

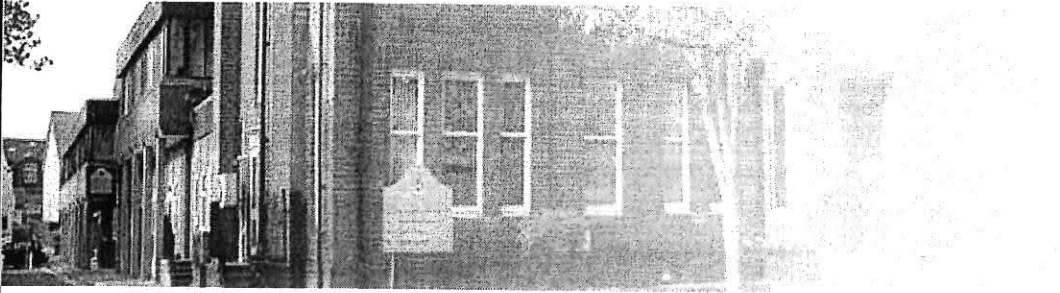


Health & Safety Unit

Annual Report 2011

Health & Safety





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INTRODUCTION

This has been the first full year of our new Health and Safety Strategy. Much progress has been made towards meeting the six strategic objectives set down within the plan and we believe that we are continuing to be amongst the best performing council's in the country with regard to the management of workplace Health and Safety. Much credit for this is of course due to staff and management meeting the challenge of their responsibilities and it is encouraging that there has been so much support for the new strategy from all sides of the council.

The council has also sought during the year to reinforce the message that we are in the business of providing a safe and healthy environment for all employees, contractors and visitors. We have no interest in implementing unnecessary bureaucratic regulation and interference. West Lancashire Borough Council is a pragmatic organisation with regard to the management of Health and Safety at work and our intention is to support management and staff and to strive to continually improve our own efficiency and effectiveness.

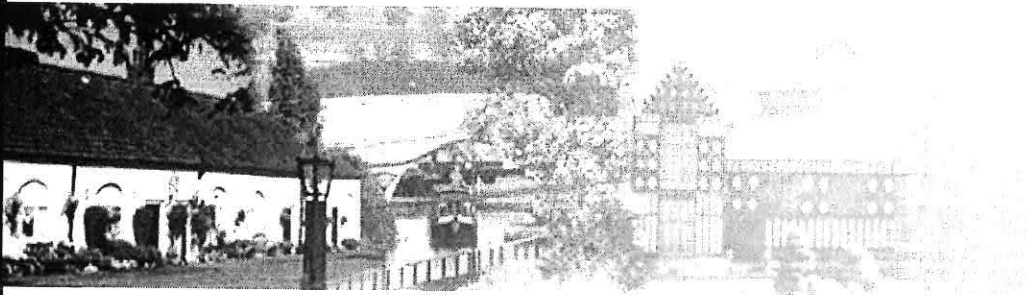
There is however no basis for complacency. We must continue to maintain health and safety standards, not least as we emerge from a period of organisational change.

Our strategy's general emphasis on the need for leadership, competence and worker involvement has particular relevance at this time.

Finally, I would wish to put on record our thanks to the members of the council for their commitment and energy and to our own staff who, at every level, make such an important contribution to protecting their fellow workers.

Councillor Iain Ashcroft
Portfolio Holder
Public Realm and Human Resources





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There have been a number of issues the Council has tackled during the period under review. The Council utilises annual Health and Safety plans to identify priorities and provide focus.

The most significant development is the development of the Council's Health and Safety Strategic Plan. The Health and Safety Strategy has at its heart the concepts of Sensible Health and Safety. Being "risk aware, not risk averse" is built into the Council's whole approach to managing risk in all aspects of its service provision. Sensible Health and Safety awareness will be key in ensuring that managers can deliver on their service priorities whilst ensuring the risks are managed in a sensible, proportionate and legal way.

The Strategy supports the implementation of the Corporate Health and Safety Policy. It provides the direction for improvement of Health and Safety performance across all areas of the Council's activities.

The aims of the Strategy are to deliver improvements to the capacity of the Council to handle risk effectively and produce a performance management framework. This will enable it to demonstrate improvements made in the management of Health and Safety and the contribution that it makes to the overall handling of risk and achieving of outcomes.

A vital ingredient of the new Health and Safety Strategic Plan is the Health and Safety training programme which is being implemented.

