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**HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE  
The HSE Board**

**Board visits during October - issues raised**

**A Paper by Colin Douglas**

**Advisor(s): Jackie Jones**

**Cleared by Colin Douglas on 31 October 2006**

**Issue**

1. To consider the key issues raised by HSE staff during the October series of Board member visits to HSE offices.

**Timing**

2. Immediate

**Recommendation**

3. That the Board:
  - i. notes the issues set out in this paper
  - ii. considers the mood of the meetings and how it varied by staff grouping and subject matter
  - iii. considers any further action that it might wish to take in response to the issues raised

**Background**

4. During the last two weeks of October, 28 HSE offices were visited by Board members in order to give a presentation to staff on a range of issues around HSE finances, COIN, the Fundamental Review, 'How and where we work' project and the 'Fine tuning' project. A further two presentations are to be given to staff in Stoneleigh and HSL.
5. The visits also provided an opportunity for staff to ask questions and give direct feedback on the topics covered in the presentation, and any other issues concerning them. As part of this process, note takers were identified to produce a short summary of the issues raised at each meeting.
6. As a broad estimate, around 900 staff attended these events. We arranged for evaluation sheets to be given out at each event.

**Argument**

7. It was clear from feedback that staff appreciated the fact that Board members were going out to offices around the country to discuss with them the current challenges and opportunities facing HSE. COIN and finances dominated much of the events, but a number of other issues were also raised.
8. There was a good level of response to the evaluation forms that were circulated at these events. They are still being analysed and a full summary will be tabled at the Board meeting. However, some topline results from an analysis of most of the events indicates that:

- i. People felt more informed after these events – 83% said they were better informed with only 17% disagreeing.
  - ii. Staff overwhelmingly felt that the information was presented clearly – 94% saying yes and only 6% no.
  - iii. They felt able to engage – 97% felt able to ask the questions they wanted.
  - iv. They were broadly satisfied with the depth of answers – 64% felt that questions were fully answered, with 36% disagreeing.
  - v. However, there was less satisfaction with the clarity of information around the Fundamental Review – only 57% felt that they now understood what it meant and how it relates to their role, compared to 43% who disagreed.
9. The issues raised at these meetings (in order of frequency) were:
- i. Finances – in particular, Band 6 shortages, managing job losses in a co-ordinated way, who is to blame, ensuring that controls in place for future, impact on training and development.
  - ii. COIN – why did we buy this system, time spent by inspectors inputting, how review of what went wrong will work, what went wrong with user testing.
  - iii. How and where we work project – concern about potential office moves, IT facility to support home working
  - iv. Cost of campaigns – why spending so much on marketing materials like playing cards, and questions about effectiveness of Backs advertising
  - v. Fine tuning project – concern about Fit 3 having gone too far and needing to be scaled back.
  - vi. Leadership – Board visibility and transparency, whether Board understands level of frustration with COIN, etc
  - vii. Need to prioritise workload and shut down low priority projects/activities
  - viii. HPAs – criteria for awarding them and the costs involved
  - ix. Fundamental Review, Fine tuning and How and where we work projects have all been heard before, but questioning whether anything will change
10. The Board will want to consider not just the frequency with which different issues were raised, but also the strength of feeling behind them. There was clearly a great deal of emotion behind the first two (although not at all the locations visited). It will be useful to hear the views of Board colleagues about just how heated discussions were on the other topics.
11. It will also be useful to identify topics/themes that Board colleagues think should be in paragraph 9, based on discussions at events they attended, but are currently missing.
12. The Board may wish to consider what response is needed to the visits. The Chief Executive gave a commitment at the Rose Court meeting to provide an overview of the points made and general responses to them. Given the interest shown by the staff who attended, such feedback is bound to be welcomed.
13. In any response that the Board makes to the issues raised, we should be mindful of the fact that there are three other activities planned for the coming months around receiving staff feedback and providing updates. First, this year's Staff Survey is due to be run shortly, with headline results being fed back to the Board by the end of the year. Second, the Board agreed to communicate to staff progress against the various Directorate and Divisional stress action plans – a number of points raised in the recent

visits around prioritising/reducing workload relate to this. Finally, in the November issue of 'express', there will be an interview with the Chief Executive about the visits, setting out why they were held and what the main messages are.

14. Since these visits have been, in effect, the Exchange Briefing for autumn, the usual process would be to present on the Intranet (and refer to this in express or e-express) a summary of the issues raised and whatever additional action is being taken. The Board may feel that this would be a sufficient response given the other activities referred to in paragraph 13 above.
15. It is clear from initial feedback, that the Fundamental Review element of the presentation appeared to be the least effective in generating understanding. The Board may wish to consider what more we can do, either collectively or within our own Directorates, to raise awareness of the different strands of the Review and how it will affect staff. Final agreement of the Fundamental Review Action Plan will provide a natural opportunity to give this greater clarity.

### **Consultation**

16. There has been no consultation in pulling together this paper.

### **Presentation**

17. Careful consideration will need to be given to how the Board responds to the issues raised and feeds back to staff. Paragraphs 13-15 set out these issues.

### **Financial/Resource Implications for HSE**

18. It is not possible to quantify the cost of this initiative but, clearly, this exercise will have involved significant resources mainly in terms of the time of staff attending these events, the time investment for the smaller team of staff organising the events, and the time investment from the Board in travelling around the country giving these presentations.

### **Action**

19. The Board is asked to agree a list of the key themes emerging from the visits, and then decide how best to respond.