

Minutes of Meeting of University Health and Safety Committee on Tuesday 14 September 2021 at 13:15

Present

Richard Brooks – **Chair** / Director of Human Resources
Chris Young – Deputy Director Safety & Wellbeing Services
Sophie Hamer – Sports Operations Manager
Stephen Godber – Director of Estates Operations
Malcolm Holley – Faculty of Science Management Representative
Andrew Nash – ISO & Compliance Manager, Accommodation & Hospitality
Mike Porter – Head of Security Services
Julian Sulley – Faculty of Engineering & Design Management Representative
Michael Carley – UCU Representative
Simon Hockenhull – UNITE Representative
Steve Nicholson – UNISON Representative
Richard Ball – Education & Research Representative
Sarah Hunter – Technical & Experimental Representative
Andrew Hutchinson – Management, Specialist & Administration Representative

In attendance

Sue Stove Schofield – Secretary

Apologies

James Paradise – UNISON Representative
Elizabeth Stacey – Students' Union Officer (Sports)

Minutes

959 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

960 Membership 2021-2022 and Terms of Reference

The Membership and Terms of Reference (Paper UHSC 21/22 - 01) were noted.

The Chair welcomed the new members of the Committee. It was noted that there was still a vacancy for the Operational & Facilities Support Representative.

Action:

The Chair and Deputy Director Safety & Wellbeing Services will continue to liaise with colleagues to fill the vacancy for an Operational & Facilities Support Representative.

961 Minutes of Previous meeting

The minutes of the Committee meeting held on 24 June 2021 (Paper UHSC 21/22 - 02) were approved as a correct record of the proceedings.

962 Matters arising

Minute 946 – Matters Arising – Policy Reviews

Updates on the Asbestos Management Policy, the Control of Legionella Policy and the Management of Contractors Policy would be covered under Agenda Item 06.

Minute 947 – SHEW Update – Significant Non-RIDDOR Reports

The UNISON Representative had not yet sent the photograph of an incident in the Underdeck involving a delivery driver to the Deputy Director Safety & Wellbeing Services.

The Deputy Director Safety & Wellbeing Services reported that a lorry going through the Underdeck had struck the scaffolding around the one of the lightwells. The Director of Estates Operations added that the height of the Underdeck had been laser measured, but issues arose when lorries were laden down with deliveries, unloaded and then hit the top of the Underdeck or bounced up when going over a speed bump.

The Faculty of Science Management Representative pointed out that the signs indicating the temporary height restriction in the Underdeck needed to be waterproof, so as not to disintegrate when it rained, as had happened today.

Action:

UNISON Representative to send the photograph to the Deputy Director Safety & Wellbeing Services.

Deputy Director Safety & Wellbeing Services to review the issue of lorry traffic in the Underdeck, including the impact of loading and unloading lorries, with the Director of Estates Operations.

Minute 947 – SHEW Update – Occupational Health - Referrals

The Deputy Director Safety & Wellbeing Services confirmed that there were no issues with arranging appointments with Occupational Health.

Action:

UNISON Representative to liaise with the Deputy Director Safety & Wellbeing Services regarding specific issues and contact details regarding referrals to Occupational Health.

Minute 949 – Investigation Report: Release from Argon Gas Cylinder – On Site Emergency Response

The Deputy Director Safety & Wellbeing Services had been in touch with the Organisational Resilience & Business Continuity Manager, who would review and on-site emergency response plans.

He had also liaised with Estates with the Estates staff who attended the incident.

The Faculty of Science Management Representative noted that for this and other incidents it was not always clear who was the lead. In this case the incident had been handed over to AFRS so they took charge of managing the incident. However, he suggested there needed to be greater clarity generally as to who was managing an incident to ensure appropriate responses. The Deputy Director Safety & Wellbeing Services pointed out that Security Services were the University's first responders, so they were the initial point of contact in the event of an incident.

Minute 950 – Rights of TU Appointed Health and Safety Representatives

The Deputy Director Safety & Wellbeing Services had updated the online incident report form so that anyone reporting an incident would need to confirm, at the time of making the report, if they were happy for the report to be shared with TU Health and Safety Representatives. If not the TU Representatives would receive an anonymised report sometime after the initial report had been submitted.

He reiterated that sometimes there was a delay between an incident and SHEW receiving a report, so this would in turn impact on the time it took for reports to be shared with TU Health and Safety Representatives. However, he would endeavour to pass the reports on as soon as possible.

Action:

UNISON Representative to provide the Deputy Director Safety & Wellbeing Services with contact details for TU Health and Safety Representatives to whom incidents reports could be sent.

Minute 951 – Universities Safety and Health Association (USHA) Raising a Concern

The Deputy Director Safety & Wellbeing Services reported that the University now had access to a general 'Whistleblowing Online Form' <https://bath.topdesk.net/solutions/forms-1/form?name=whistleblowing>. The form was hosted outside of the University, but it could be used for reporting health and safety issues anonymously.

Also, the SafeZone App was now live and could be used for reporting concerns.