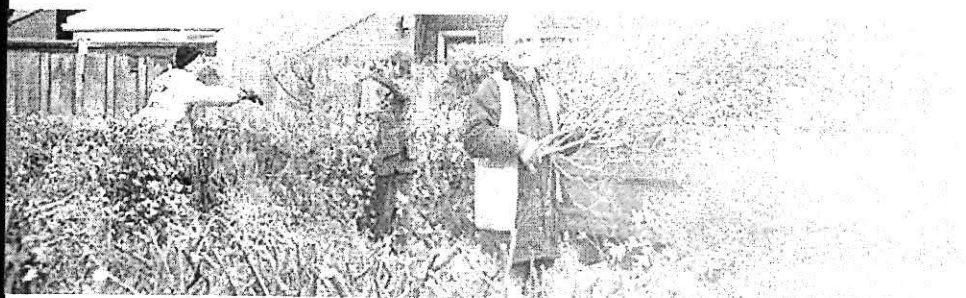
One of the fundamental requirements of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 is that all employees should be adequately trained for the work which they carry out.

Staff must be provided with sufficient Health and Safety information, instruction and training to ensure they are aware of the hazards in the workplace and know what safe working procedures to follow to reduce the risk of injury or work-related ill health.

Training is also essential to raise the level of staff awareness of Council Health and Safety

policies, procedures and practices, to ensure their effective implementation.

Most training is provided 'on-the-job'. Health and safety should form an integral part of the ongoing instruction and supervision of Staff. To supplement local training, a centrally organised programme of Health and Safety training is provided by the Council Health & Safety Unit.



HEALTH & SAFETY STRATEGIC PLAN

Planning is a crucial part of any organisation's Strategy for progress and forward thinking. Without planning there is no direction or emphasis. Health and Safety is a subject that requires planning to enable priorities to be identified and progress monitored.

The strategic plan was designed following the guidance set out in HSG 65 and BS 8800, to set specific, measurable and realistic objectives for developing, maintaining and improving proactive Health and Safety management systems across all the Council's activities.

The Health and Safety Strategy has at its heart the concepts of sensible Health and Safety. Being "risk aware, not risk averse" is built into the Council's whole approach to managing risk in all aspects of its service provision. Sensible Health and Safety awareness is key in ensuring that managers can deliver on their service priorities whilst ensuring the risks are managed in a sensible, proportionate and legal way.

The Strategy supports the implementation of the Corporate Health and Safety Policy. It provides the direction for improvement of Health and Safety performance across all areas of the Council's activities. Services will include, within their own Service Health and Safety Plans, their contribution to meeting this Strategy.

The aims of the Strategy is to deliver improvements to the capacity for the Council to handle risk effectively and produce a performance management framework that will enable it to demonstrate improvements made in the management of Health and Safety and the contribution that it makes to the overall handling of risk and achieving of outcomes.

The Health and Safety Strategic Plan has six strategic occupational Health and Safety objectives:

1. To build "Sensible Health and Safety" in to the Council's Health and Safety culture;

2. To ensure that the Council is a “learning” organisation by improving the way Health and Safety incidents are recorded, investigated and how lessons learnt from internal and external organisations are communicated;
3. To improve the way that Health and Safety performance is measured and monitored;
4. To develop leadership skills for managers that improves Health and Safety performance;
5. To ensure that all people involved in delivery of the Council services have the appropriate levels of competency to address their Health and Safety responsibilities;
6. To ensure that where the Council contracts out work to other organisations or works in partnership with other organisations the occupational Health and Safety risks are properly and satisfactorily addressed.

Each of the strategic objectives has a number of key result areas as detailed as on the following pages:

Strategic Objective 1: To build "Sensible Health and Safety" in to the Council's Health and Safety culture.

Key Result 1: To raise the awareness of what sensible Health and Safety consists of.

Key Result 2: To ensure that adequate safety management systems are implemented at all levels within the organisation and that all parts of the organisation are meeting their statutory obligations.

Key Result 3: Ensure all appropriate staff receives information, instruction and training in Health and Safety procedures.

Key Result 4: Review current legislation and or any research to ensure policies/procedures are up to date.

Key Result 5: Ensure the effective use of risk assessments and they reflect best practice.

Key Result 6: Review all generic risk assessments contained in the Risk Assessment Policy.

Key Result 7: Maintain a programme of in-house communication for Health and Safety.

Strategic Objective 2: To ensure that the Council is a "learning" organisation by improving the way Health and Safety incidents are recorded, investigated and how lessons learnt from internal and external organisations are communicated.

Key Result 8: To provide improved ways to enable staff to report any safety related incidents to their manager, improve the number of incidents investigated and improve the quality of the investigations undertaken.

Key Result 9: To develop ways in which any useful lessons learnt either from other Services or external organisations are communicated to managers within a Directorate and to other Services so that the maximum value is obtained and safety performance improved.

