

THE EXECUTIVE

8 APRIL 2003

REPORT OF THE BOROUGH PERSONNEL OFFICER

HEALTH & SAFETY STRUCTURE	FOR DECISION
<p><i>This report asks Members to approve a revised Health and safety structure, which is of corporate significance.</i></p> <p><u>Summary</u></p> <p>This report addresses the changes to the corporate safety structure, makes recommendations for change and gives an update on the action plan following the HSE notice. The report has been considered by TMT who support the recommendations.</p> <p><u>Recommendations</u></p> <p>The Executive is asked to agree the revision to the Corporate Safety structure and to note the additional Health & Safety costs (Appendix B) which are to be met from existing budgets</p>	
Contact Officer: Alan Beadle	Borough Personnel Officer Tel: 020 8227 2366 Fax: 020 8227 2868 Minicom: 020 8227 2413 Email: alan.beadle@lbbd.gov.uk

1. **Background**

- 1.1 Previous reports to TMT and the Executive (14 May 2002)) covered the need to respond to the visit of the HSE to Social Services in January 2002. The key issues were lack of consistency in policies, guidelines, forms and standards applied across the Council, manifesting in inadequacies in sharing information between departments and communication issues. The HSE challenged the authority to revitalise its approach to health and safety and a number of the issues raised have been tackled on a progressive basis as part of the Health and Safety Action Plan project.
- 1.2 This report aims, as before, to affirm the commitment of the Council towards safety by supporting corporate initiatives to raise standards of safety management in a consistent and co-operative manner across the Council. There is a need to ensure that flexible and dynamic systems are in place to meet the changing needs of the workforce, and yet be robust, progressive and sustainable in the long term as workplace priorities shift.
- 1.3 The HSE visit has prompted the need for change away from a reactive traditional style of safety management, where workplace risks were merely controlled, towards an enabling culture whereby risks are assessed and managed appropriately.

- 1.4 The health and safety profession has also moved on having to incorporate risk management strategies in dealing with ever more complex workplace issues and the grade of the safety advisers should reflect this to ensure the appropriate calibre of staff fill the posts, and can be retained in them.
- 1.5 The departure of the former Corporate Safety Manager has facilitated a review of the corporate safety structure and roles of individuals within it.

2. Challenge for Change

The challenge is to go from 'Failing' to being 'Best in Class'.

- 2.1 As the Action Plan project has developed it is important that the progress that has been achieved is reinforced and sustained. There is a need to commit to:
 - Continual improvement (as a minimum meeting legal standards) with the aim of achieving compliance with ISO 18001 for Safety Management Systems (in line with the council's current commitment to seek accreditation to ISO 14001 Environmental Management and ISO 9002 for Quality Systems by the year 2006).
 - Refocusing health and safety advisers in the context of their interaction with people as part of the environment as well as the physical environment and work practices. This will move away from the traditional procedural based physical risk assessments, and will better address the needs of complex and individualised working practices
 - Realigning health and safety priorities corporately and within departments to meet HSE criticisms
 - Sharing of safety expertise and resources to facilitate information, improve the quality of safety training, and promoting consistency in policies, procedures, forms and guidelines for safety across the council's activities
 - Revising departmental health and safety work plans and integrating them with both the corporate safety workplan and the action plan to enable flexible and sustainable management of occupational health and safety
 - Providing resources for a cost effective safety advisory and support service.

Many of these are supportive of the Community Priorities not the least making the Borough Cleaner, Greener and Safer.

3. Resources

- 3.1 A revised safety structure needs to ensure information, experience and resources are shared in such a way that not only benefits individual departments but also, importantly, is of cost effective benefit to the Council as a whole.

- 3.2 A job description for the proposed corporate post is attached as Appendix A. The role has been expanded to reflect the need to adopt a more strategic approach towards occupational safety and health encompassing service elements that are demanded by the complex range of work activities and individuals in the workplace.
- 3.3 The HSE strongly advises that the corporate post should remain within the remit of the Chief Executive.
- 3.4 A proposed health and safety structure is attached as Appendix B.
- 3.5 It is also important to note that the HSE 's priority areas for training have been identified as risk assessment, manual handling and violence and aggression. A full programme of training will be needed across all Departments over the next few years to meet HSE targets. H&S training costs presently run at approx. £400 per day upwards and the creation of a full time training post to deliver risk assessment, manual handling and core V&A training in house offers a cost effective way of dealing with this issue.
- 3.6 Under the proposed structure each department would continue to fund the Departmental Safety Advisor based in its own department.

