

MEETING	Six Town Housing Board
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CONTACT OFFICER	SUE NEWTON – HEALTH AND SAFETY ADVISOR
TELEPHONE/EMAIL	0161 686 8049 s.m.newton@sixtownhousing.org

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Managing corporate risk is a key issue for all organisations. Risk takes many forms and one of the key areas is the health and safety of our employees, our contractors, our tenants and members of the public who may be affected by our activities.
- 1.2 Effective management of health and safety risks will help:
 - Maximise the wellbeing and productivity of all our employees and the wellbeing of our tenants
 - Stop people from getting injured, becoming ill or being killed by their work for us
 - Prevent damage to our reputation in the eyes of our customers, competitors, suppliers, the Council and other stakeholders and the wider community
 - Avoid damaging effects on turnover and profitability
 - Encourage better relationships with our contractors and more effective contracted activities
 - Minimise the likelihood of prosecution and consequent penalties
- 1.3 This report provides an update on performance against the Health and Safety Service Improvement Plan and also provides statistical analysis.
- 1.4 This report covers the statistical period 01/04/08 to 31/03/09 and up to July 2009 in terms of progress against SIP.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 There has been considerable progress in terms of health and safety; however, there is still work to be done.
- 2.2 Progress against the Health and Safety Service Improvement Plan (SIP) is on target with the only barriers being related to time and financial resource availability. We

continue to work with managers to ensure they are meeting their Health and Safety responsibilities.

- 2.3 There have been 47 incidents during the last financial year – the majority of which relate to Repairs and Maintenance and which occur out on estates. Violent incidents and manual handling are the key areas for improvement. There have also been a number of fires and consideration should be given to education of tenants in fire safety. Slips, trips and falls are also of concern within the estates with defective paving being of concern.
- 2.4 The safety culture is improving but middle managers are still adverse either due to financial or time constraints to fully embrace health and safety. Hopefully the Values Framework will assist to improve the health and safety culture.

3. KEY ISSUES

3.1 IMPACT ON CUSTOMERS

- 3.1.1 A safe organisation will result in little visible impact to customers, however, an organisation that has frequent accidents has the potential to have a major impact on customers, both from a reputation point of view and where customers are endangered by unsafe working practices.

3.2 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 3.2.1 Health and Safety failures are identified on the risk register as a corporate risk. Failure to manage health and safety is likely to lead to an increase in accidents and incidents with the potential for corporate or individual prosecutions against the organisation and/or directors or board members.

Statement from Director of Corporate Services	It is important to analyse health and safety statistics and performance to ensure all board members and directors are satisfied that the risk of health and safety failures is being minimised and that arrangements are in place and being utilised to manage the risks.
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3.3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.3.1 Management failures are the most likely cause of accidents and incidents at work. The cost of investigating an incident can be significant. Costs are not just related to financial costs, but the moral and business costs should also be taken into account, i.e. the suffering of the injured party and the damage to reputation.
- 3.3.2 The cost of prosecution and fines can be unlimited and can be against both the organisation and against individuals. Individual prosecutions and fines will have to be met by the individual director or manager as the company is not permitted to settle individual fines.

- 3.3.3 The cost of civil compensation claims is significant – see figures outlined in section 7 below.
- 3.3.4 Failure to manage health and safety can lead to management failures with the potential for prosecution and fines from the Health and Safety Executive which are not covered by insurance arrangements.

Failures can also result in Civil Compensation Claims which could lead to an increase in insurance premiums and payments for claims which are under the insurance excess.

The cost of investigating accidents can also be high and is not budgeted for within normal budgets.

Statement from Finance and Business Development Manager	
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3.4 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS (include details of any issues that have been identified from the Equality Impact Assessment)

- 3.4.1 There are no equality and diversity implications. This is a report for information only.

3.5 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- 3.5.1

Statement from Chief Executive	<p>Ensuring the health and safety of our employees and tenants sits with our strategic objectives of being an employer of choice and building better communities.</p> <p>Analysing statistics and formally noting the progress against targets ensures that Board is fully aware of any potential risks or issues and can direct the appropriate resources to any areas of weaknesses.</p> <p>Board can also set strategic priorities in relation to health and safety where necessary to fit in with other strategic objectives.</p>
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4. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 It is recommended that Board note the contents of this report.
- 4.2 It is recommended that Health and Safety Statistics are reported to Board quarterly as part of the HR Update Report.