Strategic Objective 3: To improve the way that Health and Safety performance is measured and monitored.

Key Result 10: To identify key areas of Health and Safety performance.

Key Result 11: To identify the most effective and meaningful data, both reactive and proactive

Key Result 12: To measure the performance.

Key Result 13: To ensure that the data is used as part of the planning process to improve Health and Safety performance further.

Key Result 14: To develop a consistent approach to auditing within and across Services, focusing on those key areas that influence improvements in Health and Safety performance.

Key Result 15: To measure the safety management systems adopted at all levels of the Council against the HSE's Successful Health and Safety Management Guidance HSG 65.

Key Result 16: As part of a "learning organisation" to establish effective benchmarking with other similar organisations where appropriate.

Strategic Objective 4: To develop leadership skills for managers that improves health and safety performance.

Key Result 17: To identify what good leadership in health and safety looks like, and, working with trainers and lead managers, communicate this to managers as part of the leadership competencies drive.

Key Result 18: Ensure that health and safety leadership skills and actions are developed for senior managers who operate at a strategic and policy level, for middle managers who operate at a planning and objective setting level and managers who operate at the service delivery or implementation level.

Strategic Objective 5: To ensure that all people involved in delivery of the Council services have the appropriate levels of competency to address their Health and Safety responsibilities.

Key Result 19: To ensure that all individuals, including elected members, senior managers, employees, volunteers and contractors/partners who help deliver the services have the level of competency to complete their role safely without causing unnecessary risk to others who could be affected.

Key Result 20: To ensure that any training or development necessary to achieve this is identified, quantified, planned and resourced to ensure that success in this aim is delivered

Strategic Objective 6: To ensure that where the Council contracts out work to other organisations or works in partnership with other organisations the occupational Health and Safety risks are properly and satisfactorily addressed.

Key Result 21: To ensure that where the Council supports activities undertaken by others, consideration of the adequacy of Health and Safety arrangements will be part of the process in selecting projects to support.

Key Result 22: To ensure that all work undertaken by or on behalf of the Council (or where activities are led or supported by the Council) that these are undertaken with appropriate levels of Health and Safety built in. The Council will need to ensure that all contract and partnership documentation adequately addresses Health and Safety performance and suitable monitoring arrangements are established to ensure the level of performance required is met.

Monitoring the progress of the Health and Safety Strategic Plan is undertaken via the Health and Safety Committee with regular reports to the Cabinet and the Councils Management Team. It is crucial for the success of the plan that identified priorities are realistic, achievable and can be discharged within the allocated time and resources.

Excellent progress has been made towards achieving the objectives of the Health and Safety Strategic plan. The plan is continually reviewed to reflect the dynamic nature of Health and Safety management and the demands of the organisation. Some priority changes have inevitably been made but the overall objective of the plan has been maintained.

The following has been achieved over the past year against the objectives set by the Health and Safety Strategic Plan:

A bespoke Health and Safety training programme for managers has been developed in collaboration with EDP health, safety and environment consultants. This training course has been specifically designed for West Lancashire Borough Council Managers to assist them in the discharge of their Health and Safety responsibilities.

The course is designed to give delegates an awareness and understanding of what arrangements are required to ensure the safety of the work area/activity being managed, the importance of having these particular arrangements in place and how to ensure that any such arrangements are being carried out in practice.

The original intention was to have a course duration of one day. But after an initial pilot course it was decided that a different approach would be more productive and beneficial to staff. The basic structure of the course will remain but we will be adopting a blended learning approach, by this we mean a split between e-learning techniques and tutor led sessions. The general content will consist of nine module, five of which will be core modules and the remaining four will depend upon the nature of the work the manager is engaged in.

The Health and Safety Unit produces a quarterly Health and Safety newsletter for all staff, this covers a wide range of subject areas and has in general received positive feedback from readers.

The introduction of a Health and Safety Gateway on the Council Intranet several years ago has proved very successful. This resource is regularly updated to keep the information relevant and fresh. It is expected that the growth of the Health and Safety gateway as an important information resource for staff will continue in the coming year.

A full and comprehensive Health and Safety training programme was introduced toward the end of the year, the programme content being gleaned from the results of the recent training

needs analysis initiative and the annual staff appraisal programme.

The initial take up for places was very encouraging with some subject areas being over subscribed resulting in additional courses being added to the calendar.

A full and comprehensive Health and Safety management audit programme has been developed, this is an enhancement of the audit system that was introduced a number of years ago and is designed to help section managers implement the requirements of the Councils Health and Safety management system.

Considerable efforts have been made to make all the Council's Health and Safety documentation available electronically via the intranet based Health and Safety gateway, this is an ongoing project.

