

CONFIRMED MINUTES

HEALTH, SAFETY, WELFARE AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

NON-CONFIDENTIAL minutes of the meeting of the Health, Safety, Welfare & Environment Committee held on 5th October 2021 at 1000 hrs via google Meet.

Present:

Brendan Casey (BC), Registrar and Chief Operating Officer (Chair)
Ruth Davies (RD), Director, HR
Alison Blair (AB), Head of Operations, HLS
Andy King (AK), Placements and Partnerships Manager, TDE, standing in for Simon Hogg (SH), (Unison)
Ashley Rowles (AR), Technical Manager, TDE
Brian Rivers (BR), Facilities and Services Manager, HSS
Christie Rainbird (CR), Senior Occupational Health Adviser, HR
Diane Harrison (DH), Student Services Operation Manager, ASA
Emma Coles (EC), Head of Operations, OBBS
Gareth Preston, Research Fellow and Demonstrator, HSS
Heather Pughsley (HP), Facilities and Services Officer, HLS
Jonathan Grainger, Head of Statutory Safety Compliance, VCG
Jo Akers (JA), Customer Services Team Leader, LR
Michele Morley (MM), Environmental Sustainability Manager, ECS
Nikki Smith (NS), Head of Operations, SU
Tanja Dawber, Head Of Administration, ITS
Sharon Willett (SW), (Secretary), Safety Officer, HR
Tim McGill (TMc), University Safety Manager, HR
Tina Managhan (TM), Senior Lecturer, OBBS, standing in for John Lo Breglio (UCU)
Zoe Randall (ZR), Safety Officer, HR

In attendance:

Laura Fortuna, PA to Director of Human Resources (Minutes)
Maggie Maguire, Health and Safety Assistant, HR

Apologies:

Elizabeth Mitchell (EM), Technical Services Manager, HLS
H Bahl (HB), Deputy Director Commercial and Campus Services, ECS
John Lo Breglio, Senior Lecturer, HSS (UCU)
Loredana Faraon (LF), Head of Operations, MarCom
Mark Tugwell (MT), Deputy Director of Estates, ECS
Simon Hogg (SH), IT Services Transition & Benefits Manager, (Unison)

1 Welcome and apologies

1.1 Apologies are as listed above.

2 Minutes of the meeting held on 3rd June 2021

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 3rd June 2021 were accepted as an accurate record.

3 Matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting

3.1 Minute 33.4: SW provided feedback to Residences regarding the fire drill reports. This should help to keep the language, and content of the reports consistent. This action has now been completed.

3.2 Minute 35.5: All Faculties and Directorates were asked to let the Health and Safety Team have copies of any local formats used for conducting safety inspections.

Some inspection documents have been shared, but the H&S team are happy to receive more.

4. Faculty and Directorate verbal updates, on health and safety issues and successes.

4.1 ZR informed the committee that the BES contract has been moved from ECS to the H&S team. If anyone has any issues please do contact the H&S team inbox.

4.2 NS informed the committee that the Student Union (SU) is undertaking a piece of work on reviewing the health and safety governance with the help from the H&S team. The goal is to set up a formal health and safety committee that reports to the board of trustees.

The SU ran a number of events in September with around 15,000 attendees. There were no significant health and safety or Covid issues. Also the SU now has a second member of staff who had undertaken IOSH training.

4.3 JLB thanked everyone for their support and actions regarding the pandemic. RD's email clarifying the mask wearing policy was very helpful. Students have been very receptive. Everyone appreciated the quick response.

5. To receive a Covid-19 update (including ventilation update)

5.1 The levels of infection across both universities in Oxford, was reported to be quite low, below 10 in both institutions; some of our colleague institutions and the Northeast were seeing much higher numbers. There was, however, an increase of about 27% in infection rates across Oxford over the past week. Primarily in the city and in the Vale of White Horse, and largely within the 11 to 15 age group. The walk-in test center continued to operate at Brookes. We are surveying our Brookes students, asking them to declare whether or not they have been vaccinated. The indications from across the sector would seem to suggest that a very high proportion of university students have had the vaccination. We will continue to monitor both the infections across the city and the relevant local authorities such as the Vale of White Horse.

GM continues to attend the group meeting to monitor and review the local situation. They consist of the NHS, the police, the two universities, the health authorities and various other bodies.

