

Agenda Item No: 10 **Report No:** 175/16
Report Title: Joint Health and Safety Forum activities from November 2015 to November 2016
Report To: Employment Committee **Date:** 19 December 2016
Ward(s) Affected: All
Report By: Jill Yeates, Health and Safety Officer
Contact Officer(s)- Jill Yeates
Name(s): Jill Yeates
Post Title(s): Health and Safety Officer
E-mail(s): jill.yeates@lewes.gov.uk
Tel No(s): 01273 7106276

Purpose of Report:

To report the main activities of the Joint Health and Safety Forum from November 2015 to November 2016.

Officer's Recommendation:

- 1 To consider the issues reported.
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Reasons for Recommendations

- 1 The Employment Committee Meetings consider health and safety issues as specified in the Lewes District Council Constitution: Section 5 'Remit of the Employment Committee' 2.4 (c) and 2.5 (a) and (g) to (m). Lewes District Council is stated in the Health and Safety Policy Arrangements as having the "Statutory employer's responsibility for Health, Safety and Welfare of all its employees and those not in its employment who may be affected by its work - delegated to Cabinet." Reports come to Employment Committee, rather than to Cabinet.

2 Information

The Joint Health and Safety Forum has met every two months during 2016 to discuss health and safety matters within the council, and will meet quarterly during 2017 unless there is a reason to meet in between the set meetings. It has been chaired in turn by the Heads of Customer Services, and administered by the Health and Safety Officer. Those attending the meetings are managers with higher profile health and safety responsibilities, Unison representatives, and anyone with responsibilities in specific areas under discussion. 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 twelve 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. The Policy must be reviewed annually (and also when there is a specific reason to review it), and was reviewed in 2016, agreed by the Forum, and signed on 8 June by the new LDC Chief Executive, Rob Cottrill, who has also declared himself the Council's nominated Health and Safety leader at the top of the organisation to co-ordinate and monitor policy implementation. It is on InfoLink:

<http://intranet/staff/1120.asp> and the Forum is keen that evidence is collected to show how the council is meeting the Policy statements.

2.2 As with all aspects of LDC business needing legal compliance, the Health and Safety function is audited by **Internal Audit** every two years.

2.2.1 The latest audit report was produced in December 2015, and the management summary was rewarding for the Forum: "Internal Audit has obtained substantial assurance that there are effective procedures and controls covering the H&S function at the Council. On the whole, the positive developments that followed the 2013 review have been sustained. There is a framework of H&S policies and procedures in place, with adequate means to keep the procedures up to date and a reasonable framework of controls that enable risks to be actioned when they are identified." S2.1

2.2.2 The internal audit made helpful suggestions for future audit programme timing (the current programme is over 15 months rather than 12), and endorsed the importance of supporting the role of departmental managers in disseminating Health and Safety information via team meetings (the audits check that minutes show what was covered) and carrying out inspections (again, this is covered by the audits, and has been done in greater detail in Waste and Recycling since the HSE inspection visit).

2.2.3 At a subsequent Forum meeting to discuss the health and safety audits, the suggestion was made that cross-council issues were audited as well as individual sections. Following on from this audits of vehicle accidents and other insurance claims over the past three years were audited in March, legal compliance in the health and safety of staff running our surgeries (housing and revenues and benefits) in July and audits of lone working practices, and sickness patterns across the council, are being covered over the next few months.

2.2.4 Having prioritised LDC areas of work into high, medium and low risk previously, a new programme was drawn up for 2016-17 using the same

generic list of audit questions as previously, plus one about asbestos policy implementation. 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 started. The manager is then asked for a programme to show when the amber and red items will be completed. The Forum then has the opportunity to invite the manager at a later stage to report on what they have achieved, and any areas needing further work. When written updates are given by managers, these are circulated to Forum members.

- 2.3** The **accident and near miss reports** are considered at every Forum meeting, examining any trends and their possible causes. An update is also reported to every Employment Committee Meeting.
- 2.3.1 2016 was a 'near miss' campaign year, but by the summer it was clear that it wasn't having any further effect, and became part of the review of accident and incident reporting which is being considered by a working group.
- 2.3.2 The Forum have asked for more information to be provided each meeting about what has been done as a result of accident and near miss reports, so that changes can be evaluated where appropriate, and this has been provided.
- 2.3.3 The HSE has recently released last year's fatality statistics. Although the UK is one of the safest countries to work in, the Forum members agreed that 144 deaths were still too many. It was noted that workers in waste and recycling were one of the four key industrial sectors in which there were fatal injuries, and that there were 6 in the year 2015/16. It has been recommended that managers discuss this with staff in team meetings to encourage the reporting of accidents and near misses.
- 2.4** **Risk Assessments (RA), Safe Systems of Work (SSOW) and COSHH (Control of Substances Hazardous to Health) Assessments** have been a focus again this year in terms of updates for the Forum, and in particular to ensure that they have been discussed with the staff to whom they are relevant. This is an ongoing process, and the Health and Safety Officer has been to some team meetings to advise on specific issues relevant to the managers and staff.
- 2.5** The annual **Corporate Health and Safety Work Plan** is reviewed by the Forum at each meeting. The current plan covers policy reviews such as stress management, working at height; and procedure reviews such as fire safety, incident reporting, dynamic risk assessment; implementation plans such as the wellbeing initiative, the asbestos policy and procedure, bomb and white powder emergency procedures, asbestos emergency action procedures; and culture such as keeping Health and Safety issues at the forefront of everything staff do.