A series of focused Health and Safety risk management training briefs have been introduced which introduce/remind staff of the Councils approach to task based risk assessment. These training sessions last around two hours and have proved very popular.

A programme of rolling reviews of all the workplace Health and Safety legislation that affects the Council and its operations has been implemented, this programme includes consultation with managers and employee representatives.

A managers risk assessment pack has been developed and will be introduced in the new year.

The risk assessment review procedure requires managers to carry out regular review of the suitability of the risk assessments that are relevant to their sphere of operations, as part of the Health and Safety training programme we have introduced a specific training element that helps staff ensure that they are aware of appropriate documentation and how to use it during the risk assessment review.

The Health and Safety Unit have implemented strategies to increase awareness for staff of the Health and Safety gateway intranet web-pages.

The members of the central Health and Safety Committee have given an undertaking to cascade information from the Committee to all appropriate staff.

A system of Health and Safety email alerts has been introduced targeted at senior managers within the Council, it is planned to expand this to other employee groups during the coming year. The email alerts will be targeted by employee/work activity types as well as a more general alert depending upon the nature of the information.

The Health and Safety Unit has developed an employee Health and Safety training matrix to enable quick and easy identification of the Health and Safety training needs of specific job types. This matrix although effective needs further refinement before it is released to managers.

The development of systems to assist in the measurement of Health and Safety performance has progressed well during the year, various means of benchmarking performance against other similar local government organisations has taken place but no appropriate means has so far been adopted. We have therefore adopted an internal system which looks at the accident/incident data as well as the risk assessment programme. We have also started to implement an active database of potential risks related to work activity/project categories.

The Health and Safety Unit has started work on the development of a Health and Safety Competency framework base on Knowledge, skills and experience. This is designed to look at each job within the Council and establish key Health and Safety competencies required to effectively carry out that role. These key competencies will then be check against those of the post holder and any gaps will be addressed. This will ensure that all people involved in delivery of the Council services have the appropriate levels of competency to address their Health and Safety responsibilities.

Significant progress has been made in our challenge to ensure that Health and Safety leadership skills and actions are developed for senior managers who operate at a strategic and policy level, for middle managers who operate at a planning and objective setting level and managers who operate at the service delivery or implementation level.

A Health and Safety briefing session was held for elected members and a specific members area has bee set up on the Health and Safety gateway.

It is planned that all elected members to be offered training as suggested in the IOSH guide "Think about health and Safety, What elected members of local authorities need to know".

Our concentration on the provision of Health and Safety information and training has been designed to ensure that all individuals, including elected members, senior managers, employees, volunteers and contractors/partners who help deliver the services have the level of competency to complete their role safely without causing unnecessary risk to others who could be affected.

The development of our Health and Safety training programme has ensured that any training or development necessary is identified, quantified, planned and resourced to ensure that successful delivery our the Councils Health and Safety management aims and objectives.

In order to ensure that where the Council contracts out work to other organisations or works in partnership with other organisations the occupational Health and Safety risks are properly and satisfactorily addressed the Health and Safety Unit have implemented a revised contractor evaluation procedure which ensures that where the Council supports activities undertaken by others, consideration of the adequacy of Health and Safety arrangements will be part of the process in selecting projects to support and ensure that all work undertaken by or on behalf of the Council (or where activities are led or supported by the Council) that these are undertaken with appropriate levels of Health and Safety built in.

The evaluation process ensures that all contract and partnership documentation adequately addresses Health and Safety performance and that suitable monitoring arrangements are established to ensure the level of performance required is met.



ADVICE & SUPPORT

The primary Health and Safety advice resource for the Council is provided by the Health and Safety Unit. The Unit advises on all aspects of Health and Safety at work for staff.

The recent restructuring of the Unit has enabled and improved support and advice service to Services. The Unit continues to provide support and advice to managers, supervisors and staff.

The health and Safety Unit consists of two members of staff, the Health and Safety Manager and the Health and Safety Officer/Trainer.

The Unit's core work involves:

- The provision of advice and support
- Health and safety management audits
- Safety inspections
- Accident investigations
- Assessing new and proposed Health and Safety legislation and its impact on the Council.
- Consulting on Health and Safety policies and procedures
- Attending relevant meetings and Committees
- Development and circulation of guidance on a variety of Health and Safety related subjects
- Provision of statistics and appropriate reports for Committees, local site Health and Safety panels and task groups
- Administration of the Council's first aid facilities
- Administration of the DSE eye care scheme.
- Health and safety training
- Supporting Service Safety Coordinators.

Although the Health & Safety Unit strives to meet all the demands placed upon it there is no substitute for day to day advice and support from within a Service.

