



Minutes of the meeting of the HEALTH AND SAFETY FORUM held on WEDNESDAY 9 JUNE 1999 at 9.00 am

Present: Management Representatives

B Bithell (Head of Human Resources)
J Deere (Human Resources Manager)
M Odell (General Manager, Support Services)
J Stansfield (Strategic Director Learning and Development)
P Coveney (Strategic Director Resources)
D Jones (Strategic Director Neighbourhood Services)
D Boobier (Head of Policy and Support Services)

Trade Union Representatives

A Roberts (UNISON)
D Cobbold (UNISON)
C McKirgan (UNISON)
J Mackie (UNISON)
L Jalloh (NUT)

Health and Safety Advisors

L Piascik (Corporate Health and Safety Officer)
J Moffoot (Head of Corporate Administration)
G Robinson (Facilities Manager)
A Jack (Human Resources Officer)

Apologies: M Ramm, K Reed, T Smith

1.0 MINUTES - MATTER ARISING

The Forum received the Minutes of the last meeting held on 21 January 1999.

Distribution of Agendas

Unions expressed concern that some staff side representatives had not received full sets of papers for the meeting in time. It was agreed that this would be investigated.

ACCOMMODATION PROPOSALS FOR SAXON COURT, ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS WITHIN SAXON COURT, STAFF SAFETY IN INTERVIEW ROOMS AT SAXON COURT; HOUSEKEEPING - SAXON COURT

The Forum noted that Unions had a number of concerns regarding Saxon Court accommodation proposals, environmental conditions and staff safety in interview rooms and housekeeping, and that these had all been raised specifically at Level One meetings, without being resolved to the satisfaction of the Staff Side.

The Staff Side expressed concern that insufficient interview rooms were being provided at Saxon Court and at the number of attacks and aggressive incidents affecting staff. Unions believed that members of staff were increasingly being placed at risk, and claimed that they had been asked not to report such incidents to the Police. Further concern was expressed at the recent withdrawal of the security guard in the reception area at Saxon Court.

The Forum noted that the existing proposals for the re-organisation of Saxon Court included five interview rooms, and that plans were currently being re-drawn to include the provision of eight interview rooms, as a result of the reduction of the overall size of the reception area. It was further noted that only one serious incident in the reception area at Saxon Court had been reported and that this was subject to an investigation. Staff at Saxon Court had been consulted about the withdrawal of the security guard and no response had been received. Management representatives stated that the line managers of reception staff had made no reference to staff concern at the arrangements. Management also stated that it was not aware of any advice to staff stating that attacks or aggressive incidents should not be reported to the police.

Unions restated the view that provision of a security guard in the reception area at Saxon Court would protect staff and that all Saxon court staff should be fully trained in reporting serious incidents. It was noted that there had been consultation over the withdrawal of the security guard and that Unions should write, stating their concerns and proposals if they wished this issue to be reconsidered but should note that there are many Council establishments that currently do not have dedicated security guards.

The Forum noted that staff had raised concerns regarding environmental conditions at Saxon Court, and that Unions were concerned that moving additional staff into the area would exacerbate such problems.

It was reported that a survey had been undertaken by the Health and Safety Manager of temperature, light and humidity and air movement at a number of locations around Saxon Court, on the afternoon of 3 June and that these indicated that conditions were generally satisfactory apart from light levels being low in many areas. The Forum agreed that it would be helpful to have the full figures of such monitoring reports circulated in advance for discussion at the next meeting.

Unions claimed that, in some instances, missing or faulty bulbs had been reported in rooms at Saxon Court and rapid action had not been taken to deal with the problem. They also expressed the view that they had not felt that management had been working with them to address such problems.

Unions gave notice that they intended to call a Level 3 meeting to discuss environmental conditions at Saxon Court with Members.

The Forum noted that the Council meeting held on 2 March had taken the decision to vacate Lloyds court as part of the budget savings package, and that this would necessitate re-locating Lloyds Court staff elsewhere. No final plans had yet been drawn up to re-locate, although the likely time-scale was to vacate Lloyds Court by the end of August 1999.

The Forum noted that one proposal was to re-locate staff from the Treasurer's Department to the Western side of Saxon Court. The canteen would be re-located in the Atrium, with Benefits staff moved to Level Two, immediately behind the 'shop front' reception area. It was also noted that, in addition to moves arising from re-location, other operational moves would be needed.

The Forum noted that meetings had been held between Unions and management, at which Unions had expressed their concerns at the move. It was reported that no formal feedback had been given to Unions after that meeting, and that unions had still not received a copy of the management proposals for the use for the Saxon Court atrium. It was agreed that these would be provided.

The Forum noted that there were significant time pressures which meant that plans for the future use of Saxon Court needed to be developed incrementally. Management expressed the desire to work with unions to take the matter forward and stated that the views of Unions were welcomed and had been taken seriously.

RESOLVED -

1. That copies of all reports into air quality, lighting, air movement and humidity in Saxon Court be circulated to Members of the Forum on a regular basis and placed in the public folders in the Council's internal computer system.
2. That the intention of Unions to call a Level 3 meeting to discuss environmental conditions in Saxon Court with members be noted.
3. That current management proposals for the re-development of Saxon Court be circulated to Unions for consultation.

3.0

CIVIC OFFICES HOUSEKEEPING

The Forum noted that Management had been informed about storage of equipment in the loading bay area on level one at the Civic Offices, and its potential to cause an obstruction. It was agreed that this would be further investigated and dealt with.

4.0 FIRE BRIGADE INSPECTION OF CIVIC OFFICES

The Forum received a report on the Fire Brigade's recent inspection of the Civic Offices. It was noted that, although Unions had formally requested a copy of the report, this had only recently been issued to management, and would be circulated in due course.

Management briefly outlined the main points in the report.

RESOLVED -

That the recommendations included in the Fire Brigade's recent inspection of the Civic Offices be circulated to members of the Forum.

5.0 SAFETY OF STAFF IN PRIVATE PROPERTY, RESIDENTIAL UNITS AND DAY CENTRES

The Forum noted increasing concern at the risk to members of staff visiting private property. It was noted that guidance existed for dealing with the specific problem of dealing with dogs, and other general problems of personal safety for staff, and that it was the responsibility of managers to enforce and promote such procedures.

Unions raised further concerns about the safety of staff in residential units for children, particularly after the closure of Heathercroft Children's Home. In addition, concern was also expressed that, at centres such as the Tower Drive Centre, major incidents had occurred and that there had been insufficient time available for staff to write these up and report them.

The Forum noted that a cross-directorate Policy and Procedures Group had been established in order to look at procedures, including those relating to staff safety. This group would discuss the situations outlined and would need to receive reports of incidents in order to act on all the information available. Unions stated that serious incidents needed to be dealt with seriously and immediately, rather than taking time over the collation of evidence.

6.0 ACCIDENT/INCIDENT REPORT FORMS – PROCEDURE FOR NOTIFYING TRADE UNIONS

The Forum noted that there was no current procedure for informing Unions of accident or incident reports. Although some information was circulated routinely, this was not always the case. Management stated that there was no problem in principle to wider circulation to Union representatives, as long as the anonymity of those reporting incidents was maintained and the Health and Safety Officer agreed to discuss how best to handle this issue.

RESOLVED -

That summary incident reports be circulated to the Trades Union Co-ordinator.

7.0 USE OF MOBILE PHONES

The Forum noted that the Council currently provided no advice on the safety of using mobile phones, and that, to do so, further research would be needed. It was further noted that no official guidance had been issued by the Health and Safety Executive, and that, if such guidance is received it would be circulated.

RESOLVED -

That Directorates would be asked to produce figures on mobile phone use and these brought to the next meeting.

8.0 WORKING TIME

The Unions stated that there was limited understanding of the effect of the European working Time Directive among staff and management.

It was noted that detailed guidance notes had already been circulated to staff and managers.

RESOLVED -

That management would act in response to particular instances.

9.0 ASBESTOS UPDATE

The Forum received the draft policy on Asbestos, which would be submitted to the Policy and Resources Committee for approval. It was noted that in order to respond to an Improvement Notice, the Council needed to demonstrate that it was working actively to identify high risk areas and to consult with establishments about action to be taken.

10.0 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Forum noted that the next meeting would be held on Friday 8 October 1999 at 2.00 pm.

THE MEETING CLOSED AT 10.55 AM