- 2.6** There have been regular **updates on policies** which were aligned across the council and introduced towards the end of last year, including the asbestos policy and procedures, the driving policy and procedures and lone working policy and procedures. The accident investigation procedure has now become part of the accident and incident reporting policy and procedures which a working group is progressing – with particular emphasis on one report form for all incidents (near misses, accidents, verbal and physical aggression and violence).
- 2.7** The **drug and alcohol policy and procedure** review working group are looking at all the issues involved in the issues of drugs and alcohol affecting staff at work. This has turned out to be a more complex issue than was expected, and is being informed by research into the issues.
- 2.8** The move to **Saxon House** was a challenge. Saxon House opened in January with LDC staff working in the new offices. We arranged for everyone who may work there to have fire safety and evacuation training. The fire service, who own the building, carry out their own unannounced drills, one of which was at the end of November where, unbeknown to the staff, they flooded part of the building with smoke. The LDC Health and Safety officer happened to be in the building at the time and so was subsequently involved in the debrief of ‘lessons learnt.’
- 2.8.1** LDC and the Police are covering the reception area from 10 am to 2 pm every weekday. At times the Police receptionist is absent, so there has been some issues concerning lone working. Two members of staff must be present before opening the reception, which has, on occasion caused delays in the reception being opened. We carried out a joint inspection with management, Unison and our Health and Safety Officer on 4 March 2016 which reported that teething troubles identified have been resolved.
- 2.9** **Health and Safety training** is discussed in the Forum, and this year has focussed on:
- Training in the use of fire extinguishers for fire wardens or those who may need to use them in their work. Over 60 members of staff are now clear about how and when to use fire extinguishers.
 - A basic fire e-learning course on our website, which everyone who hasn't done another fire course should do.
 - eCMT attended training in September with anti-terrorist officers to consider what to do in a situation where staff were at risk from attacks, and this supports the Bomb and White Powder Policy and Procedures.
 - Basic health and safety law and health and safety refresher training for staff – tailored to Waste and Recycling in specific cases.
 - Basic working at height training for those using stepladders and steps.
 - Basic manual handling training and refresher training for many staff throughout the council.

- COSHH training for staff and managers whose role requires it.
- Waste and recycling arranged appropriate training for volunteers who are joining the road contractors AONE, which was about health and safety when working on roads and included them attaining the CSCS (construction site) cards.
- Basic health and safety training and refresher training for supervisors and managers.

2.10 We are currently **arranging** the following training:

- ‘Managing Safely’ training for team leaders and supervisors. This is a certified IOSH (Institute of Occupational Safety and Health) basic course which helps supervisors to understand and have confidence in how the health and safety of their staff fits in with their day to day management.
- ‘Train the trainer’ for manual handling. This is a course particularly for our Waste and Recycling team leaders so that they can carry out manual handling training. Feedback suggests that it is more inspirational than the standard course.

2.11 Discussions on temperature issues in **Southover House** resulted in thermometers being put up, and fans being purchased. The water heaters in the kitchens have resulted in quite a few scalds (some reported, some not) and has resulted in a lot of discussion on what can be done between Facilities and the Forum. There are notices on the heaters, and people are regularly reminded to take care; we are also looking at moving the cold water dispenser further away from the corner in the kitchen on East 2 where most of the scalds happen.

2.12 We are also trying to ensure that all **ladders** used by council staff are legal, inspected and used by those trained appropriately.

2.13 **First Aiders** are important and a legal requirement for the Council. Most of our first aiders are trained by St. John’s Ambulance, they are flexible on dates and keep us updated on any changes. Southover House first aiders meet twice a year to discuss issues and experiences, and ensure that they all have the same understanding of situations affecting them all. The most recent meeting raised the issue of evac chair training following a recent incident, and the updating of first aid box contents inline with new HSE advice and British Standard updates. We are very grateful to our first aiders for their willingness to help others when necessary. Only our receptionist is a fixed member of staff at Saxon House so we have given a basic first aid course to the staff who work there most frequently, to ensure there will always be some help if needed.

2.14 The positive outcomes of our interactions with the HSE and other external bodies were reported to the June meeting of this Employment Committee. The Chief Executive and new Director of Service Delivery visited Robinson Road Depot to thank the staff in person for their

positive approach to health and safety which had resulted in the good report from the HSE.

2.15 The Council took part in the **Global Corporate Challenge** (a fitness and wellbeing initiative), this year for the third year running, supporting two teams. However, the novelty seems to have worn off, and although most of those involved tried hard, it no longer seems to provide the competitive enthusiasm, or colleague support shown in previous years. There were free initiatives online this year, and they may be a better area for encouraging staff next year, as anyone can sign up to them not just those in the Challenge.

2.16 Finally, the Forum keeps updated with **legal changes** and health and safety developments which may affect the Council. In February, the penalties for prosecutions for health and safety breaches went up significantly, depending on the organisation's turnover, and the possible 'worst case scenario' of the offence. Enforcement concerning the use of mobile 'phones whilst driving has also become stronger with higher fines and prison sentences. There was a change in the Water Regulations in June with regard to the level of radioactivity in water for human consumption which Environmental Health may have an interest in. Currently, EBC and LDC Health and Safety Policies and procedures are not being aligned: as long as both councils have them and employees abide by them, it is not a high priority to integrate them.

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.