

# **PERFORMANCE PORTFOLIO (Health & Safety Consultative Group)**

## **DECISION RECORD**

26<sup>th</sup> October 2010

The meeting commenced at 4.00 pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

### **Present:**

Councillor Jonathan Brash (Performance Portfolio Holder)

Trades Union Representatives  
Edwin Jeffries, Malcolm Sullivan and Stephen Williams

Officers: Stuart Langston, Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager  
Steven Carter, Workplace Health Improvement Specialist  
Jo Wilson, Democratic Services Officer

## **1. Employee Wellbeing Strategy** (*Chief Customer and Workforce Services Officer*)

### **Type of decision**

Non-key

### **Purpose of report**

To inform the Portfolio Holder of the intention to adopt an Employee Wellbeing Strategy for the Authority and seek the approval and endorsement of the Portfolio Holder for this 3 year strategy.

### **Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder**

A strategic objective of the Council is to improve corporate plans to promote Healthy Working. The Employee Wellbeing Strategy is designed to give direction to health, safety and wellbeing initiatives across the Authority, underpinning all policies and procedures relating to the protection of Council staff over the next 3 years. Various action plans will be used to tackle key areas such as the management of health and safety, health promotion campaigns and support for employees who have issues. Funding is provided via NHS Hartlepool to employ a Workplace Health Improvement Specialist to lead on this work until March 2012. A Health Advocate Steering Group was also established in April 2010 to facilitate development and communication of initiatives and campaigns across the Authority. Ideas and proposals from this steering group would pass to the Employee Wellbeing and Protection Strategic Group for approval. Projects would be funded either through existing budgets or via an external organisation. Non-implementation of the strategy could lead to increased sickness absence and staff turnover, lower staff morale and reduced productivity. A copy of the draft strategy was

appended to the report. Trade Union representatives expressed their support for the proposals, requesting that any amendments made by themselves as part of the Single Table consultation be integrated into the document. The Portfolio Holder approved this with the proviso that any changes be considered by him prior to implementation. He felt that Hartlepool Borough Council should act as an exemplar for all businesses in Hartlepool on this issue and had already made clear that he would fight any proposed cuts to health and safety budgets as the safety of employees at work was of paramount importance. The Portfolio Holder made reference to the forthcoming review on health and safety legislation by Lord Young, asking that a report be brought to him on the implications when they were known.

### **Decision**

That the planned strategy and associated actions be approved.

## **2. Prevention of Violence and Aggression to Employees** (Chief Customer and Workforce Services 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) for consideration by Portfolio Holder**

The Performance Portfolio Holder had previously been provided with updates on the implementation of the Employee Protection Register (EPR) software used for recording the names and addresses of individuals who pose a risk to Council staff. Following the successful adoption of the procedures across the Council, and to ensure the system was fit for purpose, the Council's Violence and Aggression Policy had been revised and the EPR guidance notes updated. Over 700 Council employees had received training on use of the system and the Violence and Aggression to Staff Working Group reconstituted. A copy of the revised policy was appended to the report.

Trade Union representatives expressed their support for the proposals, saying anything which protected staff was welcome. They requested that any amendments made by themselves as part of the Single Table consultation be integrated into the document. The Portfolio Holder approved this with the proviso that any changes be considered by him prior to implementation. They queried how these procedures would work in the case of enforcement of out of hours noise. The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager highlighted the inclusion in the procedures of an agreement that where an employee could walk away from a situation if they felt an individual had crossed a line between being upset about a visit and becoming aggressive and that the Council would support them in that decision. The Portfolio Holder supported this, saying it was fundamental that every employee knew where that line was in their own

mind and were aware that they would be supported in this.

**Decision**

That the revised policy be supported.

**3. Corporate Smoking Policy** (*Chief Customer and Workforce Services Officer*)

**Type of decision**

Non-key

**Purpose of report**

To inform the Portfolio Holder of the changes to the Council's Corporate Smoking Policy and seek approval and endorsement for these changes.

**Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder**

The Corporate Smoking Policy had been in place for several years. Following changes in legislation in 2007 it had been deemed expedient to update the policy to reflect these changes and to include guidance on the protection of staff from exposure to second-hand smoke. The key changes were detailed within the report. The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Officer highlighted the inclusion that staff could withdraw from the premises or conduct meetings in smoke-free buildings. The Portfolio Holder supported this, saying employees should not have to be affected by second-hand smoke. He commented on the large number of smokers regularly congregating outside the Civic Centre, asking why no enforcement action was being taken to protect the rights of staff to work in a smoke-free environment. The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager indicated that security staff should move them on and he would speak to the Property Manager regarding this. The Portfolio Holder asked that officers liaise with representatives from the Magistrates Court regarding this issue and bring any feedback to him.

Trade Union representatives expressed their support for the proposals, saying anything which protected staff was welcome. They requested that any amendments made by themselves as part of the Single Table consultation be integrated into the document. The Portfolio Holder approved this with the proviso that any changes be considered by him prior to implementation.

**Decision**

That the changes made to the Corporate Smoking Policy be approved.

The meeting concluded at 4:20 pm

**P J DEVLIN                      CHIEF SOLICITOR**

**PUBLICATION DATE: 1<sup>st</sup> November 2010**