

Item no

Report to: **Executive Committee**
Date: **26 February 2008**
Report of: **Chief Executive**
Subject: **Health and Safety Policy Review**
Ward: **All**

1 **Purpose of Report**

To inform Members of a review of the Council's Health and Safety Policy.

2 **Consultation**

In carrying out the Health and Safety Policy Review I have consulted with Directors, Heads of Service, the Employee Welfare Panel, Trades Union Health and Safety Representatives and the Health and Safety Manager.

3 **Background**

Section 2(3) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 requires employers to prepare and keep under review a Health and Safety Policy. The existing Health and Safety Policy was adopted in February 2004 and includes a commitment to a review at least every two years. The Chief Executive is responsible to the Elected Members for ensuring the policy is reviewed.

Copies of the Policy document have been provided to all Elected Members and employees. More recently, we have made it available via the Council's intranet.

4 **Position Statement**

4.1 In 2003/4, the then existing Health and Safety Policy was subjected to a comprehensive review. Questionnaires were circulated to managers and trades union representatives and meetings held to broadly review the strengths and weaknesses of our health and safety management systems. This resulted in a small number of key changes:

- (i) a policy commitment to generally maintaining and improving the general health and well being of employees was incorporated;
- (ii) Service Heads were specifically required to review health and safety risks prior to any significant changes to plant, premises, systems of work or organisation;
- (iii) the need to ensure employees receive training in the agreed procedures on the Health and Safety Manual was reinforced.

- 4.2 Whilst the Health and Safety Policy lays down the Council's commitment to health and safety, and put in place the organisation and arrangements for implementing it, the detailed arrangements are set down in the Health and Safety Manual. These more detailed arrangements are documented as either Safe Working Procedures or Safety Management Procedures. At present the manual contains 104 separate procedures. The individual procedures are kept under constant review.
- 4.3 The Health and Safety Policy was last subjected to a formal review in February 2006. At that time it was concluded that it represented a sound framework for our management of health and safety at work.
- 4.4 Whilst we must not be complacent about our health and safety arrangements, I continue to believe that the framework set down in the current policy document is sound. Responsibilities and reporting lines are well understood. A local best value performance indicator for health and safety has been established, based on the number of the more serious accidents we record, i.e. those where the injury severity requires us to report them to the Health and Safety Executive. We have established target rates, for each year up to 2010, based on the national initiative "Revitalising Health and Safety". Our latest figures are on target.
- 4.5 Since the last review, two sets of construction health and safety regulations, referred to in sections 3.10 and 3.16 of the policy, have been replaced by a single new set of regulations.
- 4.6 Following the establishment of East Durham Homes, the Building Operations Job Function Safety Committee, referred to in section 3.19 of the policy is no longer in place.
- 4.7 None of the consultees involved in the review raised concerns about our existing policy.

5 Implications

5.1 Financial

There are no financial implications resulting from this review.

5.2 Legal

Completion of this review helps us to fulfil our legal obligations under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974.

5.3 Policy

The review forms part of the Council's Corporate Policy Framework.

5.4 Risk

Keeping our Health and Safety Policy under review is part of our Corporate Risk Management arrangements. Endorsement of the recommendation will ensure that our obligations are met and the risks managed.

5.5 **Communication**

The outcome of the review will be notified to all employees and Elected Members. An amendment will be prepared for inclusion in the existing Health and Safety Policy booklets.

5.6 **Corporate**

This Policy review is consistent with the Council's priority to strive for excellence in the workplace.

5.7 **LGR Implications**

As noted in 6.2 below, it is recommended that the Policy remains in place until the new Unitary Authority is established. As the employer, the statutory duty to have a Health and Safety Policy will fall upon the new Authority. A decision could be made by the new Authority to apply part or all of this Policy to some activities under its control, as a transitional arrangement.

6 **Recommendations**

6.1 Members are recommended to note the outcome of the Health and Safety Policy review.

6.2 Subject to the issuing of amendments regarding the changes noted in sections 4.5 and 4.6 of this report, Members are recommended to adopt the current policy until 31st March 2009, when this Council will be replaced by a new Unitary Authority.

Background Documents

District of Easington Health and Safety at Work Policy

The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2007