

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

University Health & Safety Executive Committee

Minutes of the meeting of the University Health and Safety Executive Committee held on
Tuesday 9 November 2010.

Present: Mr J Baldwin (Chair), Mrs S Foy, Ms J Horsburgh, Mrs Y Salter-Wright,
Mr N Sanders, Professor M Shipman, Mr R Wilson

Apologies: Professor R Higgott, Mr G Whitworth

In Attendance: Mrs J Jeary, Dr I MacKirdy

01/10-11 Terms of Reference and Membership

CONSIDERED:

The Terms of Reference and Membership for 2010/11 (paper UHSEC 01/10-11).

REPORTED: (by the Chair)

That Mr N Sanders had been co-opted onto the Committee for 2010/11 noting that the Nominations Committee had approved his re-appointment as a lay member of the Council from August 2011 to July 2014.

RESOLVED

- (a) That Professor M Shipman and Ms J Horsburgh be welcomed to their first meeting.
- (b) That Mr N Sanders be thanked for continuing to be a member of the Committee.
- (c) That the Terms of Reference and Membership for 2010/11 be approved, with the following amendment:
 - (i) That the reference to Safety in the University (SITU) be amended in light of the future removal of SITU.
 - (ii) That Ms K Gray would represent the Deputy Registrar during Mrs Salter-Wright's period of leave.

02/10-11 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2010 be approved.

03/10-11 University Health and Safety Committee

CONSIDERED:

A report from the meeting of the University Health and Safety Committee held on the 28 October 2010 (Paper UHSEC 02/10-11).

(a) Occupational Health Surveillance Questionnaires

REPORTED: (by Dr I MacKirdy)

- (i) That the University Health and Safety Committee (UHSC) had approved the Health Surveillance questionnaires modified to take into account comments by Trade Union representatives.

(by Ms J Horsburgh)

- (ii) That the Equality Act 2010 prevented detailed questions relating to an individual's health being asked at the point of application.

(b) Health and Safety Arrangements in the School of Life Sciences, the Department of Biological Sciences and Warwick HRI.

REPORTED: (by Dr I MacKirdy)

- (i) That staff within these Departments had continued to manage health and safety procedures through the transitional period associated with the establishment of the School of Life Sciences and that there was continuity of management accountability for health and safety.

(by the Chair)

- (ii) That Trade Union representatives had accepted the update on the arrangements for health and safety in these Departments.

(c) Health and Safety Strategy and Direction

REPORTED: (by Dr I MacKirdy)

- (i) That the focus for 2010/11 was:
 - (A) Improvement of risk control strategies for the most significant risks;
 - (B) Provision of further guidance including critical risk assessment methodologies for noise, vibration, and substances hazardous to health;
 - (C) Helping key Departments establish improvement plans;
 - (D) Helping specific Departments such as the new Department of Life Sciences establish appropriate frameworks that will deliver the desired culture as set out in the Policy Statement; and
 - (E) Development of case studies to promote good practice.

(by the Chair)

- (ii) That UHSC had engaged in a good discussion about the Health and Safety Strategy and Direction and that sensible ideas had been suggested to tackle simple day to day actions.
- (iii) That the Health and Safety Department would need to work closely with the Area Health and Safety committees to ensure such issues were addressed.
- (iv) That good progress had been made towards the Health and Safety Strategy but that further work was required.

(by Mr N Sanders)

- (v) That the statistics outlined in the Health and Safety Performance report were encouraging and demonstrated that significant progress had been made.
- (vi) That the new culture needed further embedding at all levels across the University and that it was vital that front line staff received adequate training.

(by Mr R Wilson)

- (vii) That the Estates Office would implement Health and Safety briefings as part of their Core Brief process.

(by the Director of Human Resources)

- (viii) That signage in departments needed to be in prominent places to ensure it was accessible to people.

(by Ms S Foy)

- (ix) That it was her view that staff were uncertain about who their representatives on Area Health and Safety Committees were and how these Committees conducted their business.