Minute 952 – Policy Reviews

The Deputy Director Safety & Wellbeing Services had amended the University Health and Safety Policy to reflect the fact the Chief Operating Officer would be taking on the Provost role of what was the role of Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost.

Action:

The Chair of the Committee will take the University Health and Safety Policy to UEB for approval and signing.

Minute 953 – Standardising the Speed Limit on the Roads on Claverton Down Campus

The Director of Estates Operations had been in touch with Marketing about how to advise Google and satellite navigation companies of the change. Marketing would investigate and follow this up as appropriate.

The ISO & Compliance Manager asked what was available in terms of education and enforcement regarding the speed limit. The Head of Security Services pointed out that it was very difficult to enforce the speed limit. Campus was private property and the University set the speed limits, but the roads were covered by the Highways Act. Serious breaches by staff could be referred to Human Resources and could be dealt with under the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

Action:

Head of Security Services to investigate the possibility of reinstating the 'smiley face' speed indicator signs.

Minute 954 – University Arrivals Square Junction

The proposed works to the Arrivals Square had been approved and funding was available. However, it was now too late to complete the work before the start of this academic year. The work would not be started until February / March 2022 at the earliest, and it may not be undertaken until next summer.

Minute 955 – Coronavirus

The Chair had raised the issue of students' behaviour and the impact on Security Services at UEB and with the relevant Pro-Vice-Chancellor. The current requirements regarding student behaviour would be reinforced, but there was unlikely to be a change to the level of penalties and sanctions, unless there was a specific case which warranted it.

The Head of Security Services hoped that this year would be better as there were now fewer (Covid-19) restrictions in place. If there were any issues, he would raise them with the Chair.

It was noted that money from student fines was passed to Student Services and was put into the various funds which were used to support students.

Minute 956 – Employee Elected Staff Representatives

See minute 960 above.

Minute 957 – Any Other Business – First Aid ‘Grab Bags’

The Deputy Director Safety & Wellbeing Services reported that SHEW were in the process of distributing ‘grab bags’.

963 SHEW Update (Including Incidents and Audit Update)

Accidents and Incidents

RIDDOR Reportable Accidents and Incidents

There had been no RIDDOR accidents since the last report.

Significant Non-RIDDOR Accidents

Exposure to hazardous substance resulting in a burn

A student had knocked over flask containing a solution which was spilled and caused a chemical burn to the student. A paramedic attended, but attendance at hospital was not required. The substance was in an unmarked flask, which may have been left by an academic who had left the University. The Head of Department had reminded research teams of labelling requirements for non-commercial vessels.

Cleaner reported a suspected ‘needlestick’ injury

The Deputy Director Safety & Wellbeing Services noted his concern that there had been a number of suspected ‘needlestick’ injuries recently. In this case, Technical Services took control of the incident. They then undertook a thorough investigation. No inappropriately disposed of materials were identified, but some cocktail sticks were found, which may have caused the injury.

Significant Fire Incidents

Laboratory Fire

A postgraduate research student had been upscaling a fiercely exothermic reaction, without implementing sufficient cooling measures. This resulted in a fire in a fume cupboard and the fume cupboard fire suppression system being activated. New procedures on scaling up experiments had now been implemented within the department.

The Faculty of Science Management Representative pointed out that accidents with scale up experiments were relatively common as they were not always reassessed correctly, as was the case with this incident. The Deputy Director Safety & Wellbeing Services suggested the Faculty of Science advertised the need for scale up experiments to be advertised.

Fire Safety

Risk Assessment Programme

The programme was now on schedule. Additional work had been required in the Virgil Building due to its change of use to a student centre.

Fire Drills

Fire drills and fire warden training would commence in the new academic year.

Health and Wellbeing

Occupational Health

Levels of referrals were similar to those before the outbreak of Covid-19. SHEW were continuing to manage referrals for clinically extremely vulnerable staff returning to campus. Those who had previously been through the referral process and wished to do so again could do.

Advice for pregnant people was being reviewed nationally and home working was still recommended at 28 weeks gestation. Where home working was not possible, it may be necessary to suspend workers on medical grounds ahead of maternity leave.

Employee Assistance Programme

Use of the service peaked in June but had since decreased. The Deputy Director Safety & Wellbeing Services continued to be somewhat concerned about the small, but significant number of people requiring more than the standard number of 6 sessions. The reasons for requesting additional sessions tended to be personal rather than work-related and this was a worrying trend. Users of the service would continue to be offered additional support if recommended by the counsellors.

The Head of Security Services asked if EAP provided users with contact details for Security Services, who would respond to staff at their home and liaise with the police if needed. The Chair advised that this may not be appropriate. However, EAP did have contact details for staff in Human Resources. The Head of Security Services suggested that Human Resources staff were made aware of SafeZone and that they could use it if needed.

Action:

The Chair would ensure staff in Human Resources were aware of SafeZone and that they could use it.

The Committee noted the report.

