

Health and Safety Executive Board Paper		HSE/03/054	
Meeting Date:	3 September 2003	Open Gov. Status:	Open
Type of Paper:	Update briefing note	Paper File Ref:	RPD/100/1000/03
Exemptions:	None		

HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE

The HSE Board

MONTHLY UPDATE ON PROGRESS WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CORPORATE SUPPORT REVIEW

Author: Kevin Allars

Not Cleared by Vivienne Dews (on leave until 2 September)

Issue

1. Update on Progress with the implementation of the Corporate Support Review.

Timing

2. The Board requested monthly updates (I have not included the detailed CSR Action Plan table on this occasion – concentrating, instead, on key progress and difficulties).

Recommendations

3. That Board members note the update, ask for clarification as necessary, and provide any comments or input that they consider appropriate.
4. That Board members:
 - encourage their staff to address the further responses to the Review of London roles and functions in such a way that the results are appropriate and defensible (para 10);
 - note that a separate Board paper on proposed Flexible Working Pilots (for clearance by correspondence) will be issued within the next few days, and requires action/comment within a week in order that preparatory estate and other work can commence (para 13);
 - in order to give clear direction to the Board's intentions on the CSR Project, cascade this paper to staff, with a commentary on the relevant key decisions from the Board meeting (para 23).

Key Progress

General Issues

5. The past 6 weeks have been characterised by some good forward movement on some of the CSR projects, but latterly some significant difficulties emerging on the estate issues, and particularly on the need to potentially move posts out of central London or for staff to work more flexibly in their need to routinely attend 'an office'. These issues are amplified below.
6. With my CSR team and some RPD senior managers, on 6 August I again met with representatives of the Unions in order to keep them up to speed with the CSR work. In contrast to the last meeting on 9 June, the TU side commented on their members' perceptions of a poorly managed and communicated project, and had significantly strengthened their negative position with respect to home-working and hot-desking pilots, and the review of future central London office requirements. Although I countered the TU side views, and explained the present position on the CSR work, including the means of communication, consultation and proposed TU side involvement, it is clear that the TU side is entrenched in its views, and particularly in London. The TU side is also concerned at the pace with which the work is being taken forward, and that staff are being consulted on flexible working issues before the TU side has formally agreed the terms under which it is to be run, even as a pilot.

London roles/functions

7. The work on establishing which functions and staff require to be in central London has now started with the formation of a small Project Team, a Project Board and the issue of a question-set to SCS managers in order to collect baseline data on London posts and functions.
8. It was intended that analysis of this baseline London information would begin shortly, undertaken by the Project Team of Ged Malone (CSR team), Kath Martin (Policy Group) and Peter Lunn (Personnel). However, some responses are having to be chased in order to complete the dataset. The work will be overseen by a Project Group consisting of senior representatives from RPD (BSD, PD and PEFD), Policy Group, Ops, the CSR team, and the Trade Unions. The project will establish which posts/functions require a central London location, and the implications of relocating the remaining posts/functions out of central London to more appropriate alternative locations in and around London or elsewhere in the country. The timescales for completion of the review are still to be finalised, but the aim is for completion and proposals to the Board by the end of 2003.
9. Looking ahead, the key issue is how we best position ourselves in relation to the Rose Court lease break in 2008. Although significant rent increases for Rose Court are expected, this must be driven by HSE's business need for the posts that the organisation requires to be located in central London, rather than by the commercial terms of the lease on Rose Court. The review will therefore rigorously examine the need for activity to continue to be based in high cost locations in and around London, and will help inform decisions as to the required Rose Court accommodation over the years leading up to 2008.
10. The review has also to clearly be looked at in the wider context of the cross-Government 'Lyons Review', which is already well underway and will feed into SR2004. RPD has presently managed to use the 'CSR Review' to satisfy the DWP

enquiries as to how we are addressing the cross-Government Lyons Review, which requires very early actions and outcomes achieved (ie. real early staff moves out of central London). We will need to provide to DWP evidence of, at the very least, a critical review of our London-based posts. The review is understandably causing anxiety amongst Rose Court staff, coming as it does on top of re-organisation and other changes. **In order to address this, a reassuring and informative global eMail will be issued to staff in the next few days, but it is imperative that the Board supports the Review and ensures that the responses from staff are appropriate and defensible.** To date, many of the responses are simply not so, and if the responses I've seen to date are taken at face value, then they paint an indefensible picture that virtually the whole of the Rose Court cadre cannot function effectively unless it remains in central London.

Flexible working

11. Another key part of the estates jigsaw is the increase in flexible working patterns, ie. more home-working and hot-desking. This will require significant up-front investment, but should realise savings in office space and running costs in the longer term, as well as freeing up office space out of London to make room for any future dispersement.
12. Proposals for flexible working pilots in Worcester, Bristol and London, using volunteers from FoD and Policy Group, will be sent to the Board in a separate paper next week. All Board members will be distributed the paper for comment, and only if Board members' views are largely consistent will action be taken to commence the pilot preparatory work: otherwise proposals will be brought to the October Board for discussion.
13. The paper, which is awaiting Vivienne Dews' comments and clearance on her return from leave, explores options for the extent of reversibility of the pilots, details the set-up costs and the issues that should be addressed prior to each voluntary pilot being agreed. The paper recommends preferred options. TU side opposition is likely unless all the health & safety, financial and liability issues are resolved up front.

Procurement

14. The BSD Procurement Review draft report is with RPD for comment, and I've established a link with the BSD review/implementation team in order to ensure that the CSR team can assist in implementation of the resulting recommendations as early as possible. Staff resource in the RPD procurement function is already being managed down.

