

HEALTH AND SAFETY IN SCHOOLS TASK AND FINISH REVIEW GROUP

MONDAY, 9TH JULY 2007.

Present: Councillor Hughes, Councillor Richmond and Mr. R. Bennett.

Apologies Received: Councillor A. J. Scott.

Officers Present:

- Colin Morrison, Health and Safety Officer;
- Ken Poole, Assistant Director, Technical Services;
- Michael Gamble, Technical Assistant;
- John Bell, Capital Programme Manager;
- George Cornforth, Risk and Insurance Manager;
- Brian James, Chief Internal Auditor.

Councillor Hughes provided a brief introduction to those in attendance unfamiliar with the work the group had undertaken to date.

Colin Morrison explained that he had been involved with the Task and Finish Group from the outset, and briefed those present on the work undertaken by the Health and Safety Unit during the duration of the review. Colin explained that in November 2006 the Health and Safety Unit gained another full-time Officer (Stuart MacKenzie), who had greatly assisted with the work undertaken. Colin confirmed that the Health and Safety Unit had now visited every school in the Borough, tailoring the approach to the individual school and dealing with any specific issues as they arose. Colin highlighted that since the work commenced the number of Accident Forms submitted by schools had risen, however this was only to be expected due to increased awareness.

Councillor Hughes commented on the involvement of the Health and Safety Unit in the development of the new Pupil Referral Unit and, whilst acknowledging that the contractor is entitled to use an external company for Health and Safety advice, felt that the Council's own Health and Safety Unit should be kept informed. Councillor Hughes was pleased to note the development of the School Tracker, which identified when a school was visited, what happened on the visit, training received, etc. Councillor Richmond stated that he was obviously very pleased with the improvements made. Colin stated that the Health and Safety Unit would repeat their cycle of visits again with effect from September 2007. The inspections involve training people on a one to one basis to carry out inspections using a form, and auditing the process and where there are weaknesses offering advice.

Ken Poole outlined the Service Level Agreement in place. The Community Services Department operate a system of cyclical maintenance and write to schools every year listing all the services provided, some statutory and some recommended. The Community Services Department actively promote these services as they are competing for business, however schools can elect to go elsewhere if they so wish. The services offered by the Community Services Department are bespoke to each school. The Community Services Department monitor the responses, and those schools that do not sign up to receive the services from the Local Authority are reported to the Director of Children's Services. Councillor Hughes asked if the Governors are informed if the

school does not take up the Local Authority's services. Ken pointed out that the Chair of Governors is required to sign off the letter to confirm the schools decision. If a school does not respond either way Michael Gamble chases the school for a decision. If the school still does not respond, Michael reports the school to John Bell and the Director of Children's Services.

A table outlining the services taken from Community Services Department by schools was circulated to the meeting.

George Cornforth reported that the Local Authority has the responsibility of a Corporate Landlord. Property Risk is rated Excellent to Poor. Eighteen months ago the Corporate Pressures and Property Risk File was introduced and is still in development, however there is a Corporate approach to property risk. A list with 55 headings outlines everything that is needed. The feedback has been extremely positive. Community Services Department deliver the services, which link into the Corporate Risk Plan, which is monitored by the Estates Section. Using Corporate responsibility, Legionella Training is mandatory to Head Teachers. The Council have won the Alarm Award for the work conducted in the last 12 months.

Councillor Richmond enquired how we price the costs of our services and whether we make a profit. Ken Poole explained that on some services we make a profit and on others we lose money. It was queried that, as we had a legal duty of care, should we not provide such services at cost price. Councillor Richmond asked how competitive the Legionella Service, at £2294, actually was. Ken Poole stated that Ertel, one of the Council's closest competitