

PERFORMANCE PORTFOLIO (Health & Safety Consultative Group) DECISION RECORD 22nd February 2011

The meeting commenced at 3.30 pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor Jonathan Brash (Performance Portfolio Holder)

Trades Union Representatives
Edwin Jeffries, A Watson and Stephen J Williams

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

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

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To inform the Performance (Health and Safety Consultative) Portfolio Holder of the Workers Memorial Day Remembrance Service and Wreath Laying Ceremony and other events taking place on Workers Memorial Day, 28 April 2011.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The Trades Union representative updated those present on the events due to take place as part of Workers' Memorial Day on 28 April 2010. These included a Health and Safety Seminar at 9am at Hartlepool College of Further Education followed by a remembrance service to be held at 12.30pm at Christchurch TIC and the Art Gallery. Wreath laying would immediately follow this at the Workers Memorial Ceremony in Church Square. Speakers at the seminar would include the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager and a representative from Thompsons Solicitors. The Portfolio Holder indicated he would be delighted to provide the seminar introduction. He expressed his support for the event and reiterated the Council's absolute commitment to supporting this event and for the continuation of health and safety legislation in general. Moreover, he repeated his commitment to ensuring that Health & Safety remained one of the Council's highest priorities and that the financial constraints being placed on council's by the coalition Government must not

threaten this.

Decision

- i. That a minutes silence be authorised in Council Buildings and for Council staff at 12.30pm on Thursday 28th April 2011 in remembrance of those workers who have lost their lives through industrial accident or disease
- ii. That the lowering of flags on public buildings on Thursday 28th April 2011 be authorised
- iii. That the sale of Workers Memorial Day remembrance forget-me-not purple ribbons be authorised on Council premises to staff and public
- iv. That promotion of the event to the wider public be authorised
- v. That the use of Council premises on Thursday 28th April 2011 for guests before and after the Workers Memorial Day Service and Wreath Laying Ceremony be authorised.

5. Corporate Health and Safety Policy (*Chief Customer and Workforce Services Officer*)

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To update the Corporate Health and Safety Policy and request the Portfolio Holder's support for this policy.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 requires that all companies with 5 staff or over have a written health and safety policy. In 2009 Hartlepool Borough Council's Corporate Health and Safety Policy was significantly revised in light of changes within the organisation and the implementation of the business transformation programme. Given the current changes taking place throughout the Council it was felt prudent to update the current policy to ensure that it was supporting and protecting the health, safety and welfare of its staff and those who work on its behalf. As the current policy had been comprehensively reviewed relatively recently no major changes were proposed, the update of the policy being to ensure it reflected the Council's approach to health and safety management. An updated copy of the policy would be circulated to coincide with the launch of the Employee Wellbeing Strategy, agreed at the last meeting of the Performance Portfolio (Health and Safety Consultative Group) in October 2010.

The Portfolio Holder asked what impact reductions in staffing and services

would have on health and safety and how standards would be maintained. The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager acknowledged there were challenging times ahead but felt that if jobs were considered properly there should be no health and safety risks. The Portfolio Holder queried what was done to ensure managers did not feel over-pressured to maintain health and safety standards. The Health, Safety and Well-Being Manager advised that if managers felt unable to cope due to budget pressures they needed to make their managers aware. Everybody must work together to create a safer organisation.

The Portfolio Holder asked whether any changes to health and safety legislation had been made in light of the government's previously anti-stance. The Health Safety and Wellbeing Manager indicated that there had so far been one proposed legislative change relating to the time for the reporting of accidents. A Trade Union Representative commented that this change might mean a significant number of accidents going unreported and might therefore make it appear that accident figures had dropped erroneously. The Health Safety and Wellbeing Manager commented that the Council tended to over-report accidents in order to avoid the risk of not reporting when required. A Trade Union Representative felt this legislative change might also be an attempt to reduce the number of health and safety regulators.

Decision

That the report be noted and the updated Corporate Health and Safety Policy endorsed.

6. Fire Safety *(Chief Customer and Workforce Services Officer)*

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To advise the Portfolio Holder of the outcome of a programme to review fire safety arrangements in Council buildings.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 requires that any person who has some level of control in a premises, takes reasonable steps to reduce fire risk and make sure people can safely escape in the event of a fire. In order to establish a better picture of current fire safety arrangements within Council buildings a fire safety specialist was appointed on a 12 month fixed term contract. 132 Council premises, including schools, were visited and an action plan with recommendations provided to the appropriate manager. Generally most buildings required minor improvements but in a number of cases there were substantial concerns leading to the adoption of new procedures to ensure appropriate checks prior to the future occupation of premises. These tended to be in the case of buildings that the Council has leased from another

organisation and a more general move away from leasing buildings to a more rationalised use of the Council's property portfolio was noted. A number of fire safety awareness and fire marshall training sessions had been provided by the Health, Safety and Wellbeing team to improve knowledge.

The Portfolio Holder asked what follow up there had been to the fire safety training. The Health Safety and Wellbeing Manager advised that it was now included on the annual inspection programme and officers would attend schools on staff training days to provide this information. A Trade Union Representative queried whether these changes affected the statutory requirement of the fire brigade to enter burning buildings. The Health Safety and Wellbeing Manager reported that it did not however it did oblige employers to be responsible for fire safety. The fire brigade would continue to inspect premises and give guidance but it would be more formal than previously thereby making the legislation more robust.

Decision

That the contents of the report be noted.

The meeting concluded at 4:05 pm

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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