

**Agenda Item No:**  
**10**

**Report**  
**No:177/15**

**Report Title:**           **Joint Health and Safety Forum activities from January to November 2015**

**Report To:**           **Employment Committee**       **Date:**           **7 December 2015**

**Cabinet Member:**

**Ward(s) Affected:**   **All**

**Report By:**           **Jill Yeates**

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**Purpose of Report:**

To report the main activities of the Joint Health and Safety Forum from January 2015 to November 2015.

**Officer's Recommendation:**

- 1 To consider the issues reported.

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**Reasons for Recommendations**

- 1 The Employment Committee Meetings will consider health and safety issues as specified in Section 5 Remit of the Employment Committee Part 2.4 c and Part 2.5 a and g to m of the Lewes District Council Constitution.

- 2 **Information**

The Joint Health and Safety Forum meets monthly to discuss health and safety matters within the council. It is chaired by the Director of Service Delivery, and administered by the Health and Safety Officer. Those attending the meetings are Heads of Service and other managers with higher profile health and safety responsibilities, and Unison representatives. The Terms of Reference, agendas and minutes are on InfoLink: <http://intranet/staff/14420.asp>

Specific health and safety matters are taken first to the manager(s) concerned, and then discussed in the Forum where relevant across different sections within

the council. Over the past eleven months, the following issues have been acted upon.

- 2.1** All employers with 5 or more employees must have a written Health and Safety Policy with the contents specified by the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. This must be reviewed annually (and where there is a specific reason to review it). Lewes District Council (LDC) had a completely new policy in 2013/4, and this was reviewed and amended in 2015, agreed by the Forum, and signed on 28 July by the Chief Executive. It is on InfoLink: <http://intranet/staff/1120.asp> The new document contains the same statement of our Policy, but has made the wording more succinct under the same headings of Commitment, Awareness, Competence, Compliance and Delivering our Policy. The 'Arrangements' (ie who does what) have also been updated in line with LDC structure changes.
- 2.2** The Forum introduced an Audit process a year ago, which has been refined with experience. Having prioritised the services and LDC areas of work into high, medium and low risk, a programme was drawn up over the year and the final audit (of Internal Audit!) has just been completed. The Forum agreed a generic list of questions, and the Health and Safety Officer makes appointments to see the managers concerned and go through the form with them, seeking evidence and identifying 'green' areas where the section is compliant (either legally, or with LDC Policy), 'amber areas' where work is being done to achieve compliance, and 'red' areas where the necessary work hasn't yet been done. The manager is then asked for a programme to show when the amber and red items will be completed, and asked to come to the Forum three or six months later to report on what they have achieved, and any areas needing further work. This has proved successful in engaging managers in complying with legal and Policy requirements. The audits are on InfoLink: <http://intranet/staff/14883.asp>
- 2.3** The accident and near miss reports are considered at every meeting, although where there are only one or two reports, this is done verbally rather than in graphic form. The Forum examines any trends and their causes. (An update is also reported to every Employment Committee Meeting.)
- 2.4** Risk Assessments (RA), Safe Systems of Work (SSOW) and COSHH (Control of Substances Hazardous to Health) Assessments have been a focus this year in order to ensure that they are all up to date and have been discussed with the staff to whom they are relevant. These should be discussed with new staff or agency workers, when they are updated or revised due to changes, or regularly as revision to ensure that workers are aware of the safety issues and procedures they need to follow. The Audit process is helping to ensure that team meetings are covering these vital processes, and the Forum is active in keeping these systems in high profile. This is an ongoing process.
- 2.5** The Health and Safety Change Management Plan 2013-4 was completed by the end of March, and a new Management Plan was

agreed by the Forum. This covers projects such as updating LDC's Lone Working Policy and Procedures together with Customers of Concern Policy and Procedures, and Asbestos Policy and Procedures. The procedures for all these have proved to be complicated and time-consuming projects, but should be completed by the end of the year. Other current projects are Driving Policy and Procedures for those with Lease cars or using their own cars on LDC business, reviewing the Fire Policy and Procedures, looking at Emergency Policies other than Fire (ie Bomb and White Powder Incidents), ensuring that the council is compliant with working at height regulations, and updating accident investigation procedures.

