

21 January 2020, 1400 in the Cairo Meeting Room, Greenwich House.

Present: Dr M Vinnell (Acting Chair), Mr J Hulme (Secretary), Mrs A Eccles, Mr M Elsdon,
Dr J Skidmore, Dr K Tibbles, and Dr A Wheatley.

In attendance: Miss L Durrant.

Apologies Received from: Ms S Alai, Dr M Glendenning, Dr G Martell, Dr L Torrente, and
Dr R Turner.

1. Minutes of the Sub-committee meeting held 22 October 2019.

The minutes were agreed.

2. Matters arising from the minutes

There were no matters arising.

3. Chairman's Items

John Hulme had kindly agreed to remain in post during this transitional stage and the post of Chemical Safety Adviser will be advertised soon. Margaret Glendenning has been working in Estate Management and as a Chemical Adviser in Physics.

4. Asbestos and Mercury containing Equipment

The Secretary will report any matters relating to asbestos and mercury containing equipment under 'Any other Business' in future so this Item will be removed from the agenda. The Sub-committee for Estate Safety deals with building compliance issues.

ACTION: 'Asbestos and Mercury containing Equipment' will be removed from the agenda.

5. Building Projects / Design Guide

Andrea Eccles reported that Cavendish III is the largest building project at present. Capital for new University buildings is on hold and refurbishment projects will be carried out to make better use of existing buildings. Focus will be on ensuring that current buildings are right rather than building new ones.

It was noted that the list of projects did not match those on the projects engaged list. It is not certain whether this is associated with the Clinical School but the technical officer is Carol McDonald (Faculty of Clinical Medicine). Andrea Eccles will get clarification about why the Safety Office have not been involved in this project.

ACTION: Andrea Eccles will get clarification about why the Safety Office are not involved in the project.

It was decided that this agenda Item will be renamed as 'Building Compliance'.

ACTION: This agenda Item will now be called 'Building Compliance'.

6. Cryogen derived house gases

There had been a number of leaks from plastic pipes carrying cryogen derived gases, giving rise to serious health and safety concerns. Funding has now been identified to replace the plastic pipework with appropriate metal pipework. Work is due to take place between March to June 2020. It was agreed that the positioning of pipes is also important so they are visible and accessible for inspection.

The committee is concerned that when long-standing members of staff leave a department their knowledge tends to go with them.

It was agreed that 'Cryogen derived house gases' be removed from the agenda. Building issues related to chemicals should be reported to the Committee and can be covered under 'Building Compliance' in future.

ACTION: 'Cryogen derived house gases' will be removed from the agenda as this subject can be covered under 'Building Compliance' (formerly 'Building projects/Design guide') if necessary.

7. Hazardous Waste

The Secretary reported that adding items to the chemical inventory had led to increased costs against the centrally funded budget in 2018/19. The secretary proposes to renew the contract with BIFFA in March 2020.

The Secretary reported that the Environment Office are keen to introduce a recycling scheme for Kimberly Clark 'Kimtech' purple disposable gloves. The Committee expressed concern that contaminated gloves could be accidentally recycled. The current practice of using the University chemical waste disposal route for contaminated gloves is safe. The Secretary estimated that 650 kilos of gloves are disposed of each financial year and will check the cost of disposal (post meeting note: the disposal cost for gloves is £75 per 205 litre drum). The Environment Office has asked to speak to the Secretary and Androulla Gilliland (Safety Office) regarding this proposal so they can write a policy.

ACTION: The Secretary to report back on progress of this scheme.

8. Environmental Monitoring

The New Museums Site building project has come to a halt so daily monitoring has not been necessary recently.

9. Occupational Health Report

There was nothing to report.

10. Chemical Safety Fire related issues

This was covered under Item 11.

11. Accidents and Incidents

The Committee received a report of accidents and incidents that had occurred since the last meeting.

The Secretary mentioned that incident number 2019482 related to a visitor who had showed a lack of understanding about what they had been working with. The incident led to a fire in a fume cupboard.

Some risk assessments are written on a case-by-case basis (eg chemical-related), whereas others tend to relate to processes (eg biological). Some of the accidents and incidents reported indicate a failure to re-evaluate risk assessments when there is a change in work. Those writing a risk assessment need to understand the work and the person signing it off must read it.

It was recommended that details about processes indicating poor practice leading to mistakes are brought to the attention of Departmental Safety Officers (DSO) so they are aware of the risks and can share the information with supervisors, etc to support training. Providing further training for risk assessment would be beneficial as although these are reviewed after an accident/incident action is needed earlier. It was proposed that when an accident/incident occurs and an issue identified with the risk assessment that the person(s) responsible for preparing and signing-off risk assessments have to complete suitable online training. The need to review risk assessment could be covered at the Annual DSO Event too.

ACTION: The Secretary will look at online training to include risk assessments and good examples of chemical safety and COSHH.

Reviewing risk assessment could be included at the Annual DSO Event.

The beta test version of the electronic accident and incident reporting system is now live. The system will allow better analysis of data to identify any specific issues.

It was noted that a series of incidents had occurred in relation ancillary equipment in 3 glove boxes. This Department had paid for an external occupational hygienist to look into the potential for exposure to building users as a result of these failures. One incident had been the result of Local Exhaust Ventilation (LEV) failure, the second due to a flow gauge failure and the third was a consequence of unpredictable equipment failure. The Department had repaired the extract system and replaced the flow gauge. They are also introducing additional procedures, including annual LEV testing for this system. The Secretary will speak about LEV at this year's Annual DSO Event.

ACTION: The Secretary volunteered to speak about LEV at the Annual DSO Event.

I was noted that some accidents are occurring when people are clearing up 'after' their work has been completed, rather than when carrying out the procedures, as such it may not have been covered by the risk assessment for the procedure.

It was suggested that departments be asked what LEV systems they have and, if so, whether they are tested every 14 months. These questions are raised during an audit but the audit programme will take approximately 5 years to complete.

ACTION: The Secretary will send out a questionnaire about LEV systems and testing to all DSOs.

12. Any other Business

The latest version of EH40 – Workplace Exposure Limits for Chemicals was published on the 17th January 2020 and contains some additions/changes to the previous version.

Post-meeting note: The Secretary will notified relevant DSOs about the new version of EH40.

13. Date of the Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 31 March 2020, 1400 in the Cairo Room at Greenwich House.

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