



Minutes of the meeting of the HEALTH AND SAFETY FORUM held on FRIDAY 11 FEBRUARY 2000 at 10.00 am

Present: Management Representatives

D Boobier (Head of Policy and Support Services)
J Deere (Human Resources Manager)
D Marks (Catering Operations Manager)
S Readyhough (Business Support Manager)
B Sandom (Head of Direct Services)
J Stansfield (Strategic Director Learning and Development)
J Stephenson (Assistant Emergency Planning Officer)
P Timmins (Treasurer)

Trade Union Representatives

D Cobbold (Chair) (UNISON)
G Harrington (UNISON)
L Jalloh (NUT)
A Roberts (Trade Union Co-ordinator)

Health and Safety Advisors

L Piascik (Senior Health and Safety Officer)
G Robinson (Facilities Manager)

Apologies: P Coveney (Strategic Director Resources), B Bithell (Head of Human Resources), J Moffoot (Head of Corporate Administration), K Reed (NAEIAC), M Ramm (CYWU), J Mackie (UNISON), P Roberts (UNISON)

1.0 MINUTES

It was noted that the Trade Union representatives declined to accept the Minutes of the meeting held on 8 October 1999.

2.0 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Air Conditioning – Saxon Court

The Senior Health and Safety Officer informed the meeting that the Health and Safety Team had been asked to monitor the environment at Lloyd's Court in addition to its work at the Civic Offices and Saxon Court. It was noted that the draft Capital Programme, to be submitted to the Policy and Resources Committee on 15 February 2000, included provision for upgrades to energy conservation and efficiency improvements (including new fans and motors in the air conditioning system).

The Chair reported that Unions had received Winton reports for air monitoring at Saxon Court, and that these were currently under consideration. The Chair stated that the methods used in the report were not recognised by environmental health specialists or the Chartered Institute of Building Service Engineers, which had delayed consideration of the document. They are investigating this further.

Reception at Saxon Court

The meeting noted that following consultation with Trade Unions representatives, it was anticipated that new facilities in the reception area at Saxon Court would be installed at the beginning of April.

Flooring

The Facilities Manager reported that the Chief Architect had been requested to produce a Five Year Plan of works to be undertaken, which would highlight the condition of the floors in the Civic Offices and at Saxon Court. It was reported that no major works were planned with regard to the carpets in these buildings.

Trade Union representatives expressed concern that some unsafe areas of carpeting within the canteen area had not been picked up by day-to-day maintenance activity. The Facilities Manager stated that these should have been attended to if reported through the normal channels. She agreed to investigate the safety of the area around the dance floor carpet, and to ensure that the taping around the carpet was secured.

The Forum noted that the last full Health and Safety inspection had been completed on 19 October 1999. It was noted that the suggested interval between inspections was three months and six months. The frequency of inspection in practice was to be determined by the presence and level of risk to health and safety. The Senior Health and Safety Officer stated that the reporting risk and improving safety should be a continual process, and that inspections should not be waited for and relied upon as the sole means of ensuring the safety of the workplace. Trade Unions representatives expressed concern at the level of response to day-to-day reports of issues of concern.

The Facilities Manager reported that caretaking staff were involved in an ongoing programme of ten-day walkabouts to attend to issues omitted from formal inspections.

Lighting at Saxon Court

The Facilities Manager reported that management acknowledged the seriousness

of lighting problems at Saxon Court, and that this was addressed in the Five Year Plan currently being formulated. It was noted that the Capital Bid to be submitted to the Policy and Resources Committee included provision for upgrading lighting at Saxon Court.

Vending Trolleys

This matter was considered as a main agenda item.

Fire Doors at Saxon Court

This matter was considered as a main agenda item.

Health and Safety Newsletter

This matter was considered as a main agenda item.

3.0 REPORTING OF ACCIDENTS IN SCHOOLS

The NUT representative requested the Forum to note that the reporting of accidents in schools was inconsistent and that the procedure for reporting accidents not well known.

The Senior Health and Safety Officer reported that management was unaware of such problems, and that a considerable number of reports of accidents were received regularly from schools. Full details of how to report incidents was held on public folders. It was to be expected that headteachers would be responsible for passing on this information to staff.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Trade Union and management representatives investigate the matter of reporting of incidents in schools.
2. That the NUT provide evidence relating to this matter for the purpose of discussion.
3. That information on the processes for reporting accidents be included in the next Health and Safety Newsletter, to reiterate the importance of reporting accidents.
4. That the matter be brought back to a future meeting of the Forum if deemed necessary by Trade Union or Management representatives.

