

Health and Safety Executive Board Minutes		HSE/07/M05	
Meeting Date:	2 May 2007	FOI Status:	Partially Closed
Type of Paper:	Above the line	Paper File Ref:	
Exemptions:	None		

HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE
Minutes of the HSE Board meeting on Wednesday 2 May
Hope Room, Rose Court, London

Present

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

Observers

Melanie Hussey	Sarah Mallagh	Sarah Shore
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Also attending

Peter Buckley (for all items), Steve Dennis (for items 1-6), Richard Lewis, Gordon MacDonald (for item 2), Gaynor Coldrick (for items 2, 4 & 5), Alison McKenzie-Folan (for Item 4), Sarabjit Purewal (for item 5), John Ewins (item 6) and Jackie Jones (for items 7 & 8).

Minutes René McTaggart

1 Minutes of the HSE Board held on 4 April and the Action Points

1.1 The minutes of the last meeting were approved subject to the amendment to paragraph 6.2 d so that it reads:

"Not to pay fees to committee members pending the above but to make it clear to them how much their hard work is appreciated, better arrangements will be made to facilitate their work and HSE will identify any steps that could be taken to reduce their workload e.g. ensuring that work is only undertaken if there is a real business need and providing papers early in a way that best suits members"."

2 Agenda Item 2 – Rationalising entry into HSE’s Services - (Paper B/07/56 - Closed)

2.1 Vivienne Dews and Richard Lewis introduced the paper with the following remarks:

- a. The Board asked for a range of options for rationalising the arrangements for services such as Infoline and the ICC where the public contact HSE;
- b. The drivers behind this work are the need to improve efficiency and improve the service provided to our stakeholders;
- c. The work to produce the paper confirmed the need for a range of communication channels and highlighted the links to the How and Where We Work (HWWW) programme;
- d. The next steps are to identify whether HSE has the right channels in place and to gain a better understanding of how they can work together to contribute to the HWWW programme.
- e. The Board were asked to provide a view on what changes they would like implemented.

- 2.2 The Board's response included the following comments:
- a. The Board sought clarification on the intended audience for the improved service which was confirmed as stakeholders including members of the public and duty holders;
 - b. The Board agreed that any changes should take account of how enquires are handled once they enter the organisation. The Board agreed the need to avoid a situation where those seeking advice are pushed towards the wrong communication channel because of the process in place (for example, those with basic enquiries should not be expected to make their requests in writing);
 - c. The Board noted the need to consider the impact changes to one channel of communication would have on others (for example, more detailed information on the internet may lead to an increase in telephone contacts to explain technical issues);
 - d. The Board agreed the scope of the project should not be restrictive so as to allow options to be explored that would enhance the HSE's business delivery. The Board also agreed that the initial exploration of options should lead quickly to a clear identification of those options within and without the scope of the project;
 - e. The Board agreed that it is important that Local Authorities are consulted as part of any considerations to develop options;
 - f. The Board agreed that the project must identify HSE staff as important stakeholders and engage with HSE Trade Unions early;
 - g. The Board noted the need to properly resource this project due to its potentially wide scope. The need to also learn from other organisations that have undertaken similar exercises and the need for a robust governance structure to the project was noted;
 - h. The Board agreed that a strategic approach was needed that allowed current initiatives to rationalise business should continue until such time they could be absorbed into project;
 - i. The Board agreed that the name of the project could be mis-interpreted to mean that HSE is putting in place a single point of contact for all enquires, etc. As this is not the case, the Board asked for a name change to be considered which would be supported by the establishment of a 'vision' for the project.

2.3 The discussions were concluded with the Board's support for the project and the agreement that a progress report will be provided for the Board in 4-6 months.

Action Point 47 **Richard Lewis to consider options for inclusion in the scope of the project and return to the Board with interim proposals by November 2007 so that proposals can be refined and completed for the Board for January 2008.**

3 Agenda Item 3 – Revised Complaints Handling Procedure (Paper B/07/55 - Open)

- 3.1 Sandra Caldwell introduced the paper with the following remarks:
- a. The project aims to revise HSE's policy so that our responses to complaints are prioritised to a greater extent;
 - b. Tribute was paid to the team (Steve Pointer, Holly Featherstone

- and Sarah Mallagh) responsible for taking this work forward;
- c. Tribute was also paid to the staff who handle complaints to a very high standard on a daily basis. Special recognition was given to Band 6 staff who handle a majority of complaints and who, through their professionalism, provide an excellent service and also help free up inspector's time;
- d. The Board were asked to indicate what it wants its public service ethos to be and to take into consideration the public's concerns about health and safety issues.

