

| Health and Safety Executive Board Paper |                    | HSE/05/050      |                   |
|---|--------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
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## HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE

### The HSE Board

### The Operation of the HSE Board

### A Paper by Justin McCracken

Cleared by Justin McCracken on 1 September 2005

#### Issue

1. The effective operation of the HSE Board in the interim period before the new Chief Executive arrives.

#### Timing

2. For discussion at the September Board meeting.

#### Recommendation

3. That the Board considers the proposals in this paper:
  - a) to focus the discussion at its formal meetings around the topics set out in paragraph 6 and 7
  - b) to adopt the process set out in paragraph 8 to aid the effectiveness of its formal meetings
  - c) to adopt the arrangements in paragraph 9 regarding the informal video conference meetings

#### Background

4. There is general agreement that despite the progress in the operation of the Board there is still scope for further improvement.
5. Recognising that Geoffrey Podger may well wish to review HSE's overall governance arrangements, I do not propose that we should consider major changes in the operation of the Board. Nonetheless, I believe we can achieve significant improvements in our effectiveness by making modest changes both in terms of clarity of role and the processes surrounding our meetings which will not in any way inhibit the scope for future change should that be deemed appropriate.

## Argument

6. The Board agendas should be arranged around the following four topic themes:
  - i. People issues such as recruitment, retention, pay and promotion
  - ii. Business delivery and process issues such as the balanced scorecard, sharing best practice, managing delivery risks out or down and regulatory/enforcement issues
  - iii. Reputational issues such as sensible health and safety, enforcement profile and consistency and interactions with our own trade unions
  - iv. Steering change in HSE to ensure that various change initiatives are properly joined up and that the pace of change is appropriate to our needs and capability
  
7. The Board should aim to take one item at each meeting which is more strategic in nature than our routine discussions. There will only be two opportunities to hold such discussions before Geoffrey arrives but this should enable us to offer him some advice on the usefulness, or otherwise, of this approach based on our experience. Topics which I think we might consider for discussion include:
  - a) Marketing ourselves as a better regulator
  - b) Strategic approach to relations with our trade unions
  - c) Making a reality of Timothy's note about SCS performance
  - d) Performance management in general

There may well be other issues that Board members feel would be a higher priority than these and I would welcome constructive suggestions.

8. On the process side there are a number of points which I propose we adopt:
  - i. We should be much clearer on the objectives and outcomes of each discussion (and I realise the Chair's summarising role is important here) and this will feed naturally into a revamped action list which we should properly review at each meeting
  - ii. Individual Board members to take clearer responsibility for specific items so that each paper should have a Board sponsor who introduces it. For any actions agreed we should identify the Board member responsible – it would then be up to them whether to delegate further or not. This will encourage us, as Board members, to hold each other accountable, not just for the Board to hold other people in the organisation accountable
  - iii. We should use sub-groups wherever appropriate. We have recently established a couple – one on geography and one on pay – but we should actively look for opportunities to build on this approach
  - iv. To make the business of the Board more accessible to staff across the organisation, I think we should consider opening up our policy on having observers present and readdress the issue of location. I would like to see more Board meetings outside London and suggest that we consider holding one of the meetings, probably the November one, outside London – perhaps in Birmingham. To get maximum benefit from this, Board members would need to put aside time for discussions with staff in whichever office we choose

- v. Peter Buckley, as Head of Strategy Division, should provide the secretariat support to the Board to support and challenges to ensure the agendas are relevant to delivery of the Commission Strategy (but Wendy Beeston would continue to provide the day to day support on these matters)
9. Our informal video-conference meetings should be held on the Monday of each week when there is no formal Board meeting. I see these discussions as having two primary purposes. The first is to share information on matters of which all Board members should be aware and the second is to raise urgent issues which require Board attention between our formal meetings. In particular, we should make sure that issues relating to our work which have a significant public profile are brought to the attention of all Board members (specifically we should make sure that high profile enforcement action and court cases are brought to the attention of Board members).