- 2.6** Unison representatives raised several concerns with LDC's approach to asbestos across the Council; as a result of this a working party was set up to deal with aspects such as our register and management plans, staff training and asbestos inspections. The working party reported back to each Forum meeting and the objectives have now been achieved.
- 2.7** The situation at Fort Road has also been monitored by the Forum because of the vulnerabilities of the few staff who still work there. All have been trained in basic first aid, and there is always a manager or team leader there so that the reception staff are not left alone in the building. The move to Saxon House will need a new review.
- 2.8** The Forum asked for a safe system of work for the use of fire extinguishers in LDC vehicles to be produced. This has been done, but we are seeking East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service comments to ensure that it is effective and up to date.
- 2.9** PAT testing across the council has been done and monitored by the Forum this summer.
- 2.10** A regular topic for the Forum is staff training. This has included:
- asbestos awareness training for any staff members who may need to be able to identify asbestos as part of their work;
  - basic first aid training for those working in small groups or out and about;
  - working at height training where necessary;
  - those who need to go on scaffolding as part of their jobs have had scaffolding inspection training;
  - manual handling training for office and other staff who may need to move items occasionally (those in waste and recycling have tailored manual handling training before they start work);
  - fire evacuation warden instruction – fire extinguisher training is being arranged;

- Health and Safety at LDC for new staff and as a refresher for staff, and also a similar course for managers.
- All post room and reception staff have had training from the counter-terrorism unit on how to recognise suspicious packages and letters, and what to do about this.
- HR have also run various resilience, self-defence, dealing with aggression on the 'phone, 'work smarter not longer' and other wellbeing courses to equip staff with the skills to protect themselves.

- 2.11** The Forum has also kept track of the purchase and placing of defibrillators at Southover House (outside for use of both staff and the public), and at Fort Road Offices (inside for use of staff, and visitors), and Robinson Road (also inside for use of staff and visitors). SECamb will be arranging instruction for first aiders in how to use these, although they are designed to be very simple to use.
- 2.12** In line with the last Internal Audit report, the Forum has agreed that items on Health and Safety issues should go into every LDC News and Corporate Briefing, and often recommends particular issues which should feature such as items on training, wellbeing, first aid, new or revised policies and procedures. Toolbox talks for team meetings are also discussed and recommended.
- 2.13** After last year's success with LDC entering two teams into the Global Corporate Challenge (a fitness and wellbeing initiative), the Forum was keen that we enter teams again this year. Four teams entered this year, and all did very well in improving their own levels of fitness and activity; this was also regularly featured in LDC News. It helps to raise awareness for all staff of the importance of physical activity to good health and wellbeing.
- 2.14** The Roles and Rights of Unison Health and Safety Representatives were reviewed, clarified and agreed, and put on InfoLink:  
<http://intranet/staff/1120.asp>
- 2.15** Finally, the Forum keeps updated with legal changes and health and safety developments which may affect the Council. These have included transitional arrangements for the new CDM Regulations; the European Court of Justice decision that obesity can now be classified as a disability if it affects an individual's 'full and effective participation'; a new Approved Code of Practice (ACOP) from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) for the use of woodworking machinery; amendments to the REACH (Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of CHemicals) legislation refer to safety data sheets which will affect any COSHH assessments we do, but it is up to the producers – not the users – to amend the safety data sheets. Many self-employed people no longer need to comply with Health and Safety law as long as what they do doesn't affect anyone else. However, LDC will still require that they do so, in compliance with our Health and Safety Policy.

### **3 Financial Appraisal**

There are no direct financial implications of this report.

### **4 Legal Implications**

The Legal Services Department does not need to comment specifically on the Forum's actions.

### **5 Sustainability Implications**

I have not completed the Sustainability Implications Questionnaire as this Report is exempt from the requirement because it is a progress report.

### **6 Risk Management Implications**

I have not completed the Risk Management Implications Questionnaire as this Report is exempt from the requirement because it is a progress report.

### **7 Equality Screening**

I have not completed the Equality Questionnaire as this Report is exempt from the requirement because it is a progress report.

### **8 Background Papers**

There are no background papers. A couple of links to InfoLink have been provided.

### **9 Appendices**

There are no appendices.