

HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 6 November 2023
Title: Public Halls Safety & Security
Contact Officer: Town Clerk – Sharon Groth

Background

The Council has a duty of care to advise and assess risk for employees who work by themselves under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

Whilst most employees work in twos or teams, Caretaking staff within the public halls working outside of office hours are often lone working.

Current Situation

There have been several incidents in the Corn Exchange recently which involved three young people accessing both the ladies and gents toilets and squirting hand soap on the floors, mirrors and wash basin. This resulted in the toilets having to be closed because it was a risk to hall users from slipping over as the floor had been made very slippery.

During this incident, the young people were rude and abuse to the staff and hall hirers.

Further incidents have occurred subsequently, and in fact resulting in a serious incident termed as a transphobic hate crime.

The incidents have been captured on CCTV which has been shared with the Police, to try and identify these young people. It is hoped that once identified the Council may be able to ban them from the Corn Exchange, but in the meantime, Officers are reviewing the Lone Working Policy to risk assess and safeguard employees at these most vulnerable times.

In respect of Burwell Hall, whilst no incidents have been reported, this is still an area of concern. Particularly the way the bookings operate for hirers to access the building. Officers are reviewing how an electronic access facility could work and the associated costings to see if a viable option is available.

Environmental impact

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 – with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

As mentioned above, the Council does have a duty of care under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 for its employees. With these incidents occurring on a regular basis, measures need to be taken to try and mitigate any impact on staff wellbeing and interrupting meetings/hirings.

Financial implications

There are no known direct financial implications arising from this report at the preset time. Officers will be looking into costing out solutions – whether that is better access arrangement, CCTV or other safeguarding measures, and a report will be brought back to the next meeting.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and the situation around safety and security in the Council's public halls.