance Officer advised that it

would be possible for schools to request a deficient budget licence in order to support a spend in this year under these circumstances. The Member agreed that support for deficient budgets in order to accommodate an emergency spend that would ensure the safety of pupils would be acceptable.

Members discussed possible boundary/adjoining wall damage by trees and queried if this issue had also been picked up during the survey. The Officer confirmed that these had been incorporated and the most appropriate course of action recommended, he also advised that outstanding data and any ad hoc requests had also been noted and actioned on a case by case basis. As the assessments were based on a 3-5 year tree management cycle the Officer anticipated that schools would need to repeat the survey process within the next 3-5 years to ensure a proactive approach. It was noted that any specific issues that warranted more frequent inspections would also have been included in the reports.

Leaf fall and their impact on drains and culverts was discussed and clarification sought as to any additional resources to assist schools with this problem. M.S. Williams advised that there were not sufficient resources or man-power available to collect the volume of leaves present at this time of year. School caretakers would be responsible for the clearing the leaves within the school grounds, outside, highways would be able to deploy mechanical sweepers for at risk gullies.

Having fully considered its content the Corporate Health and Safety Committee noted the report.

6. STATUTORY MAINTENANCE COMPLIANCE REPORT – OCTOBER 2016

Donna Jones, Service Manager Health, Safety and Welfare introduced the report which updated the Committee on the current compliance rating of Caerphilly premises in relation to statutory maintenance, as well as an overview of the current statistics for outstanding remedial tasks for the high risk disciplines, which have not been closed down within the allocated timescales.

The inspection data centred on electrical installations, gas safety inspections, legionella inspections, fire log books and fire risk assessments. It was noted that any imminently dangerous faults identified during the inspections were rectified or made safe prior to the contractor leaving the premises. Remedial works are progressed via Facilities Management or Building Consultancy depending on the nature of the work.

Members were referred to section 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5 of the report and the tables contained therein which listed tasks which have been outstanding for over 90 days. In relation to Corporate Services, managed by the Corporate FM Team, it was noted that since the publication of the report all fire works have been completed.

The high number of outstanding actions in schools was noted and it was confirmed that a significant number related to electrical installations. However certain electrical works did fall within the schools Capital Scheme and would be progressed under that remit. Members were assured that the 13 outstanding priority 1 actions relating to gas installations in primary schools mainly related to ventilation improvements and were not dangerous as the Engineer legally could not leave an unsafe gas installation in operation. It was also noted that there was considerable work to be done with regard to fire safety log books and fire risk assessments.

Reference was made to the significant improvements made in Sheltered Housing and Paul Smythe, Housing Repairs Operational Manager was commended for the work done in this area to improve the compliance rating and therefore safety of these premises.

The Committee were advised this was one of the only Councils to have this level of data available to them which allowed targeted use of Council and School budgets to maintain buildings in a safe condition. Facilities Management and Building Consultancy were commended for their work in this area and for the significant reduction in outstanding tasks.

The Chair thanked the Officer for her report and full discussion ensued.

Members noted the high number of outstanding fire risk assessments in schools and clarification was sought as to whether schools management were undertaking fire drills, chemical risk plans and storage and evacuation plans in order to safeguard life. The Officer confirmed that the fire log book covered all aspects of fire safety with schools required to undertake a fire drill each term, furthermore all current fire safety advice centres on the preservation of life rather than asset. Members were advised that schools pay for the services of a Health and Safety Officer as part of their SLA but not all schools buy into this additional support. It was further clarified that all schools are issued with a report on outstanding actions, emailed reminders and are monitored, so schools are aware of what needs to be done.

Members queried the effectiveness of school fire drills and whether any were observed in order to ensure they were being done properly. Ms Jones explained that supervised fire evacuations had been undertaken for those schools with an identified risk. It was noted that secondary schools could be more problematic in this area. Reference was made to an incident in a certain school where groups of staff, who were under the impression that they did not need, had not evacuated during a drill. The Committee were advised that the only school that would be subject to a phased evacuation process would be Trinity Fields, every other school on hearing an alarm should fully evacuate.

The Committee commended the Health and Safety Department for the amount of work done to bring the statics presented to their present level. Colin Jones, Head of Performance and Policy reminded the Committee that the data before them was very much a living document and since the reports date the position had already moved on with 63 items on the Primary School electrical tasks list to be removed having been completed.

