

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR (ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT)
TO THE EXECUTIVE
17 OCTOBER 2008

Annual Report on Health and Safety Performance 2007/8

1.0 Introduction and Report Summary

- 1.1 The Annual Report on Health and Safety Performance for 2007/08 is attached at Appendix A. The aim is to provide members, the public and others interested in health and safety with information on what the district council is doing to protect its employees, volunteers, contractors, clients and service users. Overall the council's health and safety record has been good. 2007/08 has been a good year for embedding a robust framework to ensure a high level of health and safety performance at all levels, underpinned by an understanding of roles and responsibilities, quality training and development, and consistent application of policies and procedures.
- 1.2 In particular, an IOSH (Institute of Occupational Safety and Health) accredited development programme for managers and members has been put in place and training has commenced. The Vale's Governance arrangements for health and safety at both a board and operational level have been embedded. A review of risk assessments has been undertaken in all service areas, ensuring that all significant risks have been covered. Also new initiatives on monitoring have been introduced with our partners in delivering services in leisure and grounds maintenance.
- 1.3 The contact officer for this report is Helen Bishop, Deputy Director (Organisational Development and Support), telephone (01235 540372).
E-mail: helen.bishop@whitehorsedc.gov.uk

2.0 Recommendations

That the Annual Report on Health and Safety Performance for 2007/08 is received and published.

3.0 Relationship with the Council's Vision, Strategies and Policies

This report relates to the Council's Vision in that it supports objectives A, B and E. The report does not conflict with any Council Strategies.

HELEN BISHOP
DEPUTY DIRECTOR (ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT)

VALE OF WHITE HORSE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Annual Report on Health and Safety Performance 2007/8

Introduction

This report covers the year from April 2007 to March 2008. The aim is to provide members, the public and others interested in health and safety with information on what the district council is doing to protect its employees, volunteers, contractors, clients and service users.

Health and Safety in the council is part of the overall risk management strategy which aims to identify and manage all risks to the council and its services to the public. Health and Safety focuses on the risks of injury and ill health that can arise from the wide range of activities necessary to deliver services to the people of the Vale.

The council recognises that ensuring the health, safety, and welfare of employees and others is not only a legal requirement but an essential part of delivering a well managed council.

The health and safety policy and procedures which put systems in place to secure high standards are available on the council Intranet at

http://intra/Health_and_safety/default.asp

This is the inaugural report for the council. The council commits to producing an annual summary of its health and safety performance and plans in line with the government's revitalising health and safety strategy.

Summary

The key findings of the report are:

- Overall the council's health and safety record is good. This was yet another year without a reportable accident to an employee.
- An important step was taken in developing awareness amongst managers in health and safety, when a first group of them was successfully put through the IOSH (Institution of Occupational Safety and Health) accredited "Managing Safely" course.
- The Health and Safety Review Board met twice during the year to consider the strategic implications of legislative change for the authority, especially the corporate manslaughter legislation.

- A Safety Action Group of senior managers met five times to plan and monitor operational initiatives in health and safety. The roles and responsibilities for each of these senior managers were defined and agreed by this group to ensure a consistent and comprehensive approach to health and safety is adopted at an operational level. Changes were made in corporate management arrangements to ensure that health and safety became an agenda item at all senior management meetings.
- The council's occupational health service contractors continued to support our interest in promoting employee health and reducing days lost due to stress and anxiety.
- A review of risk assessments was undertaken in all service areas to assure the directors that all significant risks had been covered, and training was provided for staff responsible for maintaining these assessments
- New initiatives on monitoring have been introduced with our partners in delivering services in leisure and grounds maintenance.

Performance in 2007/08

Pro-active Monitoring of Health and Safety

The Council recognises that regular pro-active monitoring of the health and safety of its own activities and those of its contractors is an essential prerequisite for successful health and safety management.

The various service areas prepare a summary report on progress in key areas for the monthly directorate meetings. Any issues they consider the director needs to be appraised of are also raised.

Engineering surveyors conduct detailed health and safety inspections of all premises at least annually, and often more frequently, to identify any unsafe physical conditions. 150 such inspections took place last year.

There are additional inspections by competent persons of equipment at special risk such as playground equipment.

Revised monitoring plans are in course of preparation for all major contracts. These will integrate the monitoring of health and safety with the monitoring of other aspects of the contractor's function

Underpinning these local arrangements are the audits of the safety management systems of our service areas or their contractors using an accredited safety management audit system (ACT 123). In the year 2007/08 the audit process was applied to the council's waste management contractor and they achieved a standard of better than legal compliance. Any outstanding issues will be the subject of an improvement plan (referred to as an action for 08/09).

Re-active Monitoring of Health and Safety

There were 7 accidents to employees in the year to April 2008. These were all minor in nature and none were reportable to the enforcing authorities. There was one incident reported where staff were threatened with physical assault.

During the year the council paid out £6,154.24 on 4 public liability claims as detailed below. A further 5 claims were received in the year, 4 of which were trips.

Fall in West Way	£4,422.06
Fall in West Way	£115
Car damage (River View)	£665.43
Stone Close (unclassified)	£951.75

The Council's waste management contractors experienced 2 reportable accidents. Our grounds maintenance contractors also had 2 reportable accidents. There were no reportable accidents at any of the Council's leisure facilities

Risk Assessment

The types of health and safety risks are varied, but can include:

- Lone Working
- Violence and aggression
- Transport and road risk
- Manual handling risk
- Slips and falls
- Confined space working
- Display screen working
- Work related ill health including stress

To ensure that all risks are identified, the council has introduced standardised risk assessment processes for use by management and staff and offers special training courses in risk assessment to all who need them.

Generic risk assessments for general office work and lone working were produced for service areas to adapt to their own needs and circumstances.

All service areas were asked to review their risk assessments and to report to senior management on their status and coverage. This proved to be a productive exercise as it identified previously unrecorded hazards.

Corporate Management

The Health and Safety Review Board met twice during the year to discuss the Health and Safety Executive's statements of regulatory change and their implications for the council, together with any other issues of strategic importance such as the training strategy (see below) and the corporate manslaughter legislation.

The heads of the various service areas together with other officers with special responsibilities for Health and Safety met regularly as the Safety Action Group to plan and monitor progress with the council's safety action plan for 2007/08. Their work was in turn reviewed by the Health and Safety Review Board.

It is the council's policy that health and safety be managed as part of the normal span of management functions. To encourage this an initiative was introduced that required health and safety to be a regular item at all senior management meetings. To assist this process, a list of key actions was produced for each head of service area to guide their reporting.

Health and Safety is now a standing item on the agenda for all client/contractor meetings in waste management, leisure, and grounds maintenance.

To support management the council has for some years employed (part time) a Health and Safety Adviser qualified to the chartered member level of the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health. He acts as the statutory competent person for the authority.

The imminence of the corporate manslaughter legislation with its emphasis on the “directing mind” of an organisation strongly indicated that those elected members who are integral to the decision making process at senior level should receive the same standard of health and safety training as the directors. A proposal to train all members of the Executive to the same standard as the directors was made and accepted for implementation in the year 2008/9.

Training

The Council decided that to improve the competence of all its managers (including strategic directors) to control health and safety they should receive appropriate training. The standard adopted was that the courses(s) should be accredited by IOSH (Institution of Occupational Safety and Health- the chartered body for occupational safety and health). Senior Executives were trained in November 2006 and this year (2007/8) twelve middle managers passed the IOSH “Managing Safely” module. A further “Managing Safely” course is planned for 2008.

It is also the intention that all other members of staff will take the IOSH “Working Safely” module as a base standard. Work continues on developing a web based system for delivering this training.

Due to their roles and responsibilities some employees will require some more specific training in some aspects of health and safety. In this past year such training has been offered in manual handling (10 persons), asbestos management (2), occupational driving (2), pesticide use (1), and the Construction, Design, and Management Regulations (CDM)

As part of the initiative to review risk assessments (see earlier) a risk assessment training session was run and this was attended by 8 persons.

Virtually all staff have occasion to use display screen equipment at times. This year the Council procured a web-based system to train staff to make and record their own desk based risk assessments. The implementation of this system is scheduled for delivery within 2008/09.

Employees are trained as first aiders to provide first aid cover in the council’s buildings. In 2007/8 3 employees were trained in occupational first aid and 3 employees received refresher training to maintain their qualifications.

The Council also trains its fire wardens in general fire awareness, evacuation procedures, and the use of fire extinguishers. Further courses are planned for 2008/9

Finally the council considered the position of elected members and decided that those who were part of the “directing mind” of the authority should receive the same training as directors. Consequently those who sit on the Executive of the Council are to take this training in July 2008.

Employee Consultation

During the year the joint consultative committee met 4 times. Health and Safety issues raised included smoking at work, car parks, cleanliness in staff kitchens and absence management.

Partnerships

Our services are often delivered via partnership arrangements. These can include a wide range of external organisations with specialities as different as grounds maintenance and the management of leisure facilities. By focussing on co-operation, communication, and monitoring with our partners we aim to ensure these operations are also managed as safely as is reasonably practicable. As well as health and safety being a standing agenda item for all client/contractor meetings the client officers have also to table a report at their monthly team meetings with the head of service.

Occupational Health

There were a number of referrals to the occupational health service during the year for assessment and support. This included advice on getting people back into work from long term sickness.

Confidential counselling sessions are available for employees who need some support to resolve difficulties at home or at work that may be causing stress. In 2007/8 over 20% of sickness absence was attributed to stress and depression.

Enforcing Authorities

There has been no HSE involvement or enforcement this year.

Proposed Actions for 2008/9

The key health and safety actions for the current year (2008/9) are:

Risk Assessment

- The status of risk assessments will be audited in a selected service area.
- One or more topics will be chosen and the status of risk assessments in their respect will be audited in all service areas.

Health and Safety Audit

- All leisure centres will be audited using an accredited safety management audit system.
- Special measures will be introduced to help the waste management function implement their audit recommendations (from 2007/8).

Training

- A web based learning and assessment module will be introduced to all service areas to enable users to assess and manage their own risks in the use of display screen equipment.
- A further "Managing Safely" course accredited by IOSH will be organised for a second group of middle managers.
- All members who sit on the Executive will receive the director's health and safety training already given to the council's senior managers.

- Proposals will be developed to introduce IOSH accredited “Working Safely” training for all staff using a web based system.

Stress at work

- A workshop will be organised for senior managers to raise their awareness of stress and prepare a plan of action for the future.
- A further stress audit will be organised for all staff.
- A programme of initiatives to reduce unacceptable stress will be developed and introduced.

Corporate Manslaughter

- A report on the implications of the new legislation will be prepared for senior management meetings and any recommendations actioned.

Driving at Work

- A driving at work policy will be prepared and launched to staff and managers.

Lone working

- Current risk assessments will be reviewed with the intention of introducing common standards where appropriate.

Management Meetings

- The Health and Safety Review Board will meet every six months to discuss the implications of legislative change or changes in safe practice promoted by the enforcing authorities. The meetings will coincide with the publication of the HSE’s statement of forthcoming statutory changes.
- The Health and Safety Action Group will meet at least four times to supervise and monitor the status of the key actions for 2008/9, together with any other items of general concern.

Health and Safety Annual Report

- A report for the year 2008/9 will be prepared for general release.

HELEN BISHOP
DEPUTY DIRECTOR (ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT)
September 2008