(by Professor M Shipman)

- (x) That some Area Health and Safety Committees such as that within the Department of Chemistry published their membership and minutes.
- (xi) That the new Health and Safety website should allow the communication of best practice across departments.

04/10-11 Health, Safety and Well-being Website

CONSIDERED:

A report from C Beament, Health and Safety Advisor, on the new Health, Safety and Well-being website and a presentation of the new website by the Director of Health and Safety.

REPORTED: (by Dr I MacKirdy)

- (a) That the University Health and Safety Committee had endorsed the new website and had highlighted areas for improvement.
- (b) That further topic guidance was being developed for inclusion on the website.

(by Nick Sanders)

- (c) That the website was clear, attractive and well designed but further thought should be given to accessibility.

(by Professor M Shipman)

- (d) That a clear link from the University's homepage to the Health, Safety and Well-being website would raise its profile.

(by Mrs Y Salter Wright)

- (e) That it should be ensured that the University website's search engine readily linked to the new Health and Safety website.

(by the Chair)

- (f) That good progress had been made but that, while the Council had agreed in principle the withdrawal of Safety In The University (SITU), it was necessary to demonstrate that all relevant elements of SITU had been addressed in the Health, Safety and Well-being website before SITU could be withdrawn.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Health, Safety and Well-being website should be publicly accessible with access limited to specific pages only by exception.
- (b) That the home page of the Health, Safety and Well-being website should include a statement that health and safety was the responsibility of every individual.
- (c) That the Risk Management pages should be moved to its own title page, rather than being displayed in the Topic Guidance section.
- (d) That the Health, Safety and Well-being webpage should be easily accessible from the University home page.
- (e) That the Incident Report Form link should allow the form to be printed.
- (f) That the Director of Health and Safety establish a process to demonstrate the extent to which the requirements of Safety In The University had been transferred into the new website or had been withdrawn as out of date.

05/10-11 Asbestos Management Policy

CONSIDERED:

The proposed Asbestos Management Policy, as recommended for adoption by the University Health and Safety Committee (UHSC 03/10-11 Revised, Appendix 1).

REPORTED: (by Dr I MacKirdy)

- (a) That an Interim Asbestos Management Policy had been implemented during the course of the summer as part of the University's review of significant hazards.

(by Mr R Wilson)

- (b) That the Estates Office was currently recruiting an Asbestos Manager.
- (c) That the procedure for maintaining the Asset Register for equipment would need to be reviewed in light of the proposed Asbestos Management Policy.

(by Professor M Shipman)

- (d) That the webpage on Asbestos Management on the new website contained all the relevant information including the Policy, the arrangements and responsibilities and exclusions to the Policy.

RECOMMENDED: (to the Senate and the Council)

That the proposed Asbestos Management Policy, as set out in UHSC.03/10-11 Revised (Appendix 1) be approved and adopted.

06/10-11 Health and Safety Performance Update

CONSIDERED:

A report on Health and Safety performance since the last meeting (UHSC 04/10-11), with an accompanying oral report from the Director of Health and Safety.

(a) Enforcement Agencies

REPORTED: (by Dr I MacKirdy)

- (i) That the University had been prosecuted by the HSE for an accident that occurred on the Kirton Campus.
- (ii) That the University had been served with a Prohibition Notice regarding the refurbishment of International House on the basis that the asbestos survey was insufficient, noting that the Prohibition Notice had been addressed.
- (iii) That the HSE had written to the Department of Biological Sciences regarding the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations and the Genetically Modified Organisms (Contained Use) Regulations and requested a response to a number of queries to which the Department was responding with the assistance of the Health and Safety Department.

(by N Sanders)

- (iv) That the downward trend in RIDDORS since January 2010 was positive and that the incidents that had occurred were of a minor rather than serious nature, noting that work should continue to ensure that staff received appropriate training to mitigate further incidents.

(by the Chair)

- (v) That the Students' Union should review their incident reporting given that there had been no reportable incidents in the previous year, and

that further work should be undertaken by the Students' Union in relation to the number of fire incidents during summer 2010.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That in light of the Kirton incident further analysis should be undertaken by the Health and Safety Department of the health and safety issues in remote University facilities including Venice.
- (ii) That the Health & Safety Department would establish mechanisms to communicate information regarding enforcement agency action, noting that changes in methodology should be disseminated to other relevant departments in order to share best practice.