Ms Ceri Edwards, Health and Safety Manager sought clarification in relation to the schools legionella statistics and the types of works outstanding and was advised that this primarily related to 'dead legs' and the installation of thermostatic mixing valves it was noted that there were no unsafe tanks.

Having fully considered its content the Corporate Health and Safety Committee noted the report.

7. CONTROL OF HAND ARM VIBRATION AT WORK POLICY

Donna Jones, Service Manager Health, Safety and Welfare introduced the report which sought Members views on the Control of Hand Arm Vibration at Work Policy prior to its consideration by Cabinet as part of the consultation process. Trade union representatives for their support during the policy development process.

Arm Hand Vibration is caused by repeated and frequent use of hand-held vibrating tools which over time causes injury to the small nerves and blood vessels in the fingers. The draft policy details the roles and responsibilities at all levels for the control of vibration (appendix 1) and the draft corporate management arrangements (appendix 2) detail the practical measures which will be undertaken to control the risk from use of vibratory tools.

Practical measure will include risk assessment, selection and procurement, maintenance, health surveillance and instruction and training. The Committee were advised that at risk employees had undergone a medical check with a specialist Occupational Health Physician in order to create a risk baseline; in this way any already existing issues identified could be monitored. Ms Jones confirmed that unfortunately there had been circumstances where they have had to prohibit or remove effected employees working with vibration causing equipment. Limiting the use of equipment was noted as the best method of intervention however it was acknowledged at a certain point the impact of the disease is irreversible.

The Chair thanked the Officer for her report and Members comments were welcomed as part of the consultation process.

Clarification was sought in relation to the use of specialist gloves and whether these provided any protection. The Officer confirmed that they would not protect against the vibration itself, however cold and inclement weather did have a part to play, increasing susceptibility.

The Committee commended Health and Safety on an excellent policy that covered every area of concern from procurement onwards. The Committee welcomed the policy and the trade union involvement.

Having fully considered the report it was moved and seconded that the draft policy and corporate management arrangements be recommended to Cabinet for approval and by show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that the Control of Hand Arm Vibration at Work Policy and Corporate Management Arrangements be approved.

8. ANOTHER BUSINESS – POSSIBLE LISTERIA INFECTION IN SCHOOLS

In that Ms Ceri Edwards, Environmental Health Manager was present Members requested a brief update on the recent contaminated meat issue in Caerphilly schools.

Ms Edwards confirmed that on the 19th November 2016, kitchen staff at a school had noted an odour was present on opening a pre-packed ready to serve chicken product. They removed the product from the menu and reported this to catering services, following this incident the same issues were reported by two further schools in quick succession. Unfortunately as the issue had only been spotted at the very point of serving by the time the removal notice for the product had been issued to all schools some had been served to pupils. Environmental Health Officers were sent out as soon as the issue became apparent and they had removed the entire product and sent batches for testing. Initial testing had shown listeria present in some samples and full batch testing was then undertaken, the results of which are expected shortly. The Officer confirmed that the Food Standards Agency would be the enforcing authority in this regard and an investigation is on-going. Letters have been sent to parents informing them of the potential for illness, however with an incubation period of between 3-70 days it will be difficult to know the true extent of any possible infection for some time.

In terms of infection it was noted that symptoms were very similar to that of colds and flu and given the time of year it would be difficult to differentiate between the two. The Officer confirmed that listeria was only dangerous to the most vulnerable, the very young, very old or women in the early stages of pregnancy. The risk of a normal health child becoming seriously ill was remote. She confirmed that discussions with Parents are ongoing and every thing that could be done has been done and in a timely manner. Parents with concerns are recommended to contact their General Practitioner.

A Member queried if there was any form of testing for listeria and was advised that unfortunately there was not and this was a wait and see situation and due to the extended incubation period the extent of any possible infection would not be known until the New Year, hopefully nothing will develop.

The Committee requested that copies of the letter sent to parents be copied to local Councillors so there are aware of the advice being given.

The Chair thanked the Officer for the update.

9. INFORMATION ITEMS

The Committee noted the following items for information, full details of which were included in the Officer's Reports:

1. Accident Statistics Report for April – September 2016.
2. Recent HSE Updates

The meeting closed at 11.20 am.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 20th February 2017, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR