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| Cabinet/Committee: | Employees' Consultative Forum |
| Date: | 30 January 2008 |
| Subject: | Information Report Response to Request from Unison |
| Responsible Officer: | Andrew Trehern |
| Portfolio Holder: | Susan Hall |
| Exempt: | No |

Section 1 – Background

This report is intended to inform ECF of the continuing dialogue between Facilities Management and Unison in relation to works in the Access Harrow area completed in 2006.

During the ECF Forum (Special) on 29 August 2007 it was agreed that Union representatives put any questions in writing to the management team who would produce a response. The letter from Unison was sent on 19 September 2007 and a reply acknowledging their correspondence was provided on 4 October 2007.

However it is not the intention of this report to respond directly to the individual items raised but to provide ECF members with an update on progress following receipt of information provided by colleagues.

To obtain sufficient information to reply to the request previous communication on the subject has been re-examined and this will form the basis of a detailed response to Unison.

These documents include:

- Harrow Council Health and Safety Audit Protocol dated January 2006
- HM Inspector of Health and Safety letter dated 23 November 2006
- Access Harrow Building Defects agreed position dated 22 January 2007
- Harrow Health and Safety Managers comments dated 27 February 2007
- Unison correspondence dated 19 September 2007
- Employees Consultative Forum (Special) Minutes 75 dated 29 August 2007

It is also clear that numerous meetings have already been held with Unison relating to the development of the contact centre where information has been provided to address their concerns.

Section 2 – Update Information

It is evident from the results of the enquiries that the majority of points raised by Unison have been concluded or have been discussed in detail during previous occasions when representatives from unions met with officers to resolve outstanding issues.

The response to Unison's latest enquiry will cover the nineteen individual items raised having reviewed all information available from colleagues involved in the Access Harrow project.

Evidence clearly shows that the Health and Safety Executive are happy with the project and the involvement of various council officers over a two-year period has attempted to resolve all the issues raised by the unions.

The reply to the request for information should now bring to an end this extensive and time-consuming enquiry for all concerned

Section 3 - Summary

During 2005/06, the Council carried out nearly 500 building projects. In terms of risk, the Access Harrow project was a relatively low risk refurbishment work and did not involve the most significant construction hazards.

Officers in Facilities Management are very keen that we work in partnership to resolve health and safety issues and allocate our resources appropriately. However, in replying to the trades unions' concerns, this issue has been dealt with in much detail.

Unison are continuing to raise concerns with respect to a 30-month old project that has been investigated by the HSE, the foremost body with respect to health and safety, and have been supplied with information from colleagues in Facilities Management and Access Harrow and from the relevant asbestos qualified council officer.

The officers are looking forward to developing closer co-operation with the unions in ensuring all aspect of refurbishment and construction work are carried out in accordance with health and safety legislation and building regulation safe working practice.

This will ensure any areas of concern can be addressed immediately as the project proceeds.

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

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