

Health and Safety Executive Board Minutes		HSE/05/M12	
Meeting Date:	2 November 2005	FOI Status:	Fully Open
Type of Paper:	Above the line	Paper File Ref:	
Exemptions:	None		

HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE
Minutes of the HSE Board meeting held on Wednesday
2 November 2005 in the Birmingham office at 10:00am

Present

Justin McCracken
Alex Brett-Holt
Paul Davies
Vivienne Dews
Giles Denham
Colin Douglas
Kevin Myers
Allan Sefton
Mike Weightman

Also attending

Tim Beaumont
Marcia Davies
Jackie Jones

Apologies

Sandra Caldwell
Jonathan Rees
Jane Willis

Minutes – Peter Buckley

1 Minutes of the HSE Board held on 5 October and the Action Points

The minutes from the last meeting were agreed without amendments. Justin McCracken reminded Board members they should send updates to the Action log to Wendy Beeston to the same deadline as for the papers for the meeting themselves.

2 Objectives for the Meeting

2.1 Justin McCracken outlined the objectives for the meeting as follows:

1. To discuss and agree the actions following the stress management surveys;
2. Work through a strategic discussion on marketing HSE as a better regulator;
3. Agree how to take forward the outcomes from the SCS Leadership Meeting in Cardiff last month; and
4. Review the first exchange briefings and agree on what might be done to improve them.

2.2 Justin McCracken reminded Board members that at lunchtime they would meet and talk to a representative sample of staff in the Birmingham office.

3 Health & Safety

3i) Monthly report

3.1 Justin McCracken asked Marcia Davies to introduce the paper. Marcia identified three issues for the Board to discuss. The first issue was the mid-year performance report on injury and ill-health trends. The figures were encouraging with particular improvement in DSE incidents and manual handling. Marcia felt sure that the Board would want to feedback to everyone how encouraging the figures were which were a result of concerted efforts of many staff and good management. Within this overall improvement in performance, however some issues did arise – there were mixed messages from the exchange briefing on DSE, the incidents of aggression had increased although more were probably being reported, and there was a slight upturn in the sickness absence rate.

3.2 The Board thanked everyone for their efforts in this improving picture by our own health and safety record, and agreed that each of the Board members would look at the sickness absence figures within their commands to see what might be done to bring the trend back on to a downward slope.

Action Point 11 **Board Members to assess individual directorate and division sickness absence figures to identify what remedial action is necessary.**

3.3 Marcia then introduced the second of the issues, which was progress with the fire risk assessments for the estate. The reassessment for Rose Court had now been carried out, and, with some adjustments, would act as a template for the rest of the estate. A timetable is being drawn up to complete the reassessment of the fire risk assessments for the estate, with a target date of completion by the end of the work year. The timetable was tight especially considering that the consultants we were using were in heavy demand. But we were prioritising the estate so that we would tackle the top priorities first.

Action Point 12 **Justin McCracken to pass on the Board's thanks to Steve Dennis and his team for their work on the fire risk assessments.**

3.4 Marcia then introduced the third issue from the paper that was a draft one-page summary of the Corporate Health and Safety Plan. Marcia explained that the one page summary had been produced as a direct result of the feedback from the first round of exchange which indicated that people were not sure what our Corporate Plan said or where they could find it.

3.5 The Board discussed the Corporate Health and Safety Plan summary and in particular the competency needs of our managers, the revision of the health and safety supplements, and the deadlines for completion of work in the plan, some of which had already passed.

3.6 It was agreed that the one page summary was very helpful. Where work had been completed this would be indicated as a part of the summary. And it was agreed that the summary would be published

and that Communications Directorate would help get our messages across about why we produced the summary and ensure that people knew where to find it.

Action Point 13 **Colin Douglas (supported by Marcia Davies, Tim Beaumont and Communications Directorate) to take forward the actions in paragraph 3.6 above.**

3ii) Reducing Stress at Work in HSE: Issues and Recommendations Arising from Stress Management Surveys

3.7 Marcia Davies introduced the paper as follows. She identified three drivers for this work: first, implementing our own management standards on stress; second, reducing levels of work-related stress and discomfort within HSE; and third, reacting to the information that had been gathered through the focus group sessions.

3.8 There were lessons to be learnt from our implementing the management standards which should be fed through to the policy team dealing with stress, but the strong and consistent messages that were coming over from our staff on the stressors were:

1. The pace and extent of change;
2. How it is managed and communicated;
3. Clarity of roles and expectations;
4. Priorities;
5. Relationships and valuing others;
6. The different roles we are expecting people to carry out.