Therefore a bespoke training course has been developed for managers to enable them to deal with the day to day Health and Safety management of their Services. This training course has been developed in collaboration with EDP Health Safety & Environment Consultants and is specifically designed for West Lancashire Borough Council Managers.

The course consist of nine module, five of which will be core modules and the remaining four will depend upon the nature of the work the manager is engaged in and is designed to give managers an awareness and understanding of:

- What arrangements are required to ensure the safety of the section being managed
- The importance of having these particular arrangements in place
- How to ensure arrangements are being carried out in practice
- "What do I need to know?"
- "Why do I need to do it?"

The courses are scheduled to commence in September 2011 and will initially be available to all section managers within the Council.

This course will enable managers to provide extra support at Service level for the advisory element of the Health and Safety management system.

Additional Health and Safety information and advice can be access via the Council intranet Health and Safety gateway, this resource provides staff with easy access to hundreds of Health and Safety related documents.

The Health and Safety gateway facility is designed and maintained by the staff within the Health and Safety Unit.



HEALTH & SAFETY TRAINING

One of the fundamental requirements of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 is that all employees should be adequately trained for the work which they carry out.

Staff must be provided with sufficient Health and Safety information, instruction and training to ensure they are aware of the hazards in the workplace and know what safe working procedures to follow to reduce the risk of injury or work-related ill health.

Training is also essential to raise the level of staff awareness of Council Health and Safety policies, procedures and practices, to ensure their effective implementation.

Most training is provided 'on-the-job'. Health and safety should form an integral part of the ongoing instruction and supervision of Staff. To supplement local training, a centrally organised programme of Health and Safety training is provided by the Council's Health & Safety Unit.

The courses are run throughout the year and are available to all staff. The demand for courses has remained high during the year. A number of the courses are in support of the Council's statutory Health and Safety obligations.

As a result of the restructure of the Health and Safety Unit the Health and Safety training programme was implemented late in the financial year, nevertheless course development and facilitation has progressed well.

A series of in house training sessions relating to a number of Health and Safety aspects has been delivered since January 2011. These have addressed :

- Fire Safety Awareness
- Asbestos Awareness
- General Risk Assessment

- DSE Assessor requirements
- General Health and Safety awareness

Other training addressing :

- Managing of contractors
- Safe use of ladders
- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health
- Violence and Aggression Awareness

has been prepared and is available for delivery as required.

Sessions are usually for 8-10 persons and over one hundred person training sessions have been delivered.

Training Assessment forms have been collated and a review of these indicates that the sessions are of appropriate time duration, adequately meet the required training level and have been well presented.

The necessity or desire for additional training has been identified both by course participants and by the tutor.

An externally run courses for First Aid at Work was also arranged along with a pilot course intended to provide staff with Health and Safety managerial roles with basic knowledge of eight principle issues. The feed back for these courses is such that the suitability of the course providers will be further assessed. The First Aid at Work course requires delivery and certification by Health and Safety Executive approved bodies only.

In order to meet legislative requirements an additional First Aid at Work course has been arranged and the in house Managing of Contractors training has also been scheduled for delivery in May.

Costs of the delivery of in house courses have been covered by normal staff costs of the Health and Safety Unit and by the release of participants from their normal duties to attend training.

The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act and The Management of Health and Safety Regulations indicate the need for appropriate workplace training and suitable refresher courses. Refresher courses are normally at 2 to 3 year intervals unless mandatory requirements are otherwise imposed.

The analysis of post training feedback is attached as appendix 1.



HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE

The Council Health and Safety Committee is formed under statute and is the principal consultation forum on Health and Safety within the Council.

The Committee meets approximately every eight weeks and is presently chaired by the Council's Chief Executive Officer.

A new constitution was introduced during the year covered by this report, the main changes reinforced the aims and objectives of the Committee, i.e. to work towards the creation of a workplace environment that secures the Health and Safety of all persons working for and on behalf of West Lancashire Borough Council and to promote and contribute to the safety of all persons entering onto the Council's premises for whatever reason.

The Committee assists and provides support in the monitoring and progression of the Council's Health and Safety Strategic Plan.

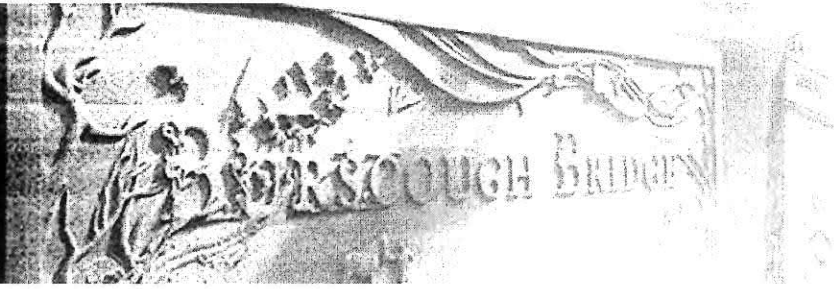
The Committee has a pivotal role in the establishment of a Health and Safety culture, throughout the Council that contributes to all aspects of service provision.