Policy and Standard Review Overview

Legionella Control Policy

No changes were proposed to the policy. It would be reviewed as required and as advised by the Estates Department.

Electrical Safety Policy

No changes were proposed to the policy.

Management of Contractors Policy

No changes were proposed to the policy.

Asbestos Management Policy

No changes were proposed to the policy.

The policy would be reviewed once an in-house Asbestos Manager had been recruited. In the meantime, the University would continue to use its appointed asbestos consultant, who was managed by the Estates Compliance Manager.

Tower Scaffold Safety Standard

No changes were proposed to the policy.

Other Policies

The fire safety policy would be reviewed once details of the Grenfell Tower review and the new Fire Safety Bill were available.

The Committee noted the report.

Working Away from University Premises Policy

Hybrid and home working had now become much more widespread, so the policy had been updated to reflect these new, flexible ways of working and the University's 'Future Ways of Working' programme.

The Director of Policy, Planning & Compliance had been appointed, by the Vice-Chancellor & President, to approve all work-related travel to destinations either on the UK Government's Red List (Covid-19) or where the Foreign and Commonwealth Office

advised against *All But Essential Travel*. In the absence of the Director of Policy, Planning & Compliance, the Director of Human Resources would deputise.

It was still to be decided if 'Red' countries would fall in the same category as *All But Essential Travel*. Work-related travel to 'Amber' and 'Green' destinations would be approved by heads of department and escalated to the Director of Policy, Planning & Compliance as required.

All travel bookings should be made through Clarity, the University's appointed provider. Clarity would underwrite that Covid-secure measures were in place for accommodation.

Action:

Deputy Director Safety & Wellbeing Services to remove the reference to the University Secretary in Appendix 1.

The Committee approved the policy.

Use of Display Screen Equipment Safety Standard

The definition of home working had been updated to include hybrid working. As more staff would routinely be working from home on a more permanent basis, workstation assessments for their home workstation would be required. Home workstations should meet the minimum legal requirements. If this was not possible, consideration may be required as to whether home working was appropriate / should be permitted.

There were some adjustments to home working that the University could reasonably assist with, for example providing desk lamps, but it could not change the overall lighting arrangements at someone's home.

The Faculty of Engineering & Design Management Representative asked for advice on arrangements for returning equipment from home to the University when employees left the University. The Director of Estates Operations pointed out that the lack of space for furniture storage was a major problem and the University may need to rent a warehouse. Estates were working on this. The Chair advised that departments should use their judgment when deciding what to do with equipment which was no longer required at home.

The ISO & Compliance Manager requested clarification regarding the provision of equipment in the office, if staff had already taken their office equipment home and were working from both locations. The Chair advised that if staff were expected to work from 2 locations the University would need to make provision for appropriate equipment in both places. However, it may be that some peoples' needs were so specialised that working from home and hybrid working were not appropriate. The Deputy Director Safety & Wellbeing Services added that the department would be required to provide and pay for any additional equipment and should liaise with the Director of Finance if necessary. Departments should not delay getting required equipment.

The Committee approved the standard.

965 Coronavirus

The Deputy Director Safety & Wellbeing Services reported that SHEW had put together generic risk assessments which reflected current “Step 4” guidance. These have been published online.

SHEW has been reviewing ventilation provision in those naturally ventilated offices which had previously been identified as being potentially problematic. Each space been had been visited and the ventilation and occupancy reviewed based on the area of ventilated space available to calculate the total occupiable space. This was then used to calculate maximum occupancy based on providing 11m³ for each workstation. Mechanisms were in place so that active monitoring could be undertaken (using CO2 monitors) and ventilation improved (or other mitigations implemented) as required.

During the course of this exercise, it had become clear that, in some offices, workspaces were overcrowded so occupancy levels would need to be reduced in line with the Workplace regulations regardless of any ventilation provision. In future, the University would need to consider space management carefully on an ongoing basis.

The UCU Representative asked, given that breaches of space management regulations had only come to light due to Covid-19 reviews, if ventilation and risk assessment information for individual rooms would be made available so that staff could look it up if they wished to do so. The Deputy Director Safety & Wellbeing Services explained that it would be difficult to provide this on a room-by-room basis, but he could explain how room occupancy levels had been arrived at. He had reviewed the figures and SAGE guidance with a member of the University’s academic staff. Very little of the HSE guidance related to quantitative measures, with investigations largely being driven by qualitative perceptions of air quality, such as stuffiness.

The UNISON Representative welcomed the idea of using air quality monitors. Also, he asked if LFT test kits could they be distributed to departments, so that they could hand them out. The Deputy Director Safety & Wellbeing Services explained that LFT kits were available from the STV and this would continue to be the case. The tests were issued from this central point in order to meet government data collection requirements. When data collection was no longer required, it would be possible to have more collection points on campus.

It had not yet been decided if the University would offer flu vaccinations as it had last year. The logistic and financial implications were being investigated.

The NHS Covid-19 vaccination bus would be on campus for the first time tomorrow.

966 Any Other Business

There was none.

Close

The meeting concluded at 14.23.