

PERFORMANCE PORTFOLIO (Health & Safety Consultative Group)

DECISION RECORD

26th February 2009

The meeting commenced at 9.30am in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor Pamela Hargreaves (Performance Portfolio Holder)

Councillor: Steve Gibbon

Trade Union Representatives: Edwin Jeffries and Malcolm Sullivan

Officers: Joanne Machers, Chief Personnel Officer
Stuart Langston, Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager
Jo Wilson Democratic Services Officer

1. Strategic Health and Safety Action Plan (*Chief Personnel Officer*)

Type of Report

Non Key

Purpose of report

To seek Portfolio Holder's Endorsement of a Strategic Health and Safety Action Plan for the authority.

Issue(s) considered by the Portfolio Holder

In October 2007 the Health and Safety Executive published a document – Leading Health and Safety Guidance at Work – which provided guidance to senior managers on how to put in place effective arrangements for managing health and safety. Since then work had been ongoing within the Council to develop a Wellbeing Strategy. As part of this some of the current health and safety arrangements had been reviewed and areas for improvement identified. In addition the Council's Health and Safety Policy had been adopted in July 2005. In its current form all departments were asked to interpret it and put in place their own policies. This resulted in some duplication and led to an inconsistent approach.

In order to address these problems and also to coincide with the significant

changes as part of the Business Transformation Programme officers proposed a revision of the Health and Safety Policy and adoption of a Strategic Health and Safety Action Plan. The proposed action plan was appended to the report. The Chief Personnel Officer further advised that the member of CMT with specific responsibility for occupational health and safety would be the Chief Executive. With regard of the Cabinet member with responsibility for occupational health and safety the Portfolio Holder suggested another member other than herself as Portfolio Holder might be preferable as a way to spread the message. However the Chief Personnel Officer suggested that since the Performance Portfolio Holder received these reports anyway her role as champion could bring a degree of uniformity.

The Portfolio Holder queried the target date of April 2010 for the development of formal mechanisms for raising health and safety issues to the appropriate level of management. The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager indicated that there were already processes in place and this was more of a review of those processes. The Portfolio Holder asked that the action plan wording be amended to reflect this.

The Portfolio Holder asked whether the reporting of occupational health and safety to Cabinet was a legal requirement but was advised that it was not. She suggested that updates for information also be sent to the Local Joint Consultative Committee and that the action plan be amended as such. Councillor Gibbon queried whether all employees were expected to take some responsibility for their own health and safety. The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager advised that they were and this was something addressed by all new employees health and safety induction and as part of the competency framework.

Decision

That the Strategic Health and Safety Action Plan as attached as appendix 1 be endorsed subject to the following amendments:

Item 10: "Develop formal mechanisms for raising health and safety issues to the appropriate level of management e.g. control measures which are beyond the ability of a local manager to implement" to be amended to "**Review** formal mechanisms....."

That a table setting out the implications for Elected Members of failing to follow current health and safety legislation (as detailed in the IOSH pamphlet "Think about health and safety") be attached to the action plan.

2. Health and Safety Roles and Responsibilities of Elected Members (*Chief Personnel Officer*)

Type of decision

Non-key.

Purpose of report

To provide an overview of a recent publication regarding the health and safety roles and responsibilities of elected members.

Issue(s) considered by the Portfolio Holder

The report provided details of a recent publication by the Institute of Occupational Health and Safety (IOSH) entitled Think about health and safety - what elected members of local authorities need to know. In addition to general guidance the publication provided specific advice to Cabinet members. A copy of the document was appended to the report. It would also be placed in the Members Library and reference would be made to it in the next member's newsletter.

The Portfolio Holder suggested that a table detailing the implications of failing to follow current health and safety guidance be formulated from the information in the publication and attached to the Strategic Health and Safety Action Plan.

Decision

That the report be noted.

3. Prevention of Violence and Aggression to Employees (*Chief Personnel Officer*)

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To provide an update on progress towards the adoption of robust procedures for the protection of employees from violence or aggression or threats of such actions.

Issue(s) considered by the Portfolio Holder

The report provided an update on the development of a system for difficult-to-deal-with individuals and premises that should be subject to additional control measures, the Employee Protection Register. There were now over 600

employees who were able to log onto the system to check the register, either for themselves or on behalf of their team. Training had been rolled out across various departments to ensure that staff were aware of their responsibilities regarding data protection issues and that the register is used appropriately. The Violence and Aggression to Staff (VAS) working group were meeting regularly to monitor the implementation of the system. This issue was also part of the ongoing Employee Survey and depending upon the analysis of responses to the questions further precautions might need to be considered.

The Trade Union representatives both felt the register was very welcome and was working well. Individual departments should be encouraged to utilise it fully in order that it become even more effective. The Portfolio Holder suggested that it be included in the Strategic Health and Safety Action Plan but the Chief Personnel Officer felt that it was just one of many actions of this kind taken by the Council but was being noted because it was innovative. In terms of its success she indicated that this was leading to more of an administrative burden. A number of outside agencies had expressed an interest in utilising the register meaning a possible income stream in the future. A report to CMT would set out proposals for future development.

Councillor Gibbon queried the practice of sending care workers out on lone visits when police officers and medical personnel routinely travelled in pairs. The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager acknowledged these concerns but felt that routine pairing would have financial implications. It was for individual departments to risk assess where people were going and whether there was a need for people to be accompanied.

Decision

That the report be noted.

3. April 28th – Workers Memorial Day *(Secretary, Hartlepool Joint Trades Union Committee)*

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To update the Portfolio Holder on the arrangements for the Workers Memorial Day Service to take place on Tuesday 28th April 2008 at 12.30pm at Christ Church TIC and Art Gallery, Church Square, Hartlepool. The event would be preceded by a Northern TUC Health and Safety Training Seminar to be held on Tuesday 28th April 2009 at Hartlepool United Football Ground.

Issue(s) considered by the Portfolio Holder

The papers provided contained information relating to the honoured guests

and on the history of the International Workers Memorial Day. The Secretary of the HJTUC gave a verbal update on the arrangements and updated members on ongoing work with Hartlepool College of Further Education. The Portfolio Holder praised the Trade Unions for the work they did on the Memorial Day and the positive impact this appeared to be having on the town's young people.

Decision

That the report be noted and the Workers Memorial Day supported.

The meeting concluded at 10.15am.

P DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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