

CORPORATE HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE – 10TH JANUARY 2007

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON REFUSE/RECYCLING IMPROVEMENT NOTICE

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF THE ENVIRONMENT

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Members, Management and the Trade Union Safety Representatives of the progress made towards complying with the requirements of the follow up Health and Safety Executive (HSE) inspection of Refuse and Recycling and the HSE Improvement Notice (W4030163) see Appendix 1.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Authority received its first visit from the HSE in July of 2005. The inspection is part of the HSE program to visit all Welsh Authorities over a 2 year period, in an attempt to work with them to improve safety standards within Refuse, Recycling and Waste Management. The first visit resulted in a report that recommended various improvements in the way the Authority both provides and manages its services and resulted in an agreed action plan to resolve the issues raised. The second visit, approximately one year later, in June/July 2006 was intended as a review of the initial visit and to evaluate progress against the agreed action plan.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The corporate aims of the Authority are supported by the Directorate with service specific aims of implementing the policy directions contained within the Wales Waste Strategy and European Landfill Directive. The service also supports Corporate Health and Safety objectives of the Authority in providing a safe and well managed place to work.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 As stated above the initial report resulted in an action plan to rectify the various issues raised. During the revisit in 2006 the various issues initially raised were commented on:
- (i) Safe Sites – signage had been improved at two CA sites and whilst improvements had been initiated at Trehir it was difficult, given the size, high usage and current site layout to redesign to sufficient standards to fully segregate pedestrians from vehicles. This issue has been raised at Capital Strategy Group in relation to funding and when this is available the site will be redesigned/relocated.
 - (ii) Safe Vehicles – It was noted that new vehicles had been ordered which would reduce risks whilst loading bulky collection. It was suggested that minor modifications should be made to the Defect Reporting Sheets (inclusion of checking reversing alarms) and this will be addressed when there is a reprint, after exhaustion of the current stock. It was also noted that thorough completion of the Defect Sheet, before leaving the yard,

should be enforced and this would now be picked up as part of the Supervisors random site inspections.

- (iii) Safe Drivers – It was noted that additional Banksman Training had been completed and again monitoring this in practice would form part of the Supervisors Site Inspections.
- (iv) Manual Handling – It was noted that the remaining employees had now benefited from manual Handling Training and that Manual Handling aids had been provided where appropriate. It was also noted that we would be undertaking a trial of one kerbside collection round utilising 140 ltr wheel bins, this again would reduce the need for Manual Handling. Comments were also made regarding Green Waste and reducing the need for crews to physically open the bags during or after collection. It was noted that we had already trialled biodegradable bags, which unfortunately degraded before we could undertake the collection so were deemed unsuitable. We are also investigating with our Green Waste reprocessor, the provision of a 'bag-splitter' at his site.
- (v) Information and Training – It was stated that information relating to the Code of Safe Working Practices and Risk Assessments provided to employees should be relevant to their posts and succinct. It is therefore our intention to provide pocket sized (on key ring) summaries of the Code of Safe Working Practices (CoSWP) and Risk Assessments (RA's) to all employees with full copies of the above documents available on all vehicles and within our offices. Training Needs analysis had been undertaken for each category of employee and it was agreed that this would be reassessed on a regular basis to ensure its ongoing suitability. It was also agreed, where necessary, that 'tool box talks' on Health and Safety would be incorporated into the regular Team Briefings.
- (vi) Customer Care – It was noted that guidance had been issued to Customer Care regarding advice and instructions that should be provided to members of the public arranging a bulky collection. It was however confirmed that the need to provide this should be reinforced to ensure it is complied with.
- (vii) Monitoring and Review - It was agreed that Supervisors Inspections are an integral part of managing safety and we have developed a new Supervisors Inspection form covering the main areas of risk within our Service Area. Supervisors will, whenever possible in the future, undertake three random inspections per week covering either refuse, recycling, cleansing or public conveniences.
- (viii) Comments were also included in the report regarding an accident where an employee was unfortunately struck by a passing vehicle, sustaining a broken leg. The accident occurred when an employee was undertaking a collection from a street in contradiction to the time dictated within the Route Risk Assessments (RRA) and in contradiction to the advice included in the CoSWP. The HSE report commented that the crossing of roads was not a one off occurrence and effective monitoring should have picked this up and appropriate action taken to prevent it reoccurring. It is however important to put this accident into context with us undertaking over 100,000 collections per week, and this being the first incident of this type within the last 7 years. There has consequently been little cause for concern with this aspect of our operation in the past but given the problems encountered we have taken the opportunity to review the RAs and issued further guidance to crews in an attempt to avoid a reoccurrence of this type of incident.

4.2 It is of course difficult for Supervisors, when they have a range of employees working at diverse locations throughout the borough, to ensure they are complying with all requirements but with the revised inspection regime then action will be taken against employees who put themselves or others in danger by not complying with CoSWP and RA's.

4.3 The Improvement Notice was served under the heading of Transport and related to the lack of 'suitable or sufficient risk assessments of all routes'. Whilst the report accepted that 'route risk assessments' had been compiled and that Drivers had been involved in their compilation the HSE felt that they had not actually identified or addressed all the risks that may be encountered on each round. Prior to undertaking RRA's we canvassed several other Local Authorities to determine an acceptable format but were unable to find an appropriate model. Unfortunately there is little guidance available on RRA's so we endeavoured to produce as detailed below.

The original assessments were undertaken as a desk top exercise between Supervisors and Drivers using their knowledge and experience to identify and control the risks that are often inherent in the types of services we provide.

4.4 The amended assessments, again involving drivers, have involved Supervisors driving/travelling each round each day to undertake an evaluation of the risks and then devising an action plan to reduce or eliminate wherever possible. This, is very time consuming exercise taking over 60 days just to cover the Refuse Collection Rounds (12 vehicles for 5 days and another vehicle for part of a week) This timescale does not include the office analysis and development of actions plans required after the site visits have been undertaken.

4.5 Where possible the new RRA's have, taken on board the issues raised in the notice. There are however some aspects where this has not been possible. A balance has been struck between cost, practicality and risk in order to avoid significant cost increases (e.g. in replacing large parts of the refuse fleet with an increased number of smaller vehicles) or transferring risks to the public (e.g. insisting that bins are placed at unacceptable locations for collection).

4.6 Due to the volume of work in competing RRA's (we have another 95 RRA's to undertake), it has been necessary to ask the HSE for an extension of time to comply with the notice (was due to expire on the 13th December 2006. Compliance within this timescale has significant resource and practicality implications. We have just heard from the HSE that they are pleased with the work so far produced and they have confirmed that the notice compliance deadline will be extended until 27th June 2007 which should allow sufficient time to complete all outstanding works.

4.7 In addition to the above a joint working group has been formulated to progress resolution of the works required by the improvement notice. To disseminate the information gained as part of this process a cross Directorate meeting has been arranged for January 2007.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The funding for a new CA Site to replace Trehir could cost, if the Authority already owns the land, in excess of £500,000.

5.2 The completion of the Route Risk Assessments, will cost over £45,000 and this can be accommodated from within existing budgets.

5.3 Fleetroute, employment of consultants and a dedicated route planning program to schedule Green Waste Rounds is likely to cost some £20,000. This will be funded via a contribution from the Insurance and Risk Management Fund.

6. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Releasing of 2 employees to undertake the RRA's will necessitate cover by a Relief Supervisor in Refuse and Cleansing for a period of 9 months.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Members are asked to note the contents of the report.

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