Improved use of IT systems

15. I've seen a very promising demonstration of the computerised T&S A/C34, and other revised forms, which will be available in the Autumn. I've also seen the prototype fully electronic A/C34 form and computer package, which includes verification, tracking, and storage systems. The management issues (value for money travel decisions, electronic signatures, verification processes, etc.) are being worked up into a paper for further discussion, but do not look irresolvable. It is proposed that the form is used (and verified) by all staff, and will, by default also improve the electronic staff directory database in that, for instance, it needs that database to record accurate line manager roles before the form can progress for payment.

Management spans/skills

16. The RPD pilot work on increasing management spans has unfortunately faltered. This has now been reinvigorated following a thought provoking note produced by Denis Toohey, in which he has looked at the issue from first principles, and is then, with input from RPD, looking to what is achievable within HSE, how best to trial those concepts (which will probably involve three separate pilots in RPD), and how to take forward the issues of generally improving management skills. However, because of CSR team resource losses, this work is still in its infancy.

Corporate Support functions

17. Following the cross-Directorate meeting was held in June at which agreement was reached as to what should be included (and excluded) from baseline data on corporate support functions in the D/Ds, all D/Ds revised their baseline submissions. The small task groups from the network of D/D contacts, set up to analyse identified areas of corporate support across HSE and to recommend ways forward on moving to a more centralised, efficient and effective system of corporate support, have now started to meet. Some groups are moving forward very well, and I anticipate that by the early Autumn (and with an aim to try and meet the October Board deadline) it will be possible to provide a map of how corporate support work should be managed across HSE. It will then be possible to start moving resources in order to achieve that collective end point in each of the Directorates, with the indicative 4% target met in all Directorates by March 2004, at the latest. You will have also seen Vivienne Dews' message to Board members, dated 25 July, proposing a moratorium on offering staff permanent postings to corporate support posts which are within the areas covered by the CSR until after the October Board, when I'm hoping to have the results of the work mapped out.

Who does what

18. RPD staff have started work on producing Intranet-based information on HSE's corporate functions, mirroring the earlier work by Personnel Division of RPD, showing who does what, and where information can be found. This work is likely to take up to 6 months to complete.

Health & Safety

19. The Health & Safety work has been moved forward by John Ives and Justin McCracken, with very little input from the CSR team, and I understand that another key part of that work will be discussed at the Board on 3 September.

Training

20. Following the recent VN issued to seek a 3-month secondment to the CSR team to take forward the management spans and training recommendations, I offer the post to somebody on the priority list that then left HSE employ the same day that she took up the CSR post (I was assured that this was no reflection on the job or manager!). However, it has left me light again on the CSR team. I've redirected the management spans work to Denis Toohey, but the CSR coordinating/overview role on the training work is still vacant, even though there are several individual projects on training issues progressing in the Directorates (RPD, FOD and CoSAS, in particular). As I'll be moving on from early October, over the next few weeks I will be discussing with Justin McCracken and Vivienne Dews how best to take forward the CSR training recommendations outwith the CSR implementation team.

CSR Team Staffing Issues

21. My own role as Head of the CSR Implementation Project will cease on 6 October when I move to HID. However, the two remaining team members will be retained on the project for some time. Ged Malone (Band 3) will continue to coordinate the work on the corporate support functions, London review and flexible working issues, transferring to RPD in September firstly to continue the CSR work and then to a permanent post in BEU from January 2004. Denis Toohey (Band 2) will continue working in RPD for the foreseeable future working on his identified CSR topics.

Presentational Issues

22. One of the recent criticisms of the CSR Project, highlighted as it was by the Review of Central London roles and functions, has been the lack of information received on CSR issues by some staff, and not just junior staff. I had resisted issuing global messages, or something similar, considering it better that senior managers take the opportunity to use the Board papers and briefing documents to discuss the recommendations with staff and to reassure them that, for instance, the review of central London roles and functions is presently of posts and not individual staff members, and that any resulting changes affecting staff would be implemented only following full consultation and with due consideration of relevant personal issues. The CSR Board papers have all been open, and I had expected Board members to distribute them to their staff ahead of them appearing on the Intranet several weeks after the Board. As well as attending the Board meetings, I've also attended several management and Unit/Section meetings in the Directorates to explain the CSR work, and have met with the TU side. Not being one to rely on staff finding the papers on the Intranet, I've often had to personally issue the Board papers to staff in order that they can discuss the issues with me by fact rather than rumour.
23. Having received collective Board support for the direction of the CSR work, I have been a little surprised that some staff have not recognised that support from the individual Board members through their own Directorate cascade mechanisms, because that would have made my job much easier. **I would ask, therefore, that in order to give clear direction to the Board's intentions on the CSR Project, that you please cascade this paper to your staff, and that they are made aware of the decisions taken at the Board meeting with respect to the paper.** I am very happy to try and attend more Management/Unit meetings to discuss the project, and am indeed attending the 4 September Policy Group Management meeting, to which Sandra and Nick have helpfully agreed that some other London-based SCS members can attend. I'm also attending the next HID Management Board on 8 September, where the CSR work is also an agenda item.
24. The CSR update paper for the October Board will include the CSR Action Plan, highlighted to show what can be expected from the projects underway in respect of each recommendation, by when, and who is taking it forward both from the CSR team point of view and at SCS level. It will also hopefully contain details of the outcome of the work on the corporate support function analysis.