

**Safety Advisory Group  
(Report of the Advisory Group)**

**1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Advisory Group met on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2005 and Councillors J W Davies, Mrs D E Collins, A Hansard, K Reynolds and L M Simpson were present.
- 1.2 The staff side representatives in attendance were K Lawson, C Sneesby and S Richardson.
- 1.3 Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of R Ward and Mrs G Smith.
- 1.4 The report of the meeting of the Advisory Group held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2005 was received and noted.

**2 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

- 2.1 Councillor J W Davies was elected Chairman of the Advisory Group for the ensuing Municipal Year.

**3 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

- 3.1 Mr K Lawson was appointed Vice-Chairman of the Advisory Group for the ensuing Municipal Year.

**4 MEMBERS INTERESTS**

- 4.1 Declarations of interest were not received.

**5 LEARNING AND SKILLS COUNCIL – SAFETY AWARD**

- 5.1 By way of a report by the Head of Operations, Members were pleased to note that the Operations Division had been working in partnership with the Learning and Skills Council to provide NVQ training for 47 of its employees.
- 5.2 As part of the Learning and Skills Council's assessment of the Division prior to the training, a full independent inspection of systems and procedures had been undertaken. The Division were advised that, as their current systems and procedures fully met and exceeded the standard required, they had been awarded a certificate of achievement.
- 5.3 Members placed on record their congratulations to the Division and commended them on their attitude to health and safety issues at work.

**6 EMPLOYERS LIABILITY – MESOTHELIOMA**

- 6.1 The Health and Safety Adviser gave a brief description of the condition known as mesothelioma and its connections to exposure to asbestos dust.
- 6.2 Members were acquainted with the outcome of an insurance claim following the death of a former plumber from mesothelioma who had been employed by the District Council between 1976 and 1990. His work had included the stripping and removing of asbestos based guttering.
- 6.3 The risks associated with exposure to asbestos fibres was well known at the time of his employment. As the Council was unable to provide evidence of relevant training, risk assessments (the latter was not a statutory requirement until 1993 i.e. after he left the Council) and a safe system of work, it was unable to defend the claim.
- 6.4 Members were also informed that a further claim had been made by a former Clerk of Works employed by the District Council between 1974 and 1995 who had subsequently contracted asbestos cancer.
- 6.5 The Health and Safety Adviser acquainted the Group with a summary of the measures adopted by the Council in relation to asbestos containing materials (ACM's). In 1997 it had commissioned a non-destructive survey of its owned or managed premises to establish the type and location of ACM's. The results were contained in the Asbestos Register. Members were reminded that since May 2004 the Council had a new duty to "manage" asbestos on its premises.
- 6.6 In that context, a programme of training had been provided to managers by the Health & Safety Adviser. In addition, together with the Architects Practice Manager, she was currently inspecting all sites and updating the Register in accordance with guidance notes published by the Health & Safety Executive. Detailed plans showing these findings will be circulated to COMT and subsequently all managers who, in line with the new procedure in the Health and Safety Policy, will carry out regular inspections of any ACM's in their working environment and submit quarterly reports thereon to their Director. In addition, the Register would be supplemented by a Contractors' Code of Conduct which had to be completed by all contractors who would be required to work in the Council's premises.
- 6.7 A Member expressed concern that the non-destructive survey would not identify ACM's concealed by walls, ceilings and flooring.
- 6.8 Following much discussion surrounding the current practices and procedures, and in view of the limited time span that employees will be accommodated in Pathfinder House, the Group felt that the precautions taken by the District Council in respect of asbestos management were proportionate to the risk involved.

## **7 BOMB THREAT SIMULATION**

- 7.1 The Group were advised that a “desktop” exercise had taken place on the 24<sup>th</sup> May 2005 to test a number of elements relating to the bomb threat procedure.
- 7.2 In so doing, they were informed that the Coordinators had agreed, in principle, that the following action would have been taken:
- the building should be evacuated;
  - the Riverside Car Park should be the designated assembly point;
  - the intermittent bomb alarm should be sounded;
  - an intranet message telling employees to evacuate the building should be activated; and
  - nominated individuals should be posted at all exit doors to direct employees and others to the assembly point.