(b) Avon Building, Westwood Campus

REPORTED: (by Dr I MacKirdy)

- (i) That the investigation into staff concerns regarding asbestos in the Avon Building concluded that there was no evidence, nor any report, of disturbance of asbestos-containing materials.
- (ii) That there was no evidence that asbestos control limits had been exceeded; nor that any person had been exposed to airborne asbestos fibres at levels that would affect their health.
- (iii) That action had been taken immediately to investigate the concerns of staff, and that communication had taken place with staff and with Trade Union representatives.

(by Ms S Foy)

- (iv) That it was her view that communication with staff had not been handled well when the issue first became apparent and that this caused staff to have little confidence that the situation was being appropriately addressed.
- (v) That she felt that direct liaison with the Trades' Union representatives at the earliest possibility should be undertaken in future.

(by the Chair)

- (vi) That when the University became aware of the incident, actions were undertaken and communication took place, however it was accepted that it could have been handled better and that the University would learn from this incident to ensure that it handled any future incidents in an appropriate manner, whilst working in partnership with the Trade Unions.

07/10-11 'Stress' Sickness Absence

CONSIDERED:

A paper from the Director of Health and Safety on statistics available on the sickness absence 'Stress' category (Paper UHSEC 03/10-11 refers).

REPORTED: (by Dr I MacKirdy)

- (a) That the 'Stress' sickness absence category was used for any mental health issue including depression, anxiety, stress (whether personal or work-related) and bereavement.
- (b) That as of 1st August 2010 the University was recording instances of sick leave deemed by the individual as 'work-related'.

(by Ms J Horsburgh)

- (c) That the accurate reporting of sickness in the University was challenging, but that the procedure was improving and sickness figures were therefore likely to increase.
- (d) That work related stress typically affected a small number of people but that such individuals would often have a high number of absence days.

RESOLVED:

That the University should seek to benchmark its sickness levels relating to stress with external organisations, noting that the staff survey may demonstrate some comparisons.

08/10-11 Fire Safety

RECEIVED:

An oral report from the Dr I MacKirdy on progress on fire safety.

REPORTED: (by Dr I MacKirdy)

- (a) That over £1 million had been spent on upgrading residences, including the installation of fire detectors and fire doors to all bedrooms.
- (b) That during 2011 the Commercial Group and the Estates Department would upgrade catering kitchens with emergency gas and electric shut-off switches on final exits and automatic fire suppression systems above deep fat fryers.

- (c) That the interim Fire Safety Policy and arrangements had been placed on the University website.
- (d) That emergency fire fighting training had been delivered to laboratory personnel in the Department of Chemistry and to staff in catering kitchens and that this would be rolled out to other laboratory and workshop personnel.
- (e) That current practice relating to Fire Wardens would continue on the main campus and that training was being arranged.
- (f) That recruitment of the Fire Safety Advisor was underway and fire safety strategies and risk assessments by building would be rolled out following the appointment of the Fire Safety Advisor.

09/10-11 Lord Young Report

RECEIVED:

An oral report from the Director of Health and Safety on the report that had been placed on the University's Health, Safety and Well-being website titled 'Common Sense Common Safety' by Lord Young of Graffham to the Prime Minister following a Whitehall-wide review of the operation of health and safety laws and the growth of the compensation culture.

REPORTED: (by Dr I MacKirdy)

- (a) That the University's approach to Health and Safety mirrored the approach of this report in that the University's focus was on high risk areas where it applied the full impact of health and safety legislation, but was more pragmatic in the low risk areas.
- (b) That UHSEC would receive an update following publication of the Government's response.

10/10-11 Dates of Future Meetings

REPORTED:

That future meetings of the Committee will be held on:

7 March 2011 at 14:00 in CMR 1.2, University House

16 June 2011 at 11:00 in CMR 1.1, University House