3.2 The Board discussed the proposals in the paper making the following remarks:

- a. The Board welcomed the paper and congratulated colleagues on a sensible approach to this issue. The Board also endorsed Sandra's comments that the professionalism and expertise of the staff handling the complaints was 'first class' – The Board recorded a formal vote of thanks;
- b. The Board acknowledged the need to learn from experience of handling of complaints under the current arrangements and from the experiences of other countries – in particular Ireland who have successfully introduced a system in which 80% of complaints are handled administratively;
- c. The Board agreed the need to ensure that the involvement of inspectors in dealing with complaints was reserved for higher risk circumstances;
- d. The Board agreed that our stakeholders need to be clear that our position on responding to all complaints is not the same as our position on visiting workplaces or taking enforcement action;
- e. It was agreed that HID would check the section on major hazards to ensure it accurately reflects the current HID position;
- f. The Board agreed that further work should be carried out to develop and test two options for more centralised receipt of complaints and that, in the meantime, some straightforward adjustments should be made to improve the existing procedures;
- g. Further development should look to opportunities to make summaries of administratively-handled complaints available to inspectors as a useful source of intelligence about duty holders;
- h. The Board asked for a map of the inter-dependencies between projects, business needs and handling of complaints to help ensure an organisational wide approach.

Action point 48 Vivienne Dews to produce a map of the inter-dependencies.

4 Agenda item 4 – Monthly Finance and Staffing Update (Paper B/07/51 - Closed)

- 4.1 Vivienne Dews introduced the paper and made the following points:
- a. Colleagues across HSE had all contributed to getting the organisation's finances under control;
 - b. The outturn against December forecast on admin costs was good but there was an under spend on programme and an over-recovery on income leading to a net resource under spend of over £3m;
 - c. The staff volumes targets for the year had been met although there was a marginal over-spend on staff costs;
 - d. A number of specific lessons had been drawn out including the

need to improve forecasting and profiling of spend, together with the action RPD proposed;

- e. The Board was asked to agree to the actions outlined in paragraph 10 of the paper.

4.2 The Board thanked Vivienne for her introduction and made the following comments:

- a. The Board asked that in presenting the end of year information to the Commission that the implications of the position are set out in clear (non-technical) terms.
- b. The Board agreed the paper subject to an amendment to point 10a. While the Board agreed the intention of 10a the Board did not feel this was the right way to achieve it;
- c. The Board agreed the position and noted the need for improvements in forecasting and the continued need for tight budgetary control.
- d. The Board noted the number of pensions' estimates being sought for the second early retirement scheme and agreed to a further discussion in July once the take-up of those applying was known;
- e. The Board also asked for a range of issues to be brought forward for discussion to help ensure staffing and skills levels were appropriate to deliver our objectives in the coming years.

Action Point 49 RPD to redraft paragraph 10a so that T&C is not confined only to contractual commitments in the last quarter but encourages spend where it has been forecast.

Action point 50 Gaynor Coldrick to circulate information to the Board on the bands by directorate who have sought estimates within the current AER scheme.

Action point 51 Gaynor Coldrick to include within the finance and staffing paper the current hot spots in relation to affordable staffing position across HSE for discussion at the June Board Meeting.

5 **Agenda Item 5 – Fourth Quarter performance and risk management report (Paper B/07/52 - Closed)**

5.1 Vivienne Dews and Steve Dennis introduced the paper with the following remarks:

- a. The Board were informed Lord McKenzie has asked for changes to how HSE monitors and reports on performance so this was probably the last time the routine reports on performance would be presented in this style. The Minister has been provided with options for more quantified reporting and future reports to the Board will include the information provided to Ministers;
- b. The Board were asked to consider the views expressed in the paper (paragraph 8) prior to the Commission's consideration of the balance scorecard.

5.2 The Board thanked Vivienne and her team for the presentation and made the following comments:

- a. The phrase 'continues to move away from the target' (in paragraph 6) in relation to the offshore indicator needs to be amended as despite a very slight down turn in performance HID are broadly on target;
- b. Recognition needs to be given to the efforts of staff in the main body of the text;

8(i) Delivery of PSA targets

c. The Board agreed this as a statement of fact;

8(ii) Delivering health and safety in HSE

d. The Board noted the considerable effort made by RPD to improve the management of sickness absence in HSE. The Board also noted that despite these efforts the indications are that there will be a slight increase in the average number of days lost to sickness absence though HSE remain below the Civil and Public Service averages;

e. The Board agreed that HSE is doing the right things to improve its sickness absence performance and management but that more work was needed to:

i. Obtain a better understanding of the causes and cost of sickness absence;

ii. Learn from other organisations that have tackled long term absence;

iii. Improve the management culture and links to the 'well being' agenda;

iv. Make better use of the HSE's occupational health service;

8(iv) Right People, skills, place and time

f. The Board noted that HSE is/will be facing difficulties in recruiting and retaining specialist staff – most notably in the high hazard sector;

g. The Board requested that information be provided on manpower/succession planning to fill skills gaps which should include options for the use of non HSE staff;

8 (v) Reporting performance

h. The changes requested by Lord McKenzie were addressed in Vivienne's introduction to the paper. The Board will comment and endorse the proposals for Q1 once the requirements from Lord McKenzie were agreed with him and incorporated in the performance report.

5.3 The Board agreed to provide RPD with any additional detailed comments on the balanced score card, specifically on Annex D, prior to submission to the Commission.

Action Point 52 **Sarabjit Purewal to amend the balanced scorecard and Commission Paper as indicated above and to reflect any detailed comments from Board members.**

6 **Agenda item 6 – Knowing our knowns and unknowns (Paper B/07/53)**

6.1 Patrick McDonald and John Ewins introduced this paper. Their introductory comments included:

a. The purpose of the project is to identify how HSE can identify and use evidence more effectively in policy decision making;

b. The term evaluation is ill defined as an evaluation can range from simply tracking progress against milestones to a full impact evaluation;

c. Over 500 reports on evaluations of HSE interventions have been produced – the easier the access to this information the more likely it will be effectively used;

d. HSE spends around £4m a year on evaluation reports – which is consistent with organisations of a similar size to HSE. HSE needs better co-ordination and strategic direction for future evaluations, to

- improve their effectiveness and to continue to secure value for money.
- e. The Board were asked to agree the proposals for improving HSE's management and communication of evaluation evidence.
- 6.2 The Board had a wide ranging discussion which included the following issues being raised:
- a. The Board agreed that the gathering and use of evaluation evidence could to be improved;
 - b. The Board considered, bearing in mind the current financial restraints, the benefits of including the evaluation budget in the project/ programme allocation to help improve the robustness of decisions around evaluation;
 - c. The Board agreed that CoSAS should be involved in the early stages and throughout the policy cycle project development to ensure appropriate evaluation models are used;
 - d. The Board welcomed the proposal for improved guidance and seminars/training for staff;
 - e. The Board recognised the need to learn from other organisations so that good practice could be adopted;
 - f. The Board agreed that the outcome of this project needs to result in an improvement in the quality of evaluation and the way it is used. The Board supported the proposal to mine past evaluation reports to 'lock down' evidence (including examples of good and bad practice) but thought revisiting all 500 past reports would not be an appropriate use of resources.
- Action point 53** **CoSAS to continue with arrangements for: co-ordinating evaluation; the drafting of simpler guidance; for a series of seminars on using evidence; and for making some evaluation evidence more readily available via the intranet.**
- 7** **Agenda Item 7 – Feedback from Board Road-shows (Oral Item)**
- 7.1 Colin Douglas outlined the progress with the latest round of Board Road-shows and reported that the three events held so far had been well attended and well received.
- 7.2 Sandra Caldwell and Patrick McDonald had undertaken the visits to Cardiff, Preston and Birmingham. They confirmed that the briefing material had provided the right level of information and had been relatively easily tailored to suit the target audiences. Both had been surprised by the lack of interest in HWWW though this could be attributable to the offices visited.
- 7.3 The Board thanked Colin, Patrick and Sandra for the feed-back and asked Colin to continue to report, as appropriate, at future meetings.
- Action point 54** **Colin Douglas to continue to report back, as appropriate to future Board Meetings.**
- 8** **Agenda Item 8 – Draft Internal Communications Strategy (Paper No B/07/58 – Closed)**
- 8.1 This part of the minutes is closed.
- 9** **Agenda item 9 – Agenda for May meeting**
- 9.1 Due to the weight of business and the need to move agenda items, the Board agreed that Peter Buckley should produce a redraft of the agenda and clear it via correspondence.

10 Any Other Business

10.1 This part of the minutes is closed.

Below the line papers

The Board noted the paper on the Monthly Health and Safety Statistics.