

Health and Safety Executive Board Minutes		HSE/06/M12	
Meeting Date:	6 December 2006	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 6 December**  
**in the Hope Room and by video link to Redgrave Court, Bootle**

**Present**

Geoffrey Podger  
Justin McCracken

Jonathan Rees  
Sandra Caldwell  
Vivienne Dews  
Colin Douglas  
Patrick McDonald  
Eddie Morland  
Kevin Myers  
Mike Weightman  
Jane Willis

**Apologies**

Alex Brett-Holt  
Giles Denham  
Bill Gunnyeon (DWP)

**Also attending**

Steve Dennis (for items 2 and 6)  
Gaynor Coldrick, Patricia Williams (for item 2 by video conference)  
Tim Beaumont (Item 3 by video conference)  
Sarabjit Purewal (Item 4 by video conference)  
Les Philpott and Avril Adams (Item 6)  
Vinny Kenny and Shellagh Molloy (Item 10)

**Minutes**

Peter Buckley

**1 Minutes of the HSE Board held on 8 November and the Action Points**

1.1 The minutes of the last meeting were agreed without amendment.

**2 Agenda Item 2 - Finance and staffing – current position - (Paper B/06/105 closed)**

2.1 Steve Dennis gave the Board November outturn figures as follows:

- a. The payroll was £76k over plan – this meant a cumulative figure over budget of around £30k for the last three months;
- b. The net leavers figure was 16.5, including 9 resignations;
- c. The travel and subsistence spend indicated that the grip on this budget was improving and needed to be maintained;
- d. The resource outturn and forecast were both under profile for this year.

The conclusions to be drawn from these figures were that the situation remained very tight and although the trends emerging were promising there was no cause for optimism at this stage.

- 2.2 During the subsequent discussion the board noted the following:
- a. The Voluntary Early Retirement Scheme had been fully subscribed with 34 colleagues accepting offers made;
  - b. No money had been identified for another scheme next year but if one were to be offered it would be on the same terms;
  - c. The funding of the arrival of the Engineering Inspectorate from the DTI into FOD needed to be confirmed;
  - d. Main Budget Holders should ensure the relevant risks in the log in Annex C of the paper were closed out in time to inform their December forecast, if necessary, in discussion with PEFD;
  - e. The cooperation from the trade unions on contacting those who are approaching 60 and those on career breaks was welcomed;
  - f. Getting the December forecast as accurate as possible was the next task in managing the financial situation.
- 2.3 The Board noted the latest staffing number projections up to March 2008 that were tabled at the meeting and Board Members were asked to check the figures and discuss any changes with RPD.
- 2.4 On communications with staff, Steve Dennis and Gaynor Coldrick would speak to the Trade Unions after the board meeting to report the current financial and staffing situation and would meet with them on 18 December. The Board agreed that a short reference to the financial situation would be included in the Chief Executive's seasonal message to staff. A further message would be considered after the January Board Meeting had set the December forecast which would determine the level of spend for the remainder of the financial year.
- 2.5 Geoffrey, on behalf of the Board, thanked Steve, Patricia and Gaynor and their teams for the quality and clarity of the board paper.
- Action Point 119 Main Budget Holders to resolve the risks at Annex C of the paper for the December forecast, with PEFD if necessary.**
- Action Point 120 Board Members check the figures on staff number projections up to March 2008 tabled at the Meeting and discuss any necessary changes with RPD.**
3. **Agenda item 3 – Health and safety – significant health and safety risk areas – lone working (Paper B/O6/108)**
- 3.1 Tim Beaumont introduced the paper with the following remarks:
- a. The paper covered progress with the policy on lone working agreed by the board in February and drew attention to the new policy agreed, recently finalised after extensive consultation with the trade unions, on the elevated risk of violence and aggression;
  - b. OMT had agreed that more needed to be done to ensure consistent adherence to the procedures to reduce the risks associated with lone working and had acted accordingly;
  - c. From the incident data collected, it was clear that verbal abuse over the telephone was an issue along with a

- suspected element of under reporting of incidents;
- d. Training dealing with how to handle difficult situations was spread across a number of training packages and some rationalisation was necessary;
- e. The support of the Board was sought to:
  - i. Encourage staff to report all cases of unacceptable behaviour;
  - ii. Ensure all staff adhere to the policy on lone working and on violence and aggression; and
  - iii. Ensure staff in contact with duty holders have the necessary skills and training.

- 3.2 During the subsequent discussion the following points were made:
- a. Board Members were full of praise for the excellent examples of staff dealing with difficult complainants;
  - b. The Board reiterated that:
    - i. Any violence to HSE staff was unacceptable;
    - ii. Members of staff would get the necessary support should they be subject to any violence; and
    - iii. The perpetrators of violence would be pursued through the courts.
  - c. The policy would be reviewed next summer by one of the national health and safety committees.

- 3.3 Geoffrey thanked Tim for the paper and all the hard work which had gone into getting the policy on the elevated risk of violence and aggression finalised. The Board accepted the paper and its recommendations.

**Action Point 121** **Board Members to action the points in paragraph 17 of the paper.**

**4 Agenda item 4 – Performance and Risk Management – Second Quarter 2006\2007 (Paper B/06/112 Closed)**

- 4.1 Vivienne Dews introduced the paper which:
- a. Presented the latest information in the balanced scorecard;
  - b. Presented a further refinement of the corporate risk management plan; and
  - c. Highlighted a number of issues in paragraph 6 which were of potential interest to the board.
- 4.2 During the subsequent discussion the following points were made:
- a. In paragraph 6 ii, the risks to the delivery of the Major Hazards PSA was not just due to the diversion of resources to the Buncefield investigation;
  - b. In paragraph 6 iii, advice was needed from RPD on the implications of the most recent sickness absence data;
  - c. In paragraph 6 v, the position on operational productivity would be enhanced by the introduction of a resource management system and there would be continuing pressure to develop unit costings;

- d. In paragraph 6 vi, the wording on staff turnover needed to be amended along with consideration of how the impact of post losses on HSE businesses might best be assessed;
- e. In paragraph 6 vii, the Board noted the current position on diversity and the likely direction of travel. The Board also noted the recent concerns expressed by the trade unions on the support for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender staff within HSE. The Board agreed that it should return to both issues at a subsequent meeting;
- f. There was a need to consider the provision of in year data for issues such as enforcement activity.

4.3 The Board thanked Sarabjit and his team for the quality of the board paper.

**Action Point 122 RPD to take into account the board discussion in presenting the next performance report.**

**Action Point 123 RPD to return to the Board at a subsequent Meeting on the issue of diversity in general and support for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender staff within HSE in particular.**

**Action Point 124 RPD to advise the Board on the implications of the most recent data on sickness absence management.**

**5 Agenda item 5 – IT System for managing research and support contracts (Paper B/06/117)**

- 5.1 Patrick McDonald introduced the paper with the following remarks:
- a. The current IT system for managing research and support contracts was no longer supported by REFIT and even if working, was no longer fit for purpose;
  - b. If the current system were to fail, manual recording would be the only short term solution;
  - c. The choice of a new system had been a thorough and time consuming process;
  - d. The system chosen was a proven system which was compatible with other IT systems in use in HSE and likely to be compatible with future enterprise systems;
  - e. The chosen system could be used for other contract management within HSE;
  - f. The system would allow the necessary disciplines to be introduced for the commissioning, capping expenditure and invoicing of work, especially with the SRO ensuring a tight configuration for the system;
  - g. Even if the number of contracts was managed down their number would be substantial enough to justify a new system;
  - h. The expenditure was small in the context of the overall spend of research over a three year period;
  - i. It was timely to introduce the system now alongside the governance changes which will occur as a result of the Better Use of Science project.

- 5.2 After a wide ranging discussion, the Chair summed up the discussion as follows:
- a. The Board were agreed on the need to replace the existing system but would not approve the current proposal at this meeting;
  - b. Important and necessary improvements to business procedures being supported by IT changes (rather than the other way round) was an important issue to get clear;
  - c. The potential scale for the phased introduction of the system to monitor other contracts across HSE needed to be built into the business case;
  - d. Arrangements should be made for Board Members who wished to do so, to discuss further the details of the current proposal;
  - e. Some contingency planning work was necessary to deal with the possibility of the existing systems breaking down;
  - f. Tailoring the use of the system and the training provided would be an important part of maximising the potential benefits of the system; and
  - g. Reducing the cost of the introduction of a replacement system should be pursued further.

5.3 The Board realised that decision would be disappointing but asked Patrick McDonald to take the further work forward and to return to the board with a revised proposal in due course.

**Action Point 125** **Patrick McDonald to take the further work forward and to return to the board with a revised proposal in due course.**

## **6 Agenda item 6 – 1<sup>st</sup> Progress Report on the Fundamental Review Action Plan (Paper B/06/109)**

- 6.1 The Board discussed and agreed the first progress report on the Fundamental Review but asked that the following points be taken forward:
- a. BSD could approach worksteam leaders to better quantify the potential benefits, timetables and to check the existing figures in the table;
  - b. Item 11 in the tabulation was about support to Ministers not public accountability;
  - c. A shorter higher impact statement would need to be produced to get over the key messages on the outcomes from the Fundamental Review both to the internal and external audiences;
  - d. Any such statement would also need to encompass a number of workstreams which have started since phase 2 of the review was completed e.g. stopping work and the how and where we work project;
  - e. The board at its February Meeting would consider the possible integration of the key Fundamental Review workstreams into the portfolio of change initiatives.

- Action Point 126**      **PEFD and BSD to take the action plan forward taking the above into account.**
- 7**              **Agenda item 7 – Gas Safety Review (Paper B/06/110 Closed)**
- 7.1              This part of the minutes is closed.
- 8**              **Agenda Item 8 – Science evidence and innovation – taking HSE forward (Paper B/06/111)**
- 8.1              Patrick McDonald took the board through the various issues raised in the paper during which the following decisions were made:
- a. On Managing the Science Budgets, the Board did not agree to roll over any unspent funds from the 2006\7 research budget into that for 2007\2008 – although this issue could emerge again during the discussion on the December forecast at the next Board Meeting;
  - b. On the approach to improving science governance, the Board agreed to the proposals subject to the aim of any governance arrangements being:
    - i. To meet the science needs of the various HSE customers; and
    - ii. To challenge HSE customers on whether what the science requested was either affordable or achievable.
  - c. On the science planning and strategy development, the Board agreed the proposals in the paper;
  - d. On improving evaluation and what works evidence, there was strong support for the proposals building on the work done as a part of the Fit3 programme;
  - e. On improving knowledge management in HSE, the board accepted that work might take longer than originally anticipated and agreed to look again at this issue in the spring;
  - f. On embedding the HSE\HSL partnership, the Board agreed the proposals subject to some minor amendments to Annex 8 of the paper and with an encouragement to focus on outputs not inputs;
  - g. On communications and presentational issues, the Board agreed to encompass the above workstreams into the general messages about Making the Best Use of Science.
- 8.2              The Board thanked Patrick and his team for the paper and asked that the actions agreed be taken forward.

**Action Point 128**      **Patrick McDonald to take the action points above forward.**

**9**              **Communications Budget**

**9.1**              **Spend for remaining part of 2006\2007 (Paper B/06/113)**

- 9.1.1              Colin Douglas introduced the paper by reminding the Board that it had agreed to keep spend on communications under review as a part of the financial management strategy now in place. The paper

detailed the existing commitments and identified the risks associated with the remaining spend for the rest of the financial year.

- 9.1.2 The Board thanked Colin and his team for the paper and agreed to:
- a. Return to the centre the spend in the no\low risk category; and
  - b. Return to the issue of the spend profile for the remainder of the financial year as a part of the board discussions at its next meeting on the December forecast.

**Action Point 129**      **Colin and Vivienne to reflect the reduction in spend in their December forecast.**

## **9.2 Spend and income for 2007\2008 (Paper B/06/114)**

9.2.1 Colin Douglas introduced the paper by reminding the Board that the allocations for the next year were indicative only at this stage. The paper also asked that the Board agree a more commercial approach to generating income on publications. And Colin reminded the Board that the new procedures for approving publications applied to priced publications.

9.2.2 The Board thanked colleagues in Communications Directorate and CDS for producing a clear and helpful paper, and noted that communication planning was further developed this stage of the year than it ever had in the past.

- 9.2.3 During the subsequent discussion the following points were made:
- a. The major hazard business demands were likely to be greater than indicated in the paper;
  - b. The balance between proactive management of the overall health and safety brand and awareness raising around specific hazards needed to be explored;
  - c. More work was needed to complete the rationale column and look at the expected returns on some of the individual investments;
  - d. A strategic look at spend commitments over the year was necessary to protect priorities and maintain flexibility; and
  - e. The proposals on income generation were agreed.

**Action Point 130**      **Communications Directorate to take account of the above points as they develop the detailed communication plans for next year and the need to maintain a corporate financial reserve.**

## **10. Rationalising entry in HSE Services (Paper B/06/116)**

- 10.1 Jonathan Rees introduced the paper with the following remarks:
- a. HSE had numerous contracted contact points;
  - b. HSE needed a clear vision of whether and how it might want to rationalise those entry points – and an opportunity to do so presented itself in 2008 when a number of contracts were up for renewal;
  - c. The services provided needed to balance HSE's business needs with the needs of the customer;
  - d. The work needed to integrate with the work already underway in FOD for a single point of entry into the

regional office network;

- e. Subject to the board's agreement to proceed, the boundaries of the project needed to be defined closely;
- f. The work needed to be taken forward as a project lead by BSD but with representatives of the various interests including operational and policy.

- 10.2 During the subsequent discussion the following points were agreed:
- a. There was no preconceived solution so what the board was looking for was options;
  - b. The precise remit of the project needed to be carefully defined by terms of reference along with projected incremental milestones for the work which dovetail in with the contract renewal dates;
  - c. The needs of the emergency preparedness communities in HSE needed to be taken into account;
  - d. The issue should be discussed with the trade unions at the next Whitley Meeting after which wider communication with staff would be considered;
  - e. Vivienne Dews would act as the board champion for this project.
  - f. The project team should report quickly – perhaps by March next year

**Action Point 131**      **Vivienne Dews to initiate the project taking the board discussion into account.**

**11            Agenda for January Meeting (B/A07/1)**

The agenda for the January Meeting was agreed with the following amendments:

- a. The session on Human Resources issues would be replaced with either one on the one year business plan or on the headline figures from the Staff Survey;
- b. Geoffrey Podger would present the paper on the decision making project.

**Action Point 132**      **Peter Buckley to revise the agenda and circulate.**

**12            Agenda item 9 – Any Other Business**

12.1          The Board discussed and agreed a line on flexi credit as the time of seasonal festivities approached.

**Action Point 133**      **RPD to circulate the line on flexi credit for forthcoming seasonal festivities.**