4. Risk Assessment

- 4.1 A risk assessment on the current level of safety services provided in the Borough would highlight:
- Potential hazards
 - Vulnerability to further action including prosecution by the HSE
 - Failure to comply with legal requirements for corporate responsibility
 - Reluctance to give H&S priority status on a managed basis (i.e. not just reactively) which has a knock on effect on staff morale particularly those working in cramped working environments under pressure to deliver services to the community
 - Inadequate control measures
 - Under-resourcing for staff welfare
 - Lack of resources for training (V&A, manual handling, stress, asbestos awareness) and provision of safety services
 - Those at risk are
 - Chief Officers
 - Staff
 - Indirectly but importantly, members of the public reliant on Council services
 - Further action required
 - Commitment from senior management to support the development and implementation of co-ordinated safety and risk services
 - A raised profile for H&S to show support for staff who are most at risk
 - Financial backing to support safety and risk initiatives on a corporate basis

5. Examples of Key Issues

5.1 Asbestos

Management of the corporate asbestos database is based in DLES, but because the service is presently geared to non-domestic premises, secondary databases have developed within Building Services and Housing & Health. Although moves are being made to amalgamate the databases, there are a number of issues outwith this service such as provision of information for other tenants, agencies (such as the Water Board, Fire Brigade etc) and training for employees which need to be addressed. A differing approach for domestic premises means that there are cost implications for both surveying and removal of asbestos in housing stock. The present strategy for asbestos management needs to draw together independent initiatives into a co-ordinated approach. Insurance claims filtering through now indicate that more proactive systems need to be in place for the future.

5.2 Violence and Aggression

It should be noted that staff in all departments offering services to the community at some time face the potential for violence and aggression. Currently all departments have a Working Party set up to look at issues in their department including training needs and the Chief Executive has agreed to launch the Corporate V&A Group.

5.3 Workplace

The Scrutiny Management Board has reiterated its views about the importance of ensuring office accommodation is allocated appropriately and conforms to health and safety standards in the workplace. This reinforces the need to adopt appropriate standards that take account of the environment where services are being delivered, and the risks faced by staff. Many workplace issues are common across departments, but this needs to tie in with initiatives on violence and aggression, and stress.

5.4 Progress

Since the HSE notice was served last year many of the items on the H&S Action Plan have been addressed or have action underway (see attached - Appendix C). The HSE improvement notice has been discharged without the need for an extension.

The Borough has been awarded a certificate by the HSE for participation in European Safety Week, and has been asked to participate in a Cost of Risk study being undertaken by the HSE. Corporate Safety has been asked to participate in:

- Interviewing selection,
- The Risk Management Group,
- Occupational Health issues,
- Stress Working Party,
- Asbestos compliance
- Investigation of workplace issues jointly with DLES for the Scrutiny Management Board,

- Participation in Controls Assurance Workshops and Improving Working Lives initiatives within the PCT,
- Working groups set up to implement the Action Plan, such as Violence and Aggression.

We now have the potential to become a model authority for how safety and risk can be more effectively managed.

6. Costs

The estimated cost of implementing the Action Plan to the end of March 2003 is £59,495. The costs for this will need to be re-charged to departments. It is intended that having regard to the effort required to-date that this will be on the basis of a split of 60% to Social Services with 10% to each of the remaining four departments. In order to avoid delays once served with the Improvement notice, we appointed Aureon to progress the action plan. Standing orders requires that for expenditure in excess of £30k alternative quotes should be obtained. In view of the urgency of the notice we had to get on with the work required. This was reported to the Corporate Monitoring group, along with progress being made. It was also reported that additional costs involved in doing this work would need to be re-charged to departments. Quotes obtained show costs vary from £300 to £500 per day for the work required. Therefore, overall costs would have been equal to or more than the cost of using Aureon.

7. Priorities & Timescale

The estimated timescale to put safety and risk management back on track is 2 years. Priority areas for action will include:

- Continuing development of policy, procedure and guidance to provide a framework for good safety and risk practice;
- Development of next generation management of risk through better integrated risk assessment, moving away from solely physical environment based assessment to encompass aspects of employee well being, health and personal safety;
- Review of workplace standards;
- Violence and aggression; and
- Asbestos.

8. Summary

The corporate role needs to be strengthened and strategically shifted towards a more flexible risk based approach, which can address the complex and diverse needs of the services provided throughout the Council. The progress made in management of safety and risk needs to be maintained if we are to become a model authority and in order to sustain the momentum, the revision needs to:

- Address both legal and HSE requirements

- Update and rationalise the level of service provided to meet the needs of differing occupational groups
- Meet Community Priorities
- Provide consistent management of risk within the organisation
- Support and sustain a risk management strategy for the future

Once coherent strategies are in place across all departments, this would place the Council in a stronger position to achieve ISO 18001 Safety Management Status in line with the commitment to meet ISO 9002 by 2006.

Background papers

None.