The main functions of the Committee are:

- To receive and review all Health and Safety policies and procedures.
- To support each Service and running of Service strategies and Service action plans.
- To review, monitor, promote and agree safety rules, safe systems of work and as required Service safety manuals.
- To represent to Directors/Council Members the effectiveness of health,

- safety and welfare strategies, gain their understanding and use by employees.
- To promote, sponsor, and encourage Health and Safety training throughout the Council and report on its effectiveness to senior management.
 - To ensure that an appropriate trade union safety representative is invited to accompany Service managers when Health and Safety monitoring visits are carried out.
 - To review the outcomes of safety inspections and the content of the Health and Safety Units unannounced inspections making recommendations and representations to others as required.
 - To encourage and support the principles of Occupational Health throughout the Council and any related health surveillance programmes.
 - To keep adequate records of all proceedings, decisions and activities of the Committee and to produce an annual report for Senior Management

Services are required to have strategic and individual arrangements for assuring effective Health and Safety management within their own service which should feed back into the Health and Safety Committee structure.



CONSULTATION/H&S TASK GROUPS

The Council has an extensive consultation framework in respect of Health and Safety. Apart from the main Health and Safety Committee most Council Services have a Service Health and Safety Committee. These Committees deal with local Health and Safety issues and provide staff and managers with an opportunity to discuss and resolve Health and Safety related issues.

From time to time H&S task groups are formed to deal with specific subjects that require more additional thought and consideration. Health and Safety task groups can ensure that the Council receives good quality practical advice on meeting its statutory obligations that utilises the available resources in the right way. No specific task groups were established during the period under consideration by this report.

Consultation with staff side representation on significant issues has taken place either in Section Health and Safety meetings or at the Corporate Health and Safety Committee meeting.



POLICIES & GUIDANCE

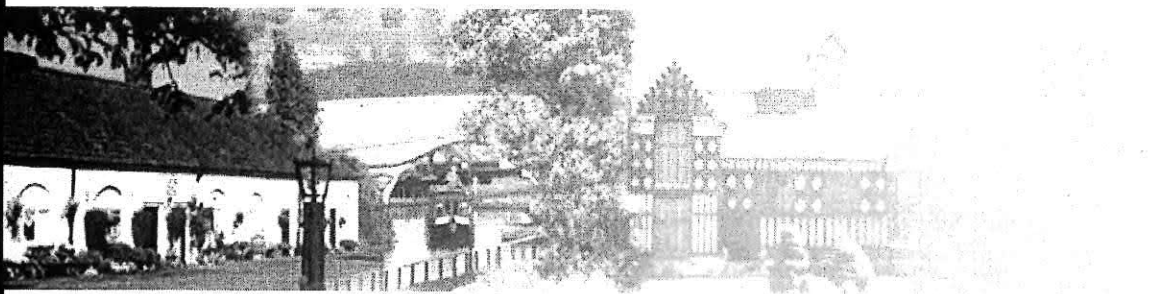
The Council Health and Safety policy was updated to reflect the changes made in the management structure as a result of the organisational downsizing exercise that took place during the year under consideration.

The Health and Safety Policy is supported by a number of health and Safety Performance Standards, (HSPF's) these contains specific duties and responsibilities and includes all the relevant guidance and advice notes relevant to the Council's work. The HSPF's will be updated periodically to maintain its relevance to the Council's operations and structure.

All the above documents are available on the Health and Safety Gateway.

There are currently over 50 Council guidance and advice notes available on a variety of Health and Safety and safety related subjects. These guidance and advice notes provide managers and staff with practical advice that can be implemented at Council and Service levels. The Health and Safety Unit are currently reviewing all the guidance and advice notes.

An outline of the new guidance notes that emerged during period under consideration by this report are attached as appendix 2.



ACCIDENTS & INCIDENTS

The Council is required by statute to record and maintain records of accidents that occur in connection with its work. Accident reports are compiled for submission and scrutiny by the Council Health and Safety Committee.

The accident reporting and recording system was improved by the introduction of a revised accident report form. This form was designed to meet the requirements of the HSE and the Council public and employee liability insurers.

Accident Statistics

The total number of accident reports received by the Health and Safety Unit for the period 1st April 2010 to 31st March 2011 stands at 39, for the same period last year, i.e. 1st April 2009 to 31st March 2010 the number received was 54.