5. UPDATE AGAINST TARGETS 2008/9 AND 2009/10 AND OTHER RISK AREAS

5.1.1 Review of Occupational Health Provision

Provision of Occupational Health is a major contributor to managing sickness and getting people back to work. Occupational Health also includes health surveillance which is required by law for certain employees.

The review was included in the 2008/9 SIP with a view to being completed during 2009/10. However, due to a lack of time and capacity within the HR Team and the other ALMO's who had originally expressed an interest in a joint procurement exercise, the project commencement was delayed. Initial work has identified a potential issue with our current providers, Bury Council who do not have the resource to fulfil our requirements. We are currently looking for an interim measure to "catch up" with health surveillance and are working with other ALMOs to investigate a shared approach to the purchase of Occupational Health. We would also like to provide an Employee Assistance Programme, however, this is not possible within this financial year due to budget constraints.

Work is also on-going to introduce a well-being strategy (see separate report).

5.1.2. Inclusion of Health and Safety Training

Training Needs Analysis reports, accident reports and other methods have been analysed to determine the requirements for health and safety training. Some training has been made mandatory such as manual handling training and others are offered on a voluntary basis. Job specific training is identified and sourced as and when required, i.e. specialist electrical and gas updates, use of machines and tools and safe use of ladders and scaffolding and managing conflict.

Over the last 18 months, most staff have undertaken training in corporate induction, asbestos awareness, manual handling, risk assessment and fire procedures.

Job specific training has been arranged as required and tool box talks are taking place with operatives every 6 weeks on a variety of subjects from disposal of needles to working at height.

It is intended that the values framework will determine a minimum requirement of responsibility for health and safety for each role within the organisation. These are likely to be based on the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health working safely and managing safety qualifications.

5.1.3 Risk Assessments

Risk assessments have now been updated and reviewed for the repairs and maintenance service and the caretaking service. Other sections will update all their risk assessments during this financial year.

Actions that have arisen from the repairs review have been put forward in an action plan and will be monitored by the Head of Repairs and Maintenance and the Repairs Manager .

Failure to have up to date risk assessments could increase the possibility of accidents and will increase the potential for a successful HSE prosecution.

5.1.4. Consultation

A health and safety committee is now up and running, consisting of unions, management and staff. The purpose of the committee is to assist with setting out a strategic direction for the organisation in relation to health and safety and to oversee performance on an operational basis.

All new policies and procedures are consulted on with all interested parties and staff are encouraged to participate in health and safety changes and initiatives by way of working groups and input into risk assessments/inspections etc.

5.1.5 Performance and financial monitoring

Accident statistics are now being collected via Trent and reported on to Health and Safety Committee. A benchmarking scheme has been set up with local ALMOs to allow for comparison across the North West.

Other areas for monitoring are being investigated and will be reported on as and when agreed.

5.1.6 Policies and Procedures

A health and safety manual has been approved and is available for staff. The manual contains guidance and Six Town Housing's policy and procedures for a wide variety of health and safety issues. From this manual, a handbook has been approved and printed and these will be issued to all members of staff as a basic aide memoir.

5.1.7 Health and Safety Awareness

The culture of health and safety is improving – particularly with the operatives. There are still some barriers mainly within middle management where managers can experience conflict between budget management and the requirement for expedient service delivery and the requirements of effective Health and Safety Management. However, we continue to work closely with managers and are achieving real improvements.

5.1.8 Contractor Monitoring

A lot of work has taken place particularly in repairs and maintenance and asset and investment in relation to managing contractors for health and safety purposes. An "approved list" has been set up and a process of vetting contractors has been agreed. A standard of at least CHAS and Constructionline registration along with other legal requirements has been agreed for all our sub contractors and other partner contractors. There is some work to be done on ensuring that all sections within the organisation utilise the "approved list" and do not use contractors that have not been through a vetting process.

5.1.9 Asbestos Management

A great deal of work has taken place on managing asbestos. This has been a joint effort between the various teams and the result has been recognised by the Audit Commission. There is now a Policy and Management Plan in place along with an

action plan for further work that was required. The majority of this work is now in place and the working group still meet regularly to ensure that outstanding items are progressed.

5.1.10 Legionella

Work in this area has been delayed due to other priorities, however, there is no major concern as a lot of the work in this area has already been carried out. The outstanding areas revolve around communal areas and whether there is the potential for risk from shared water systems. It is expected that this project will commence this year.

