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HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE
Minutes of the HSE Board meeting held on Wednesday
4 January 2006 in Rose Court at 9:30am

Present

Geoffrey Podger
Justin McCracken
Jonathan Rees
Alex Brett-Holt
Sandra Caldwell
Vivienne Dews
Giles Denham
Colin Douglas
Kevin Myers
Mike Weightman
Jane Willis

Also attending

Marcia Davies (FOD) and Sarah Page (Vice Chair Corporate Health and Safety Committee) for item 2
Mike Lacaille and Andy McGrory (PEFD) for item 3
Patricia Williams and Dave Thomas (PEFD) for item 7
Alison Scott (DWP) for item 7 onwards
Dawn Waterman for item 9

Moira Wilson (HID) (shadowing Jonathan Rees)

Apologies

Paul Davies

Minutes

Peter Buckley

Introductory remarks

The Board passed on their congratulations to those HSE staff whose achievements had been recognised in the New Year Honours list. The Board particularly congratulated their fellow Board member Paul Davies on his award of a CB.

Geoffrey Podger informed the Board that, following the demise of the Resources and Delivery Group, the DWP's Alison Scott had been invited to attend those parts of the Board Meetings dealing with the general themes of planning, performance and business risk management.

Eddie Morland, the Chief Executive of HSL, would be invited to join the Board.

1 Minutes of the HSE Board held on 7 December and the Action Points

1.1 The minutes were agreed with the following amendments:

- a) Minute 2.2.1 would be amended to read 'the key issues that emerged were change management and leadership at Board level'.
- b) The minutes under agenda item 4 would be withheld until such time as there were any further developments on the Energy Review.

1.2 Geoffrey Podger reminded the Board of the importance of discussing the results of the staff survey with their staff during January (action point 36 in the action log). This would enable a more informed discussion to take place at the February Board meeting.

Colin Douglas explained to the Board that the February Exchange briefing would focus on the action plans for taking forward the results of the staff survey, and it was important that staff understood that discussing and dealing with the staff survey would be two-stage process.

Action Point 1 Peter Buckley to amend the minutes in light of the above comments

2 Health and Safety

2.1 Monthly Update (paper number B/06/01)

2.1.1 Justin McCracken introduced the paper by observing that although the incident rate figures were still encouraging, HSE was just about on track to achieve the targets set for the financial year 2005/06. So although the figures gave rise to cautious optimism, the need to actively manage health and safety remained.

2.1.2 On sickness absence, the slight rise in the Autumn had now flattened out and overall the figures showed an encouraging reduction from those in previous years. In the light of the latest figures, no further detailed analysis was proposed at this stage.

2.1.3 The Board noted the monthly update on health and safety.

2.2 Three-Year Strategy for Health and Safety (Paper B/06/01)

2.2.1 Justin McCracken introduced the three-year strategic framework for health and safety as follows:

- a) The development of the framework was at the specific request of the Board.
- b) The framework was constructed around three themes – culture, corporate coherence and compliance with HSE's health and safety rules and guidance.
- c) Annual specific plans would be produced under the three themes of the framework.
- d) The Corporate Health and Safety Committee had agreed the framework.
- e) The paper sought the support of the Board for the framework and to the development of individual annual plans.

2.2.2 The Board discussed the framework, during which the following points were made:

- a) The framework is both simple and straightforward and is therefore easy to understand.
- b) A reference should be included to HSE's occupational health provider.
- c) References should also be added on promoting the health and wellbeing agenda.
- d) The issue of management of sickness absence needed to be handled sensitively, and the importance of job design and job satisfaction in terms of reducing sickness absence should not be overlooked.
- e) The following drafting changes were suggested:
 - i. Page 8, paragraph 1, first line should read 'using proper risk assessment to ensure that HSE's policies are

- proportionate and grounded in reality’.
- ii. Page 8, paragraph 3, second bulleted indent should end after the word ‘abuse’.
- iii. Under ‘Compliance’ something should be added on the responsibility of the individual to ensure his or her own health and safety.

2.2.3 Geoffrey Podger summed up by thanking the authors for the paper. The Board was wholly supportive of the framework and asked that it be taken away to produce a final version in light of the comments made. Geoffrey suggested that job design and consequent job satisfaction were important issues to be handled outside the framework.

