

MINUTES of the meeting of the SAFETY ADVISORY GROUP held on Wednesday, 17th September 2003

PRESENT: Councillor J W Davies (Chairman)
 Councillors A B Hulme and L M Simpson

APOLOGY: A Hansard and K Reynolds

IN ATTENDANCE: P Corley, S Douglas, P Duerden, Mrs H Lack,
 Mrs C Rowlands, C Sneesby and R Ward

The Chairman welcomed Mr C East Risk Management Assessor at the District Council of the Group.

10. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Advisory Group held on the 4th June 2003 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

11. ANNUAL SAFETY INSPECTION

The Group considered a report by the Head of Administration (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) detailing matters identified for investigation or requiring attention during the annual inspection of the Council workplaces on 2nd July 2003. The Group were acquainted with action taken as a result of the inspection.

The Chairman reported that the inspection had been positive and productive and it had been helpful for the Group to observe the Council's employees undertaking their work duties. Following a request by a Health and Safety Executive Inspector, during a recent inspection of the depot, the Head of Personnel Services undertook to inform him of the forthcoming meeting at which the Cabinet would be considering the outcome of the wheeled bin trial in the North of the District.

12. DRIVER DEVELOPMENT TRAINING

The Group received a report by the Head of Personnel Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) detailing a pilot scheme for driver development which had been agreed at their meeting held on the 29th May 2002. Members noted that after an initial assessment of service providers, "13/50" had been selected to conduct the pilot scheme and 10, high mileage users had attended the course during July 2003. The Group were acquainted with the results of the driver assessment and were pleased to note that feedback had been unanimous both in praise for the assessment and the assessor. Moreover, delegates would have no hesitation in recommending it to all of the Council's drivers.

RESOLVED

that the Driver Development training course be incorporated into the health and safety section of the District Council's corporate training programme, with participation determined initially on the perceived level of risk and number of miles travelled and subsequently through the annual training needs assessment element of the appraisal process and be funded by individual Directorate training budgets.

13. NATIONAL EMPLOYERS ORGANISATION FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES - CONSULTATION ON DRAFT PART 4 GUIDANCE ON HEALTH AND SAFETY.

The Group received and noted a report by the Head of Personnel Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) in connection with a consultation document from the National Employer, for future inclusion with Part 4 of the "Green Book" national conditions of service. Following discussion, Members agreed with the content of the proposed inclusion in the Green Book, it was

RESOLVED

that the Executive Councillor for Resources and Welfare be nominated lead Councillor with responsibility for driving up health and safety standards throughout the Council.

14. FIRST CONTACT REVIEW

The Group received and noted a report by the Head of Personnel Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) reviewing the operation of the Council's First Contact facility offered by the District Council as a listening service to all its employees.

The Group were pleased to note that the service had been well used by those employees and noted that it would be re-launched in the near future.

RESOLVED

that the First Contact service be continued in its current form.

15. ACCIDENT/INCIDENT REPORT

(a) District Council Employees

The Group received and noted a report by the Head of Personnel Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) detailing 20 accidents which had taken place since the last meeting of the Group.

In relation to incident numbers 1701 and 1702, the Health and Safety Adviser reported that in each case, in addition to heat exhaustion, the employee had an underlying medical condition that may have contributed towards the incident.

In relation to Incident No 1705, the Health and Safety Adviser reported that all new employees are required to complete a pre-employment health questionnaire at which time medical conditions are assessed and where necessary, employees are referred to the Occupational Health Nurse to determine their fitness for employment. The Head of Operational Services advised that the employees had not had an epileptic fit for the previous 3 year period and had a doctor's certificate stating that he was able to work. In addition, he informed the group that regular medical certificates would be sought before they were allowed to operate machinery.

In relation to Accident number 1695, the Health and Safety Adviser reported that the affected filing cabinets now had been bolted together by external fixings on the top of the units as opposed to the current system of internal fixings to allow employees to regularly check their stability.

(b) Leisure Centre Employees

The Group received and noted a report by the Head of Community Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) detailing accidents which had been reported at the Leisure Centres since the last meeting of the Group.

In relation to Accident No 5095, the Leisure Centres' Health and Safety Co-ordinator clarified the circumstances of the incident and advised that the member of staff had not closed the door of the unit correctly resulting in the door opening and injuring the member of staff.

16. ANNUAL ACCIDENT/INCIDENT REPORTS

(a) District Council Employees

The Head of Personnel Services submitted a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which summarised accidents previously reported to the Group during 2002/3. Members noted that there had been an overall increase of 25% in the total number of reported accidents in the current year and a 63% increase in the number of employees absent from work for more than three days after an accident, details of which were reportable to the Health and Safety Executive under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations. There had been a 45% reduction in employees being involved in an accident, categorised as hit by a moving, or flying object when compared with a previous year.

Concern was expressed that accidents in the Central Services Division had increased by 157%. In that context, the Health and Safety Adviser informed the Group that despite the seemingly large increase, the actual number of accidents was low.

In addition, the Group noted that whilst the largest number of

injuries were sustained when employees were handling lifting or carrying equipment, the greatest increase on the previous year involved those who were hit by moving, flying or falling objects.

(b) Leisure Centres Employees

The Group received a report by the Head of Community Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) detailing accidents previously reported to the Group during 2002/03 and a comparison with the previous year. Members noted that the single highest case for employee related accidents was as a result of being injured whilst handling, lifting or carrying.

17. HEALTH AND SAFETY TRAINING

The Group were acquainted with a report by the Head of Personnel Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) outlining training courses which had been held since the last meeting of the Group.

18. WORKING TEMPERATURE OF OFFICES

Safety Representatives outlined employees' concerns regarding the working temperature of the offices in Pathfinder House. Members noted that temperatures had exceeded 30°C for a prolonged period during the summer and had been much higher than in previous years. In their view this would have resulted in adversely reduced employees' efficiency in those areas affected within the Council. The Head of Personnel Services reminded the Group that in the previous year, a survey had been undertaken to identify "hot spots" with a view ultimately to introduce portable air conditioning units. More recently however, it had been determined that there was insufficient electrical power to run such high capacity units.

The Health and Safety Adviser reported that the District Council's Headquarter and Other Office Accommodation Advisory Group currently were investigating alternative short and long-term solutions to the problem.

Chairman