Following much discussion, Members agreed that the Council’s bomb procedure should be reviewed by the Group at their next meeting.

## **8 FIRE DRILL – PATHFINDER HOUSE**

- 8.1 The Group received and noted a report on the recent fire drill at Pathfinder House held on the 15<sup>th</sup> April 2005 at 11am.
- 8.2 Members were acquainted with a number of issues including, inter alia, that the self closing mechanisms on the fire exit doors had been removed for essential maintenance work and had not been replaced. This subsequently had been rectified.
- 8.3 On a related subject, on the 28<sup>th</sup> April 2005, in accordance with the requirements of the fire certificate and the Fire Precaution Act, an inspection of the fire protection and evacuation measures in Pathfinder House had been carried out by the local Fire Officer. Members noted the contents of the Fire Officer’s report and remedial action taken thereon.
- 8.4 Having regard to some of the unsafe practices adopted by employees during the evacuation which included, inter alia, uncertainty about the sound of the fire alarm; failure to complete the roll call board; moving back to their offices against the flow of employees to get their personal possessions; and carrying hot drinks down the fire exits; the Group agreed that employees again should be reminded about the procedure.

## **9 ANNUAL SAFETY REPORT**

- 9.1 Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Administration containing the observations and comments made by the Group during their annual safety inspection of the recycling and mini-recycling functions held on the 27<sup>th</sup> April 2005.
- 9.2 With regard to the observation relating to lone working by employees undertaking the mini-recycling function, the Group were advised that the Operations Division were investigating the use of the SOLO system used in other Divisions of the Council. However if this proved

to be impractical due to mobile phone coverage another solution would be sought.

9.3 In response to concern expressed by the Group about the safe working practices followed by the general recycling employees, in particular the risk from the wheeled bins falling from the lifting mechanism, the Group were shown a short comprehensive safety video produced by the manufacturer.

9.4 Members noted that the video did not show the need for employees to step to the side of a vehicle during the lifting process. In that context, whilst the Health and Safety Adviser still believed there could be a risk which may lead to a serious injury, it was agreed that that the reference to standing to the side of the vehicle in the existing safe working practice should be amended to reflect this.

## **10 ROSPA GOLD OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY AWARD FOR HUNTINGDON, ST IVO, ST NEOTS, SAWTRY AND RAMSEY LEISURE CENTRES**

10.1 The Group were pleased to note that all five of the joint provision Leisure Centres in the District had successfully achieved the RoSPA Gold Occupational Health and Safety Award.

10.2 Members placed on record their congratulations to the Leisure Centres Health and Safety Co-ordinator and the Leisure Centre staff for their achievements.

## **11 ACCIDENT/INCIDENT REPORT**

### **District Council Employees**

11.1 The Group received and noted a report by the Head of Personnel Services giving details of 28 accidents, which had taken place since the last meeting.

11.2 With regard to incident number 1836, the Group were informed that although the employee could have been seriously hurt the vehicle was no longer in use.

11.3 In response to a query about incident number 1832, the Group noted the Members who had attended the annual safety inspection held on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2005, had witnessed an employee moving heavy recycling bins and concern was raised that employers had experienced repetitive injuries.

### **Leisure Centres Employees**

11.4 The Group received a report by the Leisure Centres Health and Safety Co-ordinator containing details of accidents, which had been reported at the Leisure Centre since the last meeting of the Group.

## **12 TRAINING**

- 12.1 The Group were acquainted by means of a report by the Head of Personnel Services with training courses that have been held since the last meeting.
- 12.2 In response to a request by a Member, the Head of Personnel agreed to look into the feasibility of providing summaries to show , by Directorate, the percentage of employees who had received health and safety training during the proceeding 12 month period.

J W Davies