BC reported that he walked through the campus most days to check on compliance, and observed that it appeared to be good. Campus monitors asked students not wearing a mask to comply and in most instances students just put them on.

5.2 JG provided an update on the ventilation system.

TMG, ZR and SW used the British Occupational, Hygiene Society model for ventilation assessments for the pooled teaching rooms. Each room is given a rating which can be red (high risk), amber (medium risk) or green (low risk). The bulk of our rooms have come out in amber. The number of red rooms was about 14. TMG and the team have looked at different ways to improve the ventilation rating for these rooms.

The second stage is to assess the faculties' teaching rooms, the H&S team is currently identifying and measuring the rooms. Once assessed relevant job tickets and action will be taken to improve the ventilation where necessary.

Finally CO2 monitors will be purchased and installed in pooled teaching rooms. The group was reminded that measuring CO2 levels does not measure the amount of Covid present, it shows the efficiency of the ventilation system. Poor ventilation can allow Covid to build up. JG said it would take approximately one month for everything to be finalised and fully set up.

5.3 BC enquired about basement rooms. ZR informed the group that we are currently working with TDE in the Richard Hamilton building because the ventilation system is quite old and the rooms small. ZR is working with TDE to implement effective mitigations. Adrian Pawley (TDE) has been monitoring the CO2 levels hourly, and we expect to have a clearer picture of the ventilation in Richard Hamilton basement soon.

5.4 JLB raised a number of concerns about ventilation and OBU actions designed to control the spread of Covid. JLB reported that in week zero union reps were flooded with emails reporting concerns about the ventilation. In particular:

- Union reps were told that the risk assessments were all in the appropriate electronic folder. But in fact, they were pointed to two documents: one was the 'Ventilation C19 strategy' (which is a strategy that gives an overview of the different ventilation systems) and the second document was a 'Pooled and teaching room risk assessments'. The links have since been updated and point to the correct folder.
- JLB was contacted by one faculty in particular, which was very upset about having to teach classes of more than 50 students. Feedback was given to the faculty concerned about teaching classes of more than 50 students. That the absolute number of people in the room is not relevant. For example if there are 75 students in a room that has a maximum capacity of 200, with a working ventilation system and openable windows then ventilation would be more than sufficient. JG suggested that where lecturers etc are concerned we should take room measurements (height, width and depth), note the ventilation system, and note the number of windows so an assessment can be made.
- JLB took the measurements of the room he is using this semester and applied the BOHS tool, it came up with a three, which is amber. Then questioned if there had been a decision to teach in amber rooms? The amber rooms are in use. There are mitigating controls in place that reduce the spread of Covid such as wearing face coverings and opening windows and doors etc which reduce the likelihood of the Covid infection spreading from person to person. In addition the installation of the CO2 monitors to measure the actual CO2 levels will allow us to take action if ventilation levels are too low. The H&S Team will record the readings and share that information with the Unions. **Action: H&S Team**
- Have the 14 red rooms been taken out of the teaching pool or are people still teaching in those? Rooms rated as red normally means that either we think the ventilation is not working or there are no windows. If the room has been rated as red, the H&S Team will investigate and identify remedial action such as recommending installation of additional ventilation to bring it up to amber before the room is approved for use. There are no red rooms in use.
- JLB was not satisfied with the explanation and raised a concern with the accuracy of the tool and the efficacy of the university's ventilation systems. The tool was

developed by the The British Occupational Hygiene Society, (a scientific charity and the Chartered Society for Worker Health Protection) and the Health and Safety Executive. The tool provides a way to understand our environment. ECS checked the ventilation systems to ensure they are working appropriately. Unions would like to see the data regarding green, amber and red rooms. **Action: H&S Team**

- The Union asked if CO2 monitors would be fitted in every room? The monitors would not be appropriate for all rooms, however, the plan is to fit each faculty teaching room with a monitor.

Union reps are extremely concerned about how slowly this was being rolled out and questioned why this wasn't done over the summer. It was explained that the University must abide by purchasing rules for large purchases and the devices had to be sourced, delivered, and the resources freed up to install the devices in all the pooled teaching rooms, and staff recruited to collect the data.

6. Trade Union Updates

6.1 Nothing to report for now.

7. To receive the annual Health and Safety report 2020/21

This report cannot be compared to previous years due to the pandemic and absence statistics have been affected by the fact that significant numbers of staff have been working from home.