When considering the number of accidents/incidents that are required to be reported to the Health and Safety Executive of the 39 reports received 5 were classified as over three day reportable and one was classified as a major injury, details of these accidents/incidents are included at the end of this section. For the same period the previous year of the 54 accident/incident reports received 6 were classified as over three day reportable.

All the reportable incidents have occurred within the Street Scene Services for both periods under consideration.

A detailed accident and incident analysis is attached as Appendix 3.



ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

The Council is a large regional employer and is subject to a substantial number of statutory regulations. Therefore it is not uncommon for the Council to be the subject of visits and inspections by a number of enforcement agencies. Relations with enforcement agencies remain good and no enforcement action was taken during the 2010/11 year.

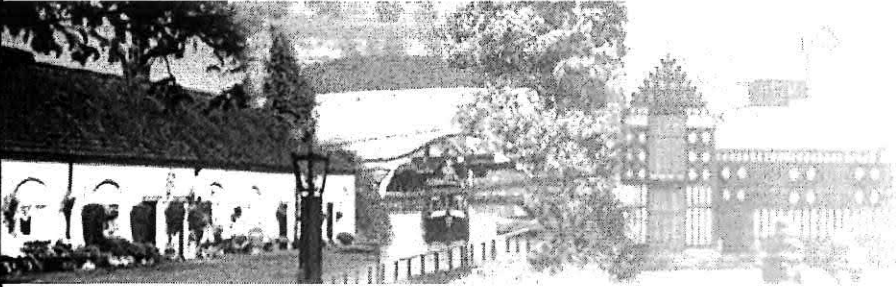
The following summarises the visits to the Council by relevant enforcement bodies during the period under review.

Fire Authorities

The above services undertook routine inspections on our sheltered accommodation and the common areas of our flats.

Health and Safety Executive

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) visited the Council on one occasion during the period under review. This visit was to Street Scene Services to review the refuse and recycling service. The inspectors met with the Assistant Director Street Scene Services and the Chief Executive.



FUTURE DIRECTION

It is important to acknowledge that significant advances have been made in recent years to the standards of Health and Safety expected and delivered in the Council. The concept of risk assessment, for example, which is central to today's approach to managing Health and Safety at work, is now firmly embedded in the organisation. More generally, in the last decade the number of work-related injuries reported to HSE has fallen. There is, however, clearly still much more to be achieved. Whilst reported work-related injuries have fallen significantly over the last 10 years, we still had 1 major injury and 4 other injuries reported in 2010/11. We need to acknowledge and build on those things that are working well for us. This includes our:

- approach to risk assessment;
- comprehensive and supportive system of information and advice;
- teams of highly dedicated and professional staff and their desire to work together to achieve common goals.

Conversely, we also need to recognise and address those areas we to make some degree of improvement in. These areas include:

- leadership;
- the negative perception of Health and Safety;
- the need to fully embrace the concept that good Health and Safety management is good business.

We want West Lancashire Borough Council to be:

"A place where the sensible control of work-related risk is the norm and work-related injuries and ill health are the exception."

We must therefore make every effort:

"To further reduce the number of work-related injuries and cases of ill health in West Lancashire Borough Council."

We will achieve this by focusing on the core aspects of workplace Health and Safety thereby promoting sensible and proportionate risk management by all.

Working together

The Health and Safety Unit and the various Services across the Authority will work together to ensure the most efficient use of collective resources and in doing so ensure that those responsible manage their workplaces in a way that protects workers and others affected by work activities.

To achieve more efficient use of resources the Health and Safety Unit and Services will work together in innovative ways to overcome the challenges presented by the various Act and Regulations and Orders made under such Acts and Regulations that at any time affect workplace Health, Safety and Welfare.

The challenge is for the Health and Safety Unit and Services to work together to create a flexible, proactive and responsive system that can deal effectively with current and future Health and Safety challenges.

Public services have undergone, and continue to undergo, significant structural changes as part of the ongoing review of public administration. Health and Safety Unit and Services will embrace the opportunities and challenges brought about by these changes.

Sensible risk management

Health and safety management has often been misused and misunderstood. There is a need to refocus efforts to make sure that those who create risks properly understand and control them. The development of Health and Safety competence is critical to establishing a culture within the Council that is focused on controlling risk.

In developing this competence, we will need to focus our efforts on the areas of greatest concern. Competent managers will have an understanding of the true meaning of Health and Safety and will ensure that efforts are directed to tackle the risks which occur most often and have the most serious consequences.

