

CORPORATE HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE – 10TH FEBRUARY 2010

SUBJECT: CORPORATE H&S AUDIT HISTORY

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members, Management and Trade Union Safety Representatives of improvements made since the introduction of auditing by the Corporate H&S Unit and to discuss and agree proposed changes to the auditing process.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Corporate Health and Safety Unit commenced a formal program of health and safety auditing in January 2005. An audit protocol was introduced which set out how audits would be arranged and ensured that written audit reports are sent and, following this, action plans are completed by the auditee and returned to the Corporate H&S Unit, within specified timescales.
- 2.2 Audits are scheduled on a quarterly basis and are agreed between the Corporate H&S Unit and the Senior H&S Officer for each Directorate. Audits are currently taken place in specific areas and are topic based. This means that areas may have repeat visits over a year where they are audited on different topics, e.g visits on one area to audit on building managers' responsibilities, latex, risk assessment, DSE, COSHH.
- 2.3 Due to initial issues in ensuring that action plans were returned, quarterly reports to each Directorate Management Team were introduced, as well as reports to the Corporate H&S Committee. These have been successful in raising the profile of H&S and in ensuring that the action plans are returned.
- 2.4 It was also decided that where audits showed red rated issues (these are findings which show a legal non-compliance/high risk issue) further audits would be scheduled after 6 months to follow up these findings. Audits are scheduled for areas and topics until all red rated issues have been dealt with. This can mean that an area has repeat visits over the course of one year (or longer) on one specific topic.
- 2.5 Following analysis of the audit results it has become clear that we have seen a vast improvement in audit results across the authority. The number of action plans that are now being returned has significantly improved and the number of red rated issues being identified during audits has significantly declined. Appendix 1 provides in-depth details and analysis of the audits and their results between 2005 and quarter 2 2009-10.
- 2.6 It is felt that these improvements provide a firm basis to review and improve the way in which the Corporate H&S Unit undertake auditing across the authority. The unit are looking to streamline the audits and undertake a lower number than previously but also ensure that the audits that are undertaken using a more holistic approach. It is proposed that the unit concentrate on audits in the following circumstances:

- Undertake more in-depth audits within areas rather than them being one topic specific. It is proposed that two main type of audits are developed; one to cover building related topics (Asbestos, Legionella, Fire Safety etc.) and another to cover the more general topics (Risk Assessment, COSHH, Stress etc).
- Continue with topic and area specific audits where:
 - the HSE have allocated areas of importance and/or have expressed an intention to undertake an inspection e.g. Violence at work within Children's Services.
 - Complaints are received and further investigations are necessary.
 - There is a specific identified risk via:
 - Establishing closer working relationships with Risk Management to enable areas and topics for audits to be chosen based on risk e.g. from the number and type of employee liability claims being received.
 - Establishing closer working relationships with Managing Attendance to enable areas and topics for audits to be chosen based on absence for work related reasons e.g. Stress.

It is also proposed that we investigate links with the audit department and look at the possibility of joint auditing where crossover occurs. This will potentially increase the profile of H&S and increase management ownership.

- 2.7 Due to the more holistic approach and a variety of topics being looked at during a visit it likely that audits will take longer to conduct. However areas will be less likely to feel that they are being over audited as it will decrease the number of re-visits to cover various different topics. It is also proposed that we investigate smarter ways of working with regards to undertaking audits and consider the use of bespoke auditing software and handheld PDA, as are used within other areas of the authority.
- 2.8 A review of the Audit Protocol and associated paperwork will be undertaken to reflect the changes in the audit process and ensure that the approach of the audits is that of a management tool and will be seen by managers as a helping hand in identifying and closing any defects in H&S compliance. We need to review the way in which the action plans are created and used to ensure that issues are dealt with in a way that has a minimal impact on services whilst ensuring H&S compliance.
- 2.9 It is envisaged that the quarterly reports to DMT and H&S Committee will continue, however their format will require reviewing.
- 2.10 It is proposed that the new audit procedure be started in April 2010, to coincide with the start of the new financial year.

3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 That the contents of the report be discussed and that the new audit proposals agreed.

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 Councillor Allan Pritchard, Cabinet Member for Human Resources and Constitutional Affairs

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Appendices:
Appendix 1

Details/ Analysis of the Audits and Results between 2005 and Quarter 2 2009-10