

**General Purposes Committee on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2006**

Title: Action Plan for Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare	
Item of: Head of Personnel	
Wards(s) affected: N/A	Item for: <b>Discussion</b>
<p>Consultation (list those consulted):</p> <p>Chief Executive's Management Board</p> <p>Executive Advisory Board</p>	
<p><b>1. Purpose</b></p> <p>1.1 To advise of and agree Draft Action Plan for improvements to Council's Health and Safety Management System for submission to Health and Safety Executive (HSE) by 28/2/06.</p>	
<p><b>2. Introduction by Executive Member</b></p> <p>2.1 The Health and Safety Executive have requested that the Council submit an Action Plan by 28<sup>th</sup> February 2006 to further develop their existing health and safety management systems</p>	
<p><b>3. Recommendations</b></p> <p>3.1 Members comment and agree action plan for formal submission to the HSE. (Appendix 1)</p> <p>3.2 Members note findings of the Health and Safety Executive Inspection Report (Appendix 2)</p> <p>3.3 Members affirm their commitment to fully support all elements of the draft action plan.</p> <p>3.4 All Directors identify and commit appropriate resources as defined in the Action Plan in order to ensure all defined targets are addressed</p>	

- 3.5 Members note additional costs related to the implementation of the Action Plan and ask the Head of Personnel to agree additional budgetary provision with the Director of Finance once estimates are Finalised
- 3.6 Members note that The Corporate Health and Safety Team will offer additional services beyond their core functions to directorate services who require this to achieve compliance with the proposed action plan.

Authorised by: Chief Executive's Management Board

Contact Officer: Stuart Young, Head of Personnel

#### **4. Executive Summary**

- 4.1 During their presentation to CEMB on 21<sup>st</sup> December 2005, the inspection, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) recognised many examples of good practice within individual Council services but also highlighted areas requiring further development.
- 4.2 The HSE have requested that the Council submit an action plan that details strategies that will assist the Council in further developing a health and safety management system that reflects their own strategic targets for work related accident and ill-health reduction.
- 4.3 The main body of this report summarises the Inspection findings and identifies areas that the Council will seek to strengthen through its action plan

#### **5 Reasons for any change in policy or for new policy development (if applicable)**

5.2 N/A

#### **6 Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985**

6.2 The Inspection of the Health and Safety Executive, November 2005

6.3 N/A

## **7 For Executive Advisory Board to Consider**

7.1 Please see recommendations.

## **8 Background**

- 8.1 A team from the Health and Safety Executive carried out a snapshot inspection of this Council's health and safety management systems during November 2005.
- 8.2 The scope of the inspection was small but examined both corporate systems and individual services such as Parking, Housing Management, Schools, Social Care, Construction Procurement, Occupational Health, Back Care Training for Carers and Health and Safety Advice. Evidence was prepared based on interviews with the Chief Executive, Directors, Assistant Directors, The Leader of the Council, Lead Member for Organisational Development, Head of Personnel, Service Managers, staff and Trade Union representatives. Interviews and inspections also focussed on a number of cross-cutting themes such as: work-related sickness absence, violence at work, stress management, slips trips and falls, musculo-skeletal injuries and management of contractors (based on the implications of the recent Crowland School Fire)
- 8.3 The HSE presented their basic findings to CEMB on 21<sup>st</sup> December 2005.
- 8.4 A formal detailed report has now been submitted to the Chief Executive. A copy is attached as Appendix to this report.
- 8.5 At Management Board on 21<sup>st</sup> December it was agreed that a formal action plan would be submitted to the HSE by 28<sup>th</sup> February 2006 to address areas needing further development as highlighted in the inspection

## **9 Present position**

- 9.1 Training** Both strengths and weaknesses of the Council's Health and Safety management systems were identified within the findings. The overall picture did highlight many individual examples of good practice.
- 9.2 However, there were also services where a lack of knowledge about management and staff roles and responsibilities in relation to health and safety provision was clearly evident.
- 9.3 These concerns can be effectively addressed by:

