

# **MEMBERS/TRADES UNIONS JOINT CONSULTATION AND SAFETY PANEL**

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 8 October 2003, at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 4.30 p.m.

## **PRESENT:**

**Employers' side:** Councillors Copping, Holland and Short.

**Trades Unions' side:** Mr A Rybicki (Chair), Mr A E Foster, and Mr J Lynch

An apology for absence was received from Mrs J Webb.

## **506. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **507. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 28 July 2003, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

## **508. SECURITY AT RIVERSIDE HOUSE**

The Panel considered a report from the Director of Customer Information and Advice, containing further information on the security arrangements at Riverside House. Previously, concerns had been raised in relation to violent and potentially violent incidents occurring at Riverside House, which had been the subject of a report to the Executive in 2000, as a result of which the current out of office hours arrangements had been introduced.

The report pointed out that the staff were actively encouraged to report incidents, including verbal abuse. Reporting was also strongly encouraged by the unions.

Training days had been held on how to deal with violent and aggressive people, and risk assessments had been carried out during the design of Riverside House. All accidents, including violent incidents, were followed up and recommendations made, where appropriate, to reduce the risk of similar occurrences. A variety of safeguards had been provided such as fixed and personal alarms, and CCTV coverage of the various reception areas and associated interview rooms.

Other support mechanisms were available, as discussed at previous meetings of the Panel, and the Assistant Chief Executive (Personnel) advised that stress levels of staff were monitored closely and support was available to anybody who required it. This included the confidential free telephone service on which concerns could be registered, face to face counselling was available, and stress management seminars were being planned.

At present, a guard was on duty whenever Riverside House was closed. From an estimate received from the security company, the cost of a 24 hour, 365 days service would cost approximately an additional £9,000. The security company had based these figures on three people working 56 hours each week. They had a pool of people to draw on to cover in unexpected absences and had back-up office support which could mobilise the police or emergency services in the event of an incident.

When consideration had been given to the arrangements for Riverside House, the various merits of having a security contractor or employing guards were explored. It had appeared that the most straightforward arrangement was to use a contractor and, in the light of experience, this had proved to be the correct one.

The Panel was reminded that a Best Value Review was currently taking place regarding customer access and this would consider all issues including possible physical changes to the reception arrangements.

Reference was also made to the need to bear in mind the potential risks to staff at other Council buildings other than Riverside House.

Following discussion, it was agreed that the employment of a security guard during office hours was justified in the interests of staff health and safety. The Assistant Chief Executive (Personnel) advised that the additional funding required for this would have to be sought probably through the appropriate Service Area Plan. A report would be made to the Panel clarifying the process which would have to be followed.

**RESOLVED** that the Panel fully support the employment of a security guard at Riverside House during office hours to supplement the current security arrangements.

(The meeting ended at 5.20 p.m.).