**Notes of Health and Safety Group Meeting** 

**Tuesday 22nd October 2024**

**Present:** Steven Westcough (SW), Head of Health, Safety and Wellbeing, HR (Chair)

Robert Dove (RD), Unison Representative

 Debbie Palmer (DP), Occupational Health Adviser, HR

 Thomas Walker (TW), Estates Compliance Officer

 Nicola Souter (NS), Assistant Administrator, HR (Secretary)

**1 Apologies/Welcome**

1.1 The Chair welcomed Thomas Walker to the group and confirmed apologies from Lynn Smith and Ian Sturrock.

**2 Terms of Reference and Membership**

2.1 SW confirmed that the Terms of Reference and Membership had been recirculated based on the new structure.

2.2 The Health & Safety Group (Trade Unions) would continue to meet at six monthly intervals and would feed into the Health& Safety Operational group.

2.3 The Health & Safety Group now had reduced membership to increase the focus on Health & Safety matters.

**3 Health and Safety Reporting Structure**

3.1 SW shared the new reporting structure with the group and gave a verbal update.

**4 Minutes of previous Meeting circulated for 16 April 2024**

 4.1 It was noted that the previously circulated meeting minutes were accepted as an accurate reflection of the meeting by the group.

4.2 Action: AM to install a no smoking bin container at entrance to Constantine. **Action completed.**

4.3 Action: SW to keep the smoking issue under review. **Action completed.**

 4.4 Action: SW to contact the International Centre to put a request in to their students to make them aware of the no smoking policy. **Action completed.**

4.5 Action - SW to review the agenda for the next meeting to decide if the meeting duration needed to be extended. **Not necessary on this occasion. Action completed.**

**5 Safety Report (SW)**

5.1 It was noted that the Safety Report had been circulated.

5.2 SW explained that the new Smoking and Vaping Policy was awaiting approval by UET. The current policy would still be in use.

5.3 The Pat Testing Policing would be due for a review in 2025 and SW would be discussing possible amendments with ITDS.

5.4 Work to develop documentation regarding E-Bikes and E-Scooters had been ongoing. The University insurers had identified an issue at the bike store at Net Zero with the associated risk of lithium batteries. Users had been contacted to request removal of the E-Bikes and E-Scooters. The University had until December to confirm their response to UMAL.

5.5 SW explained that 17 fire alarm activations had been reported.

5.6 There had been an increase in the number of false alarms in student accommodation during the reporting period but this was not unusual at this time of the year. Contractors working over the summer had also contributed to this.

5.7 Cleveland Fire Brigade had undertaken an inspection of Themis and BIOS with no issues identified. An inspection of Themis West had been scheduled on 23 October 2024.

5.8 Damage had occurred to doors and windows after the civil unrest. SW confirmed that the majority of repairs had been completed and this had been a good team effort.

5.9 The Digital Life Building was on schedule to open during spring 2025.

5.10 Themis, the Students Union, Cook Building, Victoria Building and Orion Building had received lift and switchboard replacements.

5.11 A gas leak had been identified in the Student Life Building and the Orion Building. Both buildings were closed immediately. Northern Gas Networks had undertaken inspections and had identified a couple of gas leaks. Both buildings were now open and operational.

5.12 Inspections continued in the Health & Safety department and remained on schedule.

**6 Occupational Health Report (DP)**

6.1 SW introduced Debbie Palmer, the new Occupational Health Adviser who would be working on a temporary contract until a permanent role had been secured.

6.2 DP had reviewed the Occupational Health statistics from 10 September. 27 employees had been referred, 11 of which were health related and 16 were sickness absence referrals. 9 referrals had been short term and 11 had been long term referrals. 10 referrals were related to mental health concerns, 3 of which were work related stress and anxiety. Mental health continued to be the biggest trigger of sickness absence which was not untypical.

**7 Accident Statistics Report (SW)**

7.1 SW confirmed there had been no accidents during August. One near miss had been reported when a toilet door had fallen off its hinges. There had been no injury caused and all doors had been checked and refitted.

7.2 4 minor staff and 3 minor student accidents had been reported in September and had been summarised in the report.

7.3 There had been some student needle stick injuries in the School of Health & Life Sciences. SW explained that this had not been unusual when new students start practising and all injuries had involved clean needles. The Health & Safety department had issued training and instruction.

7.4 A student had fallen over near the Student Life Building. The area had been inspected with no defects identified.

7.5 A student had fallen on stairs in student accommodation. The stairs had been inspected with no defects identified.

7.6 A near miss had occurred when a staff member had been struck around the head. SW confirmed that the staff member responsible no longer worked at the University.

7.7 A cleaner had reported a trip hazard on laminate flooring and this had been repaired.

7.8 A near miss had occurred when a tenant had left a cup in a microwave.

7.9 A near miss had occurred when a chair collapsed.

**8 Health & Safety Training**

8.1 SW confirmed that an update had been included in the information pack.

8.2 Hundreds of staff had completed their Health & Safety training and there had been some positive training figures.

**9 Health and Safety Audits (SW)**

9.1 SW explained that the HASMAP audit conducted for TU London had revealed 20 standards that had not been met out of 49. This had resulted in recommendations for actions and would be completed by the end of November.

9.2 The SHLS audit had focussed on BIOS. Only 3 standards had not been met. All actions had been dealt with.

9.3 The fire safety audit had revealed mostly compliant areas with a small number of low risks or advisory’s. 5 actions had remained outstanding but these had been within the agreed parameters.

9.4 SW explained that a Property Risk Management and a Health and Safety Risk Management report had been produced by UMAL after the bi-annual audit.

9.5 Full compliance had been reported in the Property Risk Management report.

9.6 The Health & Safety Risk Management report had achieved full compliance against all of the 10 indicators assessed and had received the maximum score which had placed the University in the top 5 Universities in the country.

**10 Smoking & Vaping Campaign/Policy**

10.1 SW explained that the campaign had coincided with the Stoptober campaign.

10.2 As part of the campaign, SW had produced a blog that had been made available to students and staff. An article for the digital update had also been displayed on the screens around campus. SW had ensured that Schools and Departments had been promoting the materials.

 10.3 SW confirmed that problem areas had been identified around Themis in particular. The signage had been reviewed and was adequate but an addition of vaping could be an area for improvement.

 10.4 RD expressed concern that these campaigns were not working after being alerted to more complaints. SW requested RD to advise him of these complaints.

 10.5 SW had requested that colleagues in Security try to move people away from entrances and exits to buildings and explained that he and LS also actioned this daily.

10.6 RD explained that a member of staff who had raised the complaint had felt intimidated approaching a group of 21 people and it would not be fair to ask staff to do this.

10.7 TW suggested approaching the media team to make a short video on smoking and vaping which could be televised in Campus Heart.

 **Action - SW to contact Lois Speakman to reiterate the concerns of the Trade Union Representatives and ask that security actively move smokers from entrances and exits**.

 **Action – SW, LS and TW to arrange a sub-group meeting before the end of the year.**

**11 Smoking & Vaping Policy**

11.1 SW confirmed that the policy, which was still to be approved by UET would be sent out via Meta Compliance and circulated in the University Update.

**12 AOB**

12.1 SW explained that IS was not in attendance at the meeting but had expressed concerns around staffing arrangements in SACI. IS could report on this at the next meeting.

**13 Date and Time of Next Meeting**

13.1 It was noted that the next Health & Safety Group Meeting would be held on Wednesday 23 April 2025 at 10am via Teams.