- (i) reviewing the content and improving current methods of corporate training delivery within the courses already on offer
  - (ii) making these courses mandatory for service managers and team leaders through directorate business plans
- 9.4 **Systems and Procedures** The Council already has systems that will effectively drive good health, safety and welfare management i.e. Business Planning, People Plans, Corporate and Service Induction, Performance Appraisal Targets, One to ones, Team Briefing etc.
- 9.5 For this reason, much of the action plan will focus on further integrating health, safety and welfare priorities into these systems with a “build-in” rather than “bolt-on” approach.
- 9.6 **Corporate Policy.** The inspection findings also remarked that the implementation of the new corporate health and safety policy was not progressing within an acceptable time frame. This is largely due to a failure in agreement about how building and service health and safety responsibilities will be split between landlord and tenant.
- 9.7 **Communication** The Inspectorate felt that the failure to maintain an effective Safety Liaison Officer Forum was impeding both effective cross- Council and directorate health and safety communication. They also emphasised that the SLO role itself needed to be carried out by an officer at a suitable senior level but with access to the time and resources necessary in order to give it appropriate priority. Whilst this has always been the intention of this particular role, changes to the Council’s directorate structure mean that its now requires redefinition and a revitalisation.
- 9.8 There was also no consistent picture in relation to directorate health and safety forums.
- 9.9 **Contractor Monitoring and Management** The circumstances of the Crowland School Fire were also discussed with relevant officers during the course of the inspection. With the subsequent receipt of the Fire Officer report into its causes, the HSE have clearly stated that the Action Plan will also need to address further development of systems to improve contractor and sub-contractor monitoring on site. They have also requested that they have input into any review.
- 9.10 **Data reporting and Analysis** The Inspectors welcomed the Council’s systems reporting of accident and sickness absence statistical information but felt that the capture of data and also the identification and analysis of trends could be taken much further in driving proactive strategies. They also commented that the current corporate accident reporting pro-forma is too heavily weighted towards insurance purposes.

- 9.11 **Stress Management** Inspectors acknowledged both the existence of the Council's Stress Policy and examples of good practice demonstrated in individual services.
- 9.12 However, the HSE were concerned that there is no mainstream approach to the management of stress across the Council. An effective way forward is for the Council to become one of the "willing 100" organisations who will commit to the implementation of the HSE's defined stress management's standards. This strategy is based on 6 themes: Demands, Control, Support, Relationships, Roles and Change. The methodology required to implement standards merely comprises an initial exercise to capture and analyse organisational data and then follows the 5 basic steps of risk assessment as applied to all work related hazards.
- 9.13 This commitment allows the organisation to receive agreed areas of support and advice from the HSE itself during the implementation period. At CEMB on 21st December an undertaking was given by the Council to participate in this strategy.
- 9.14 **Advisory Resources** The Inspectors were impressed by the standards of medical competence demonstrated in an improving Occupational Health Service. and welcomed the various health promotional initiatives already underway However, they did comment that the ratio of Occupational Health Nursing and doctor provision to Council workforce numbers was insufficient. They also commented that the Corporate Health and Safety Unit is not resourced sufficiently to allow them to carry out any significant cross Council auditing function. This service would greatly benefit from additional self generated funding to improve the quality and scope of its services.
- 9.15 Inspectors did also acknowledge that other health and safety advisory teams were deployed in both Children's Services and one particular housing service area.

## **10 Long term strategy**

- 10.1 The Action Plan identified in Appendix 1 to this report identifies developments that will strengthen the Council's Health and Safety Management Systems and demonstrate its commitment towards achieving the HSE's targets for the reduction of work related sickness and accident absence

## **11 Recommended action**

- 11.1 That Executive Advisory Board note the recommendations to this report.

## **12 Financial Implications**

- 12.1 Any specific additional budgetary provision will be agreed with the Director of Finance once estimates are agreed.

### **13 Comments of the Director of Finance**

13.1 Please see 12.1

### **14 Comments of the Head of Legal Services**

14.1 The adoption of this report and, particularly, the action plan attached, will assist the Council in complying with its duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, and associated Regulations, as a public authority and employer.

### **15 Conclusion**

15.1 The Executive Advisory Board is asked to support the action plan which focus on the following themes:

- (i) Strengthening existing training provision and introducing improved methods of delivery
- (ii) Fast-tracking the roll out of the new corporate health and safety policy
- (iii) Introducing the HSE Stress Management standards as a corporate strategy
- (iv) Revitalising corporate and directorate communication of health and safety issues
- (v) Improving methods of monitoring contractor/sub-contractor activity on site
- (vi) Reviewing and updating the Council's procedures for reporting and analysing work related sickness and accidents.
- (vii) Strengthening the links between Corporate Occupational Health and Health and Safety practitioner teams and improving service delivery