It was noted that H&S are in the process of restructuring into a business partner model. The team have or are setting up meetings with representatives from the directorates and faculties, and are starting to work more collaboratively with them. The team has worked with ECS on the two new software applications, one to help manage building projects and the other to help manage contractors on site. H&S has taken on the management of the statutory inspections, currently done by a company called BES. This should help to ensure OBU has an asset register of all equipment.

The H&S team have been supporting a number of building projects: the refurbishment of Paul Kent Hall and the removal of asbestos from the Helena Kennedy building site, and the refurbishment of the International Building (which is ongoing) in addition to many more smaller projects.

A significant amount of time and effort has gone into Covid Risk Assessments - H&S have estimated that they've reviewed somewhere near 2000 Covid risk assessments.

The Moodle platform was used to move training from face to face to online. However, Moodle doesn't allow analysis of who has been on the course during a particular period. So statistics on training are not readily available. Colleagues in OCLSD are implementing a new software package called 'Think Learning' which is going to help with the management of training regardless of whether face to face or online. ZR informed the group that between the first of September 2020 and the 31st of August there were 238 new starters that were enrolled on the induction and the DSE. Before the start of the pandemic ZR was monitoring attendance, unfortunately due to Covid workload this has fallen behind.

There's a large list of priorities for the coming academic year and with JG the team are working through these to prioritise and start to implement them.

Slip, trips and falls are the most common types of accidents. There was one HSE report this year: a lost time from work accident resulting in more than seven days absence. There was one visit from the fire service, they visited following a kitchen fire at Clive Booth Hall. They made a few minor suggestions about policies and procedures which will be implemented.

8. To receive the annual Occupational health report 2020/21

8.1 The report follows the same format as last year and has been separated into two parts, work related to Covid, and actions and interventions based on the risks that we identified at the start of the year.

A staff health screening process was put in place earlier on in the pandemic, which identified any staff with more significant vulnerabilities. When the third lockdown commenced this was taken as an opportunity to look at key workers on site and make contact with them to find out if health issues have changed for them. During this time OH also developed and reviewed the vaccination policy and the face coverings policy. OH worked with colleagues in ECS where some specific workplace risks were identified. The higher risk was for staff in the residences, particularly with the potential for unreliable student behavior e.g. failing to report a positive case. OH completed some work on bubbles, devised training and revised the PPE requirements. At the end of the lockdown in March the focus was on thinking about the workplace risk and the local viral prevalence. At the moment in terms of getting people back into the workplace one of the key issue is levels of anxiety about returning after a significant period of working from home. About 10% of colleagues have expressed such concerns and OH are working with these people to build confidence in the mitigations and aid their return to the workplace.

The second part of the report is the “business as usual part” and that's around sickness and absence levels. The sickness absence levels have fallen from previous years but are in line with the ONS data for the current year at 1.8%. The report shows data for each faculty and directorate in term sof absences but also the number of OH referrals. CR thanked the team of counsellors who have worked really well despite having to work with much more complex cases in the recent period. The social isolation of shielding, the loss of family and friends have all had a significant impact as indeed has the increased workload that many staff have had to respond to.

9. To receive an update on the ISO 14001 Annual Audit

The University received our external report two weeks ago and it is still to go through verification hence it will be shared fully with the group in a couple of weeks' time. It was a good result which is great news. We have received no non-conformances for the third year in a row, which is really positive. We had five areas of best practice around F gas policy and procedures which will be signed off by the end of this month; active progression of the carbonization project; the new toolkit which TMG alluded to as well as helping with the sustainable design criteria into application.

We have a new approach to reusing unwanted furniture and the last area was around our clinical waste procedures at Marston Road. The auditor was really pleased that we had managed all the way through the pandemic to carry on with our internal auditing procedure as we did that online. MM would like to thank the members of the group that went through this process and for support in achieving such a positive outcome.

10. Any other business

JLB enquired about masks policy during Open Days. BC confirmed that the guests are expected to follow university procedures.

EC would like to personally thank the H&S team and the OH team. Thanks to everyone that has helped over the summer to prepare for a safe return to campus.

11. Date of the next meetings:

TBC

END OF UNCONFIRMED MINUTES