Action Point 2 Justin McCracken to produce a final version of the three-year strategic framework for health and safety to reflect the points made during the discussion

2.3 Lone Working Risks (paper number B/06/03)

2.3.1 Marcia Davies and Sarah Page introduced the paper with the following remarks:

- a) The procedures attached to the paper had been drawn up jointly with the Trade Unions and the principles agreed by both the Operations Group and the Corporate Health and Safety Committee.
- b) The procedures’ aim was to improve the level of assurance that there were adequate management arrangements for HSE’s staff (not only Inspectors and Health and Safety Awareness Officers) when they are either working out of the office or working within one of HSE’s offices on their own.
- c) The procedures covered the generality of risks when staff were on their own without immediate help to hand – for example should an accident or illness occur or their car broke down.
- d) The procedures also covered the unpredictable threat of violence generally present in society; aggression, which could reasonably be anticipated, will be dealt with separately.
- e) The purpose of the procedures was to limit occurrences and especially the severity of their consequences.
- f) Lone working was recognised in the current health and safety plan as a key risk for action, affecting a large proportion of HSE staff.
- g) Staff rightly expect HSE’s standards to reach those of other employers who have similar risks to manage and there is a reputational issue for HSE if it does not have sufficiently robust systems.
- h) Improving health and safety in this regard went hand in hand with modern, professional management and business practices.
- i) Although the procedures had been updated, the issues and precautions regarding lone working were not new and had been covered by previous health and safety supplements.
- j) However, compliance had always been patchy and despite recent improvement, this still remains the case. Management and Trade Unions believe that this position is unsustainable for HSE.
- k) Therefore the paper sought agreement to more comprehensive procedures and leadership from the Board to ensure delivery and compliance.
- l) The issue of lone working within HSE’s offices would be referred to local health and safety committees because each office varies both

- in terms of type of location, other people in the building etc.
- m) The Trade Unions have been both supportive and proportionate, and had been involved in leading the development of the procedures. The Trade Unions would need some time to communicate the key messages to their members before the procedures were introduced.

2.3.2 The Board then had a wide-ranging discussion on the paper during which the following points were made:

- a) At present the procedures do not apply to HSE's staff working at home, although managers should continue to oversee such work and apply the policy as appropriate.
- b) The whole issue of homeworking has not yet been bottomed out within HSE and HSE management need to talk separately and informally to the Trade Unions about this issue.
- c) The procedures should cross-refer to other relevant guidance - for example, "Asbestos - dealing with the risk of exposure".
- d) There were doubts as to whether the risk of lone working was sufficient to justify revised procedures on health and safety grounds alone.
- e) This is a fast moving area so whatever the Board decided today would need to be kept under review as the technology in this area progressed – for example, some organisations are now considering the use of individual tracking devices.
- f) It was recognised that violence to HSE staff was not restricted to when HSE staff worked on their own.
- g) FOD had already moved to the procedures outlined in the paper following the events in London on 7 July, and had been able to make the procedures work.
- h) For the system to work the calendar entries in Lotus Notes needed to be intelligible to someone reading them cold, and, of course, relied on staff following HSE's existing policy of granting access to their calendars.
- i) There was considerable benefit to individual members of staff if managers knew where they were so they could readily be helped or contacted if the need arose.

2.3.3 The Board agreed that there was a management need for these procedures, whilst recognising that there were also supplementary benefits to health and safety and to effective management of people and work.

2.3.4 The Board then moved on to how best to communicate the decision and agreed the following constituent parts of a message to staff:

- a) Many parts of the organisation are doing this successfully already, e.g. FOD.
- b) The procedures build on HSE's long-standing policies.
- c) The Trade Unions support the procedures.
- d) The need to record the whereabouts of staff fulfilled HSE's management needs whilst having supplementary benefits for health and safety.
- e) The Board would expect compliance to follow shortly after the issuing of the procedures.
- f) A compliance check would be carried out at some stage in the future.

- 2.3.5 The message would be sent to senior managers in advance so that they could check they were already complying with the procedures prior to general issue. The timing and drafting of the message going out would be discussed with the Trade Unions.
- 2.3.6 Finally, the Board briefly discussed the issue of investigation of the thankfully small number of incidents involving violence and/or verbal abuse. The Trade Unions made a special plea for more detailed post-incident analysis to enable HSE to put in place procedures and proportionate guidance that was based on better intelligence. The Chairman noted the Board would need to return to this.
- 2.3.7 The Board was then invited to submit any further comments on the wording of the procedures to Marcia Davies, who would then agree any revised wording with the Board Health and Safety Champion and with the Trade Unions.

- Action Point 3** **Geoffrey Podger to discuss the issue of home working informally with the Trade Unions.**
- Action Point 4** **Marcia Davies to take away the procedures and revise them in light of the Board discussion and any subsequent comments and clear them again with Justin McCracken and with the Trade Unions.**
- Action Point 5** **Justin McCracken to issue a message to staff along the lines discussed by the Board and in liaison with the Trade Unions to allow the unions time to communicate with their members before the message and procedures are issued.**
- Action Point 6** **Health and Safety Unit to work with the Trade Unions to improve the analysis of the infrequent acts of violence and/or verbal abuse to HSE staff**

3 Development of a Revised Corporate Balanced Scorecard for HSE (paper number B/06/04)

- 3.1 Vivienne Dews introduced the paper with the following remarks:
 - a) The Board had requested a rethink of what measures might constitute a revised balanced scorecard for introduction in the planning year 2006/07.
 - b) A sub-group of Board members and senior managers had met to develop the draft of the balanced scorecard attached to the Board paper.
 - c) There were three questions the Board needed to consider:
 - i. Is the framework right?
 - ii. How does HSE measure each of the component parts in a meaningful way?
 - iii. How does HSE then use the balanced scorecard to improve organisational delivery?
- 3.2 The Board had a general discussion on the paper during which the following points were made:
 - a) The three categories – Delivery Perspective, Managing Resources and Learning and Growth - were right.
 - b) Under each of these categories, there was a desire to simplify what

