

City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committee(s): Finance and Risk Committee of the Barbican Centre Board – <i>for information</i> *Barbican Centre Board – <i>for information</i>	Dated: 08/01/2025 29/01/2025
Subject: Barbican Centre Health and Safety Report	Public report: For Information
This proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes • provides statutory duties • provides business enabling functions 	Diverse Engaged Communities Vibrant Thriving Destination Providing Excellent Services Flourishing Public Spaces
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain’s Department?	N/A
Report of:	David Farnsworth – Interim CEO Barbican Centre
Report author:	Megan Dewberry – Head of Health, Safety & Wellbeing

Summary

This report outlines the current state of health and safety, including fire management at the Barbican Centre and the steps being taken to address weaknesses. Over the past decade, the erosion of dedicated health and safety roles has led to unclear responsibilities across departments.

In response to independent reviews and issues arising in relation to fire safety management over the past 12 months, the Barbican has now recruited Megan Dewberry to a new Head of Health, Safety & Wellbeing role, secured funding for two additional new health and safety roles and is in the process of developing a strategic health and safety plan, sitting within the framework of the City of London Corporation’s health and safety strategy. Members will be asked to review and approve the plan in Spring/Summer 2025.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. The numbers and levels of dedicated health and safety competence and resource at the Barbican has been reduced over the past decade, examples include the Fire Officer and Medical Officer posts which were removed from the structure, as was the Head of Security and Safety post in 2017/18.

Since then, health and safety management has been informally shared across Directors and Managers, but roles and responsibilities have not been well defined. In Autumn 2023, Quadriga Health and Safety Ltd were commissioned to conduct an independent review of the City of London's (CoL) health and safety management arrangements, including the competency of health and safety advice. The review recommended that, due to the complexity and nature of the Barbican's activities, the Centre should have a dedicated health and safety provision with a minimum of three professionals.

There have also been a number of events that have highlighted weaknesses in general and fire safety management. Earlier this year the Town Clerk set up a "Task and Finish Group" to oversee improvements in relation to physical fire safety systems and management processes.

Current Position

2. Following the Quadriga report and interactions with the London Fire Brigade (LFB) and Town Clerk's Department, the Barbican has developed a clearer understanding of some significant health, safety and fire management issues and is implementing plans to address them, as detailed below.

Health and Safety Provision

Funding has been approved for three health and safety roles: a Head of Service and two managers. The Head of Health, Safety and Wellbeing joined the organisation at the end of September 2024 and is in the process of recruiting a Health and Safety Manager and Fire Safety Manager who will support in driving the strategic health and safety plan and act as a competent source of advice to Directors and their teams, supporting them to fulfil their health and safety responsibilities.

Safety Maturity Assessment

In April 2024, the Corporate Health and Safety Team commissioned a safety maturity assessment across all CoL departments, including the Barbican. The assessment measures 74 competencies that sit within the following 10 modules:

- Director Knowledge
- Management Knowledge
- Worker/Contractor Knowledge
- Health & Safety Management System
- Verification & Audit Activities

- Emergency Preparedness
- Health & Safety Data Collection
- Management Reporting
- Worker/Contractor Engagement
- Culture & Behaviours

The assessment was undertaken to provide a clear and objective picture of the health and safety capability of the organisation. It was led by Safe365, in collaboration with the Corporate Health and Safety Team and Barbican staff, who collectively agreed on the responses to each competency.

The score indicates that the Barbican's health and safety management system lacks maturity, however the assessment provides a helpful framework for improving the management of health and safety. It will also help the Barbican identify key priority areas which will be reflected in the strategic health and safety plan. Over time, it will also serve as an assurance tool for senior management, boards/committees, the City of London Corporation's Executive Leadership Board and the Corporate Health and Safety Team.

Leadership commitment

Bespoke leadership health and safety training has recently been delivered to the Town Clerk and the Executive Leadership Board. The Interim CEO of the Barbican is ensuring similar training is delivered to the Barbican Directors Group and wider Management Team. The intention is to adapt the training for members of the Board. The training will ensure that Directors and Managers fully understand and own their health and safety responsibilities. Managers will know how to manage and/or escalate risk and are equipped with the tools to show leadership in line with our values, visibly demonstrating their commitment to the safety and wellbeing of those impacted by the activities within their domain. This will be a critical step in fostering a strong safety culture and improving safety maturity at the Barbican.

Consideration is also being given to the type of training that will be delivered to Members to support them in exercising their responsibilities in relation to health and safety decision making.

Options

3. The Head of Health, Safety and Wellbeing has been in post for two months. Part of this time has been spent gathering information by reviewing previous reports and documentation, speaking with colleagues across the organisation and recording observations of the physical site. This information contributes to a gap analysis exercise to identify priority areas for improvement and inform the long-term strategic health and safety plan.

An internal audit of the Barbican's health and safety management is planned for January/February 2025. This will provide additional insight into deficiencies and will help inform the health and safety plan.

All options will be considered in determining the strategic direction based on the data collated. Options including risk-based approach, cost/benefit etc will be part of the decision-making process for the Director's Group. The intention is to present the draft plan to the Committee for comment/approval circa three months after the audit results. Improvements are already underway and will continue throughout the drafting of the plan.

Proposals

4. As stated, the proposal is to present a draft strategic plan in Spring/Summer 2025.

This report is for information purposes and provides context to the current state of health and safety management. Funding for the three new health and safety roles has already been secured, as outlined earlier in this report. Any further resource implications or needs will be better understood and clarified once the gap analysis exercise has been completed and will be included in the draft plan.

Conclusion

5. In conclusion, the Barbican Centre is taking significant steps to address the gaps in its health, safety, and fire management systems, following a series of challenges and independent reviews. With the approval of funding for three new health and safety roles, including a Head of Health, Safety, and Wellbeing, the Centre is now in position to improve its overall safety culture and capabilities.

The ongoing safety maturity assessment and leadership training are key components in building a more robust safety framework. The development of a strategic health and safety plan, informed by a gap analysis and an internal audit, will ensure continuous improvements and will be submitted for approval in Spring/Summer 2025. These actions reflect a strong commitment to enhancing the safety and wellbeing of all stakeholders at the Barbican Centre.

Appendices

None

Megan Dewberry

Head of Health, Safety and Wellbeing

E: megan.dewberry@barbican.org.uk