5.1.11 Fire Policy and procedures

A fire policy has been agreed and is being implemented but is causing some issues around communal areas. A separate briefing note has been issued relating to these issues.

5.1.12 Vibration and Noise

This is another key risk area for Six Town Housing, particularly in regard to Repairs and Maintenance, the Caretaking and Home Improvement Agency sections. A working group has been set up and agreement has been reached as to how this will be measured. Work is on-going to provide the baseline information on types of activity and tools used to enable us to access accurate measurements and put in place a system to manage the risks.

5.1.13 Drivers Procedures

There has been a number of issues around staff driving recently and a new system of checking driving licences, servicing and maintenance arrangements has now been put in place.

6. FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS

- 6.1 During this financial year and into next, the majority of the groundwork for health and safety will have been set. The focus will then turn to auditing and ensuring that management and staff have the resources and knowledge to undertake their roles and comply with legislation and with policies and procedures.

7. STATISTICAL INFORMATION

7.1 Accident Statistics

During the last financial year there were 47 accidents/incidents, the majority of these resulted in no absence (35). The section with the highest levels of accidents was predictably Repairs and Maintenance with 27, followed by Estate Management with 10. The highest level of reportable incidents occurred within Repairs and Maintenance. The highest level of individual locations for incidents was Point Blue (7), but most accidents occurred on schemes (36). The highest cause of incidents was violence/verbal abuse (12) followed by manual handling (8) and contact with sharp instrument (7).

These figures are not unexpected and show trends that we are aware of and have been addressing over the year with the design of new violence at work policies and a review of risk assessments and lone working arrangements. It is worthwhile pointing out that reportable incidents – i.e. those resulting in absence of over 3 days or where major injury has occurred has increased significantly over recent months. The longest periods of absence during the reported period was 30 days and 29 days respectively. The health and Safety Advisor continues to monitor these incidents and training had recently been delivered to managers around RIDDOR reporting and preventative health and safety management.

Benchmark figures with other ALMOS are not yet available for the last financial period.

7.2. Fire Statistics

During the last financial year there has been 7 fires within domestic premises and no fires within offices. Luckily there have been no reported injuries as a result of these fires. The major cause of the fires appears to have been due to tenants actions – i.e. children playing with lighters, chip pan and unattended use of candles etc. The costs to repair the damage caused by these fires is estimated at around £35,000.

7.3 Insurance Claims Statistics

During the last financial year, there were 16 new claims brought against Six Town Housing for physical injury allegedly caused due to Six Town Housing's actions or defects in structures under Six Town Housing's control. There were other claims which allegedly caused financial loss which are not reported on within this document. The majority of the incidents reported on relate to slips, trips and falls usually due to defective paving or missing drain/utility covers. The total estimated cost of these claims is in excess of £145k and will all need to be directly funded from the insurance budget as they fall under the insurance excess.

7.4 Prosecutions/Enforcement Notices/Advisory Letters

There has been no enforcement activity within Six Town Housing.

8. CONCLUSION

There has been a lot of work carried out on improving our health and safety performance within Six Town Housing over the last 18 months, with most sections contributing towards the overall performance – however, there is still work to be done and there is a need for consistency throughout the whole organisation. The transfer of the R&M and HIA services has increased the risks of health and safety failures significantly due to the very nature of their work.

Some managers have fully taken on board health and safety and without the assistance of certain managers the progress to date would not have been as significant as it has been. Thanks should go in particular to Repairs and Maintenance and Asset and Investment.

There has been a need for some difficult decisions and it is acknowledged that there are both budget and time constraints, however, with the help of the executive management team the majority of these issues have been dealt with as they have arisen.

The focus for the first two years from appointment of the health and safety advisor has and will be around ensuring that policy and procedure is available in all areas of significant risk, ensuring that suitable and sufficient risk assessments are carried out or updated and that staff have the correct training to do their job so that there is a consistent approach to health and safety. This in effect is implementing a health and safety management system. Once these issues have been adequately addressed, the focus will move to audit and inspection, which is the next phase in a management system.

Overall, health and safety is moving in the right direction and the health and safety advisor is confident that systems are much more resilient and robust than they were at the time of the health and safety audit carried out by Bury Council.

The next stage will be to compile a comprehensive risk register relating to health and safety risks and ensuring this is monitored by the executive Management team and Board where appropriate.

TRACKING/PROCESS

EMT	WORKING GROUP	COMMITTEE	
03.08.09			
BOARD	COUNCIL	OTHER	
19.08.09			