- was measured and to reduce the number of measures.
- c) There was agreement that:
 - i. The measures needed to be both objective and subjective; and
 - ii. A proper balance struck between inputs and achievements; and
 - iii. Progress against HSE's PSA targets must form one of the measures.
 - d) The board had received a suggestion from Richard Clifton that horizon scanning be added as another measure included in the balanced scorecard.
 - e) RPD had possibly offered up too many measures in its areas of responsibility.
 - f) There was a need to ensure that the timing of the production of the balanced scorecard fitted in naturally with the reporting cycle to both the Commission and the DWP.
 - g) The Board needed to consider not only how to improve what was measured but also when was the best time to do so - to be able to get reliable information on trends and the need for corrective action.
 - h) The balanced scorecard needs to be sensitive to the impression it creates to the outside world.
 - i) In the past the Board has not used the balanced scorecard to improve organisational delivery.

3.3 Geoffrey Podger then summed up the conclusions of the discussions which were:

- a) The general approach was supported.
- b) Although the range of measures was supported, the number within each category might be reduced - nine measures in total would be a good target.
- c) The Board needed to be clear about the timing and frequency of measurement.
- d) The Board needed to be clear about what it was going to do with the balanced scorecard.

Action Point 7 Vivienne Dews to bring forward to a subsequent Board meeting a revised balanced scorecard and paper to reflect the Board discussions.

4 Update on Pay

4.1 Vivienne Dews gave a verbal update on pay. Meetings would be arranged by PD around the country to explain the offer to staff and to answer questions they may have on it.

5 Legal Risk Register (paper number B/06/06)

5.1 The Board had a closed discussion on the legal risk register.

Action Point 8 Alex Brett-Holt to revise the legal risk register in light of the Board discussion and to bring the risk register to the July Board meeting

6 SCS Leadership Meeting on 24 January

6.1 Geoffrey Podger and Vivienne Dews outlined the draft agenda for the SCS Leadership meeting on 24 January as follows:

- a) Justin would open the meeting making the links back to the Cardiff Meeting.
- b) Geoffrey would follow with a short introductory session.
- c) The rest of the morning would then be devoted to working in preallocated groups discussing the staff survey, with particular reference to governance issues and HSE's relationship with the Commission and the Department. Jonathan would lead this session
- d) In the afternoon, the discussion in preallocated groups would focus on the Fundamental Review and the five themes identified at the Board discussion before Christmas (which are - 'freeing up time', aspects of delivery, procurement, making best use of science and "working with others").
- e) The SCS would need some material in advance of the meeting so that they could prepare and be aware of what was planned on the day.
- f) Part of that pack would include the recently produced note on the HSC/E health agenda.
- g) It was agreed that the theme of the day was getting people informed and involved in current Board issues of which the staff survey and the fundamental review were the two most important issues.
- h) The SCS would also wish to be clear about what other events were planned this year, and the mix of those events between one day and residential, perhaps by seeking views at the end of this Leadership Meeting.

Action Point 9

The SCS Leadership Meeting sub-group to take forward the planning of the next meeting on the basis of the above.

7 Financial Update, December Forecast and Spring Supplementary Estimate (paper number B/06/010)

7.1 The Board had a closed discussion of finance issues and agreed the December forecast and the application of the recommended central adjuster. The Board thanked Patricia Williams and Dave Thomas for the excellence of the paper that had so smoothed the way to the Board coming to a decision.

8 A.O.B.

8.1 The Board received a verbal update on the Buncefield incident. The Board commended the professionalism and commitment of all staff who had responded both to the immediate aftermath and to the subsequent demands on-site and for briefing and information.

8.2 The Board received a verbal update on the phased rollout of the COIN project. It was noted that this was giving rise to problems in some areas but also that work had been undertaken to illustrate the advantages of the new system, which should continue to be disseminated. Whilst there might be a need for further training help, the Board were clear that the roll out of COIN needed to continue as planned to allow the maximum benefit to be gained.

9 Corporate Stakeholder Engagement (paper number B/06/08)

9.1 There was a brief introduction to the corporate stakeholder engagement paper and a brief discussion on it. After which the Board decided to return to this issue once the Board had the opportunity to listen to the views of the Lead Contacts within HSE who have been invited to lunch.

9.2 Board members were asked to provide feedback to Colin Douglas on the views expressed to them over lunch.

Action Point 10 Board members to provide feedback to Colin Douglas on the points made to them by the Lead Contacts during lunch.

Action Point 11 Colin Douglas to bring back to the next Board meeting a revised paper on corporate stakeholder engagement to build in the feedback from the lunch with the leading contacts.