

04th September 2008

**SAFETY ADVISORY GROUP
(Report of the Advisory Group)**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Advisory Group met on the 11th June 2008 when Councillors Mrs B E Boddington and J W Davies were present.
- 1.2 Also in attendance were Messrs P Corley, J Craig, P Duerden, S Howell and Mrs T Davidson, Ms C Deller, Mrs A Jerrom and Mrs C Rowland.
- 1.3 The Staff Side were represented by Mrs S McKerral, C Sneesby and Mrs G Smith.
- 1.4 Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors A Hansard, Mrs P Jordan and L M Simpson and K Lawson.

2. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

- 2.1 Councillor Mrs B E Boddington was elected Chairman of the Group.
- 2.2 The report of the meeting of the Advisory Group held on the 5th March 2008 was received and noted.

3 MEMBERS' INTERESTS

- 3.1 No declarations of interest were received.

4. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN

- 4.1 K Lawson was appointed Vice Chairman of the Group.

5. ZURICH AUDIT REPORT

- 5.1 The Group were advised by the Head of HR and Payroll Services that the District Council had engaged Zurich Municipal to undertake an audit of the authority's health and safety management, particularly at the Senior/Strategic level. The draft document had raised several issues which currently were being discussed with the Consultant from Zurich. Once these had been resolved, the final document would be published and this together with a consequential Health and Safety Strategy and associated Action Plan would be submitted to the next meeting of the Group.

6. INCIDENT AT ST NEOTS LEISURE CENTRE

- 6.1 The views of the Advisory Group were requested by the Health and Safety Adviser following her description of an incident at St Neots Leisure Centre on 24th February 2008, which had involved a masked robbery at the main reception.
- 6.2 The Group were satisfied that a full internal investigation had taken place and that the two employees present at the time had been given any necessary support needed. First Contact and the external

Counselling Service had been offered to the employees. In the event, sufficient support had been provided by their Manager and colleagues. The Group felt that the incident had been well managed, particularly because the employees had followed implicitly, actions provided in their earlier violence at work training. It was agreed that the earlier removal of glass screens from the reception area had resulted in the incident being less violent than may have been case had the screens been in place. The Group were advised however that during the planned refurbishment of the reception area, consideration would be given to providing an emergency exit for staff to a place of safety (e.g. a lockable office). It was suggested that when completed this could form part of a future ad-hoc safety inspection visit. For the future, the Advisory Group noted that a sealed area for safe egress from reception would form part of the design for the dryside facilities at St Neots and Huntingdon Leisure Centres and that "Violence at Work" training now would include advice on dealing with such incidents. The Advisory Group requested the Head of HR and Payroll to commend on their behalf, the actions of the 2 employees involved.

7. ASBESTOS POLICY

- 7.1 The Group considered a report by the Head of HR and Payroll Services on the District Council's Asbestos Policy which had been reviewed and updated to comply with the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2006.
- 7.2 The Asbestos Policy had been amended to take account of the significant changes that had been introduced and, in particular to nominate specific duty holders to carry out responsibilities to ensure compliance with the Regulations in managing asbestos in the Council's owned or managed premises. It was explained that appropriate asbestos awareness training would be carried out. In approving the contents of the policy the Group recommended that it be adopted by the Cabinet as Council policy.

8. THE CONTROL OF NOISE AT WORK REGULATIONS 2005 (APPLICATION TO PLACES OF ENTERTAINMENT)

- 8.1 The Group received and noted a report by the Head of HR and Payroll Services on the Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 and the action taken by the Council to ensure compliance with one section of the Regulations which had not come into effect until April 2008. This related to the provision of live or recorded music and the potential adverse effect on employees who may be exposed to noise in excess of the statutory limits. As the Council provides live or recorded music at its Leisure Centres, noise assessments had been carried out by specialist Officers from the Environmental and Community Health Services division. The Advisory Group was informed that preliminary results had indicated that the music played was not above the threshold levels requiring further action but that the Health and Safety Advisor would seek confirmation on this assessment.

9. THE CONTRACTORS HEALTH ASSESSMENT SCHEME (CHAS) – UPDATE

- 9.1 The Group received and noted a report by the Head of HR and Payroll Services on the Contractors' Health Assessment Scheme. The Group endorsed the action taken by COMT on 15th April 2008 to approve the

introduction of CHAS as the Council's method of vetting contractors who were being employed to carry out potentially high risk activities for the Council and to ensure that the second and third stages of the process were undertaken by competent persons.

**10. APPOINTMENT OF:
(a) A CHAMPION FOR HEALTH AND SAFETY (OFFICER) AND
(b) A RESPONSIBLE PERSON FOR FIRE**

- 10.1 The Group were informed that interim arrangements would be put in place to ensure appointments to the posts of Officer Champion for Health and Safety and Responsible Person For Fire in view of the imminent retirement of the Director of Central Services and Head of HR and Payroll Services. These appointments would be reported to the next meeting of the Advisory Group. In the meantime, it was reported that Councillor A Hansard had been appointed Member Champion for Health and Safety.
- 10.2 The Group were updated on the concerns raised at Item 5.3 of their previous report and were informed that, following reassessment of the perceived risk inherent in the selection of the first assembly point, it was now agreed that employees in Centenary House would continue to assemble on the green in front of the Bus Station but they would cross slightly further down St Mary's Street rather than on the corner as it was felt that this was still a safer option.

**11. ACCIDENT REPORT
(a) DISTRICT COUNCIL EMPLOYEES**

- 11.1 The Group received and noted a report by the Head of HR and Payroll Services giving details of 23 accidents involving employees, one accident involving a volunteer and three involving non-employees that occurred since the last meeting of the Group.
- 11.2 Whilst most of the accidents were relatively minor, one accident which had involved an employee being absent from work for more than three days had been reported to the HSE.
- 11.3 The Group was concerned at the cause of the accidents referred to in accident Nos 2111 and 2119 and questioned whether it was reasonable for one operator to be emptying a recycling bin of that size and weight (1100 litres). Having been informed that the problems concerning the emptying of wheeled bins which had been raised before and were being looked into and whilst acknowledging that there were several issues to take into account including the nature of the individual sites and ground conditions, the Advisory Group requested that a report be submitted to their next meeting and that a risk assessment on the practice be undertaken in the meantime.

(b) LEISURE CENTRES ACCIDENT REPORT

- 11.4 The Group also received a report by the Leisure Centres' Health and Safety Co-ordinator detailing accidents which had been reported at the Leisure Centres since the last meeting.

12. TRAINING REPORT

- 12.1 The Group were acquainted, by means of a report by the Head of HR and Payroll Services, with details of Health and Safety courses which had been provided since the previous meeting of the Group.
- 12.2 At the request of the Health and Safety Adviser, the Advisory Group agreed to a change in the format of the report to reflect the total number of participants per course over a specific period. In terms of training for new Members of the Group, the Health and Safety Adviser undertook to discuss with the Chairman and Councillor Mrs Jordan the possibility of their attendance on the IOSH Safety for Senior Executives Course and whether other Members would benefit from a refresher course on the subject. In addition Democratic Services Officers agreed to canvass the interest of Members in training on first aid should their assistance be required out of hours during evening meetings.
- 12.3 The Group were requested to give some thought to ideas for future visits for the ad-hoc safety inspections.
- 12.4 The Group conveyed their thanks and extended their best wishes to Phil Duerden, Head of HR and Payroll Services on his forthcoming retirement and for his support and advice over the years.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the Safety Advisory Group was scheduled for 10 September 2008.

Chairman