None of these messages came as a surprise and they were consistent with the messages which staff had been giving us through other means.

3.9 In identifying the way forward, we had to acknowledge that some work was already in train – for example on skills, culture and behaviour improvements and these were listed in annex 1 of the paper. And some of what we needed to do resonated with the conclusions from the SCS Leadership meeting in Cardiff last month.

3.10 Whatever the Board decided to do needed to be cohesive and corporate so that people understood that there was a cause and effect relationship between the focus groups and the actions that the Board were taking. And we need to involve our staff health and safety representatives in the processes.

3.11 The Board then went on to discuss the specific recommendations in paragraph 21 of the paper. During the course of the discussion, the following points were made:

1. The early analysis on the staff survey show that although there was some good news in some areas, leadership and confidence in leaders was a key issue that needed to be addressed;
2. The same messages were coming through about change, about our capacity to lead and manage change, and roles and responsibilities. But the key issue for us in this context is whether these issues actually make people ill;
3. We should explore the possibility of benchmarking ourselves against another government department which either has or is

further advanced with a change agenda of a similar scale to our own;

4. There was some unease about the individual question sets within the management standards which Board members would feed through to the policy team responsible for them;
5. The Board was sure that change would continue to be with us, so it was a question of how we managed change, not whether we change at all;
6. Although there were some issues around the number and coverage of safety representatives within HSE, the Board was keen to take this stress agenda forward with staff and their representatives;
7. The Board were happy for stress action plans to be integrated into wider business improvement plans so long as it was clear that this had been done and people within the relevant parts of the organisation understood clearly that this was the case;
8. The Board recognised that some parts of HSE needed more time to get their action plans together and to involve their staff
9. Some of the issues identified in annex 1 were national rather than divisional or directorate problems that should be taken up by the reconstituted stress steering group
10. The Board recognised that this was a difficult and time consuming process, and we need to build our own experience into our developing policy.

3.12 Justin McCracken summarised the discussion as follows:

Action Point 14 Justin McCracken would ensure the management of stress should be an explicit part of the SCS change process identified at the Cardiff Leadership meeting (see paragraphs 5.5 and 5.6 below).

Action Point 15 Justin McCracken, supported by Marcia Davies and Tim Beaumont would arrange for the management stress steering group to be reconstituted as a sub-group of the Corporate Health & Safety Committee and it should deal with the national issues taken from annex 1 and monitor progress with individual action plans.

Action Point 16 Board Members would ensure Directorate and Divisional action plans are completed by the end of January, which would include measurement milestones within them, and be communicated clearly to staff. Copies of the action plans should be forwarded to Tim Beaumont.

Action Point 17 Vivienne Dews would ensure that the next stress survey should be aligned with the next staff survey.

Action Point 18 Board Members would ensure that the learning points from our work on stress should be fed into the policy team developing HSE's stress management standards by the end of January.

- 4 Strategic Discussion: Marketing HSE as a Better Regulator**
- 4.1** The Board had a closed discussion on marketing HSE as a better regulator.
- Action Point 19** **Giles Denham and Colin Douglas to update the paper to reflect the discussion, and to prepare a draft 'script' to help staff in their ambassadorial role**
- 5 SCS Leadership Meeting**
- 5.1** Justin McCracken indicated that the feedback following the SCS Leadership Meeting had been very positive. He thanked everybody for their help in making the event a success. But how effective the Leadership Meeting had been would be judged in 12 months time by what outcomes had been subsequently delivered. The Board noted that the Communications work on pay was already underway.
- 5.2** Justin McCracken then ran through each of the recommendations in the paper during which the Board agreed the following:
- Action Point 20** **To invite outside people to future Leadership Meetings. It was important to choose the people carefully and that they were well briefed on what we would like them to say – Peter Buckley to pass on to organisers of the next but one SCS Leadership Meeting.**
- Action Point 21** **To ask Jonathan Rees to coordinate the recommendations in the paper on how to promote a better understanding of the health agenda for our staff.**
- Action Point 22** **To set a personal example on delivering the action points on personal delivery and accountability agreed at the SCS Leadership Meeting in Cardiff.**
- Action Point 23** **That the next SCS Leadership Meeting would be held on (probably) 24 January, and would be a one-day event in London. Justin McCracken would put some ideas to Geoffrey Podger for this event, and then depending on his response, the same group who had taken forward the preparations for the Cardiff event would do the organisation for this London Meeting.**
- Action Point 24** **Not to have separate action logs for the Leadership meeting and instead would incorporate the actions agreed within the action log for the Board itself – action Peter Buckley.**
- 5.3** The Board then went on to discuss the role of sub-groups of the Board and discussed the following:
- Sub-group on Vision for HSE**
- 5.4** The Board agreed to set up a sub-group on a "task and finish" basis, under the chair of Colin Douglas, to produce a narrative on what we have achieved as an organisation, where we are going as an organisation, and then how we are going to get there. This work should be completed by February 2006

Action Point 25 **Colin Douglas to establish the group and come back to the March Board meeting with the outcome.**

Change Sub-group

5.5 The Board agreed to set up a change sub-group under the initial chairmanship of Justin McCracken. The terms of reference would be circulated to Board members within a few days of the meeting for agreement. It was important that this group produced a plan of action by January, although some of the work that would flow from this group would take much longer to complete.

5.6 During the subsequent discussion, it was agreed that the importance of this work needed to be communicated clearly to staff. This was more than reordering or reconfiguring what we are already doing. The message was the same message that had been agreed during the stress discussion - change is here to stay, so we need to manage it better rather than stop change altogether.

Action Point 26 **Justin McCracken to quickly circulate draft terms of reference for the Change Group to Board Members and to organise the first meetings of the group.**

Human Resources Sub-group

5.7 It was agreed to form a human resources sub-group, which would be chaired by Vivienne Dews. But it was also agreed that this group would not get to work until after the Board discussions on a range of people-issues at its December meeting. The Board then discussed a range of structural issues around the corporate governance of HSE, but accepted that these sorts of issues could not be resolved until the new Chief Executive arrived and had settled in.

Action Point 27 **Vivienne Dews to set up a Human Resources Sub Group after the board meeting in December**

6 Exchange – Report of First Briefing Sessions

6.1 Colin Douglas introduced the paper and identified the three key issues:

1. The first exchange sessions had gone well but we need to do more to encourage greater take-up;
2. We needed to identify what the January exchange topics would be; and
3. We need to be clear on the feedback mechanism to staff following the first exchange briefing.

6.2 Jackie Jones in further introducing the paper made the following points:

1. The headline figures indicated that up to 60% of staff had attended one of the exchange sessions;
2. The figure could be higher because not all the paper returns had yet been received; and

3. There were 106 individual sessions organised and the preliminary analysis of the feedback forms had already been done and any directorate specific points raised had been passed back to heads of directorates for action;
4. The feedback was also very positive in terms of constructive comments both on process and on the initiative itself, although staff were waiting to see what would happen next.
5. The recommendations to the Board were about improvements to the exchange process, and were about the specific issues which had arisen from the two topics – health and safety in HSE and the public safety role of HSE.

6.3 During the subsequent Board discussion, the following points were made:

1. The Board had already agreed to a one-page summary of the corporate health and safety plan being published.
2. There was discretion for divisions and directorates to tailor the process to suit the individual needs of their bit of the organisation (within the framework of face to face discussions leading to upward feedback). There was feedback that the discussions were more constructive in smaller groups.
3. Although the costs in terms of staff time were not inconsiderable, the Board felt that the investment was well worth the return.
4. There had been an encouraging start to the process but we needed to continue to focus on selecting the right topics and then selecting some sharp questions within those topics on which to seek the views of staff.

6.4 The Board then returned to the recommendations and agreed that:

Action Point 28 **The recommendations on health and safety would be taken through the Corporate Health and Safety Committee – action Justin McCracken supported by Tim Beaumont**

Action Point 29 **The conclusions on the public safety role of HSE would be fed into the review already underway on this issue – action Colin Douglas, supported by Jackie Jones**

Action Point 30 **The recommendations on improving the exchange process were agreed – action Colin Douglas, supported by Jackie Jones**

Action Point 31 **The two topics for the January exchange were the results of the staff survey and human resources modernisation/workforce strategy – action Colin Douglas and Jackie Jones.**

7 **A.O.B**

7a) The draft agenda for the December meeting was agreed with the following amendments:

1. The meeting would start at 9.30 and finish at 4.
2. The first session on people issues would run through until 12.30 with a break half way through.
3. Session 5 and 6 would be of one-hour duration each.

4. Vivienne Dews would do the presentation on the staff survey.

**Action
Point 32**

Peter Buckley to amend agenda and send out with minutes.

7b)

The Board took an update on Hampton from Giles Denham following the Hampton implementation programme board meeting the previous day.

Below the line paper:

Views on the below the line paper could be sent to Avril Adams by Friday 11 November.

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