4.0 ACCIDENT STATISTICS

The Forum considered the Annual Incident Statistics 1 January 1999 – 31 December 1999, and Quarterly Incident Statistics 1 October 1999 – 31 December 1999. Members of the Forum were asked to comment on a draft new format for the presentation of these statistics, an example of which was circulated during the meeting (attached as **Annex A** to these minutes).

The Forum noted that because of the efforts made to improve the recording and presentation of statistics, it was difficult to comment on comparisons of this

year's statistics with previous years, which were held in a different format. In response to a question about the apparently great number of violent and aggressive incidents, the Senior Health and Safety Officer stated that these figures included incidents which did not result in injuries.

The Senior Health and Safety Officer stressed that the figures supplied indicated incidents *reported* only, and that the increase in incidents reported did not necessarily reflect a substantive increase in incidents occurring, but possibly a success rate in encouraging people to make reports.

4.0 USE OF MOBILE TELEPHONES

The Senior Health and Safety Officer circulated a report conducted in October 1999 on mobile telephone use within Milton Keynes Council (attached as **Annex B** to these minutes).

The Forum noted that the greatest risk to health posed by the use of mobile telephones was that caused by using telephones while driving. The Department of Transport, Environment and the Regions had produced a leaflet, "Mobile Phones and Driving", which was available from the Road Safety Officer. Information from this would be included in the next edition of the Health and Safety Newsletter.

In response to a question from Trade Union representatives, the Senior Health and Safety Officer reported that in the case of one mobile telephone being shared between several workers, there was no clear guidance on whether it was hygienically acceptable to share earpieces. This would be a matter for the individual to decide. The Department of Transport, Environment and the Regions (DETR) recommended that mobile telephones should not be used at all when driving. Whether the use of earpieces provided significant protection against the potential danger from radio waves was yet to be determined. The forum noted that earpieces were usually provided free of charge with the sale of telephones.

5.0 VENDING TROLLEYS

The Forum noted Risk Assessments and an Occupational Health Assessment of the new vending trolleys. By way of correction to the minutes of the last meeting, it was noted that the new vending trolleys were no heavier than the previous models. The new trolleys had a capacity of 150 cups, in contrast to 300 cups in the case of model previously used. At the time of the assessment of the trolleys carried out by a qualified member of the Occupational Health team on 25 October 1999, no reports of back strain or of collisions had been reported to management.

The Chair reported that in contrast to management assertions that there had been no accidents relating to the use of the trolleys, Trades Union representatives were aware of a collision incident with a plant pot, where a flask had fallen from the top of the trolley. The Catering Operations Manager stated that this incident had

not been reported to her, and that flasks should not be carried on trolleys. She agreed to investigate the matter.

6.0 FIRE DOORS AT SAXON COURT

The Facilities Manager reported that the door which was the subject of concern at the last meeting had been investigated, and that a satisfactory temporary measure had been put in place, as agreed by the Unions' inspection of the matter during the week preceding this meeting. Discussions were taking place with the Fire Officer to arrange a full fire inspection of Saxon Court, including consideration of the fire doors.

Unions reported that the fire door originally of concern had been inspected and the closure mechanism found to be faulty on 9 February 2000. The fire doors adjacent to the Caretaker's office were also often found to be open. The Facilities Manager reported that this area presented problems, since it was a loading bay. Quotations had been requested for a system to be installed within the next two weeks which would ensure that the doors closed automatically in the event of a fire. In the meantime the fire doors would be kept closed, except for purposes of access.

7.0 HEALTH AND SAFETY MANUAL

The Forum noted that the Health and Safety Manual would be distributed in two volumes, with a draft of the first volume to be circulated to management and Trade Union representatives for consultation by mid-March.

8.0 HEALTH AND SAFETY NEWSLETTER

It was noted that a draft version of the Health and Safety Newsletter had been passed to staff side representatives for comments and amendments or updates to the information included in it.

UNISON reported that its comments had already been passed to the Health and Safety Team, and that a current list of all UNISON representatives was held on public folders.

The Senior Health and Safety Officer reported that the newsletter for the second quarter of the year would be distributed as soon as possible, and that staff side and management side representatives would receive a revised copy of the newsletter for comment before its despatch.

9.0 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Forum noted that the next meeting would be held on Friday 26 May 2000 at 10.00 am.

THE MEETING CLOSED AT 3.21 PM