Effective Health and Safety management involves a balance between risk and cost and this is incorporated into Health and Safety legislation by the concept of the phrase "so far as is reasonably practicable". This concept continues to have relevance and requires a culture

change within organisations so that every person understands their role in ensuring good Health and Safety.

We will target work sectors and vulnerable groups involved in high-risk activities, by identifying and working with managers to improve intelligence and develop new approaches to improving compliance.

Integral to this approach will be the development of effective communication initiatives to raise awareness, provide information and engage with managers, to encourage continuous progress towards best practise. This will be underpinned by appropriate inspection activities to ensure compliance with minimum legal standards.

We will also promote appropriate risk management and good working practices and explore how we can become more effective at promoting the proactive management of workplace .

Building capacity

We will continue to channel a significant proportion of our resources towards informing and advising managers of what is expected of them and what they need to do to comply with the legislation.

We currently provide advice and support services aimed at addressing the barriers faced managers in managing workplace Health and Safety.

We need to explore ways of ensuring that managers understand their own specific Health and Safety needs and when and who to turn to for competent help and advice.

Vulnerable groups

Assist in highlighting the needs of vulnerable groups to ensure that their needs are recognised and managed within the workplace.

We recognise that our workforce is becoming increasingly diverse in nature. This could be due to an increase in disability, gender or age related issues and we need to assess and manage the particular risks associated with vulnerable individuals and groups of workers.

Vulnerable worker(s) is a term which can be used to describe an individual or a group of workers who may be at an increased Health and Safety risk in the workplace due to their specific needs. This could be an inability to speak or understand English, having a disability, being a younger, an inexperienced or older worker, an agency or temporary worker, or for a gender based reason such as pregnancy.

While this is not an exhaustive list, it is clearly recognised that risk assessments should

address the specific needs of such workers to ensure that they are appropriately protected. Worker involvement is an essential element of these risk assessments.

We need to work with other organisations of a similar nature to ensure an effective network for learning and sharing of good practice on key aspects of workplace Health and Safety.

Leadership

The overriding aim of our Health and Safety Strategy is to prevent the death, injury and ill health of those affected by work activities. Its essence is that everyone adopts a sharper focus on the priorities and takes a leadership role in addressing their responsibilities. This is also underpinned by our commitment to maintain and develop a Health and Safety culture that leads by example and encourages respect for Health and Safety as an integral part of a modern, competitive public sector.

We will encourage leadership within the workplace, ensuring that managers take ownership of risk and accept responsibility for managing it.

The role of others

We need everyone to play their part in delivering improved standards of performance in Health and Safety because, ultimately, it is the delivery of our Health and Safety Strategy that will count.

The Council's senior management, play an influential role in raising Health and Safety capabilities within the Council. They provide the leadership and the framework in the workplace within which effective Health and Safety management can thrive and they set the tone for the Health and Safety culture of the Council. They decide on the importance of Health and Safety outcomes relative to other business outcomes and establish clear performance indicators for Health and Safety.

Workers are often the ones who are most exposed to workplace risks and their active participation in Health and Safety matters at the workplace is therefore critical. While employers have a duty to provide their employees with adequate training and protection against workplace hazards, workers have a duty to care for their own Health and Safety and for others who may be affected by their actions. Workers should always ensure that they understand and abide by the proper Health and Safety procedures. Workplace research provides evidence to suggest that involving workers, whether they belong to a union or not, has a positive effect on Health and Safety performance. Worker involvement is fundamental to good Health and Safety performance and, therefore, to good business.

Our purpose in developing our Health and Safety Strategy is to achieve a safer and healthier

working environment for everyone in West Lancashire Borough Council in a cost effective, customer focused and holistic way. We are committed to directing our energies and resources to the achievement of the strategic goals outlined in our Health and Safety Strategic Plan and, in doing so, are prepared to be held accountable for our performance.

In order to achieve the strategic goals, we will plan together at strategic and operational levels to maximise our impact in improving Health and Safety outcomes. We will seek opportunities to enhance our capacity through the delivery of common services, the utilisation of resources, systems and expertise from other organisations, and by adopting best practice and seeking to enhance support, we will provide a better level of service.

Success is about working in a closer partnership which can make a real and sustainable difference and provide value for money. It will involve the Health and Safety Unit and Services working closer together to drive forward improvements in workplace Health and Safety, to deliver protection from risks and to ensure that those who fail in their Health and Safety duties are held to account. At the same time, it will also involve leading by example and working with others to support the inclusion of Health and Safety in priorities and strategies related to health, work and wellbeing.

Ultimately this will support a reduction in the number of work-related injuries and cases of ill health throughout West Lancashire Borough Council.

West Lancashire Borough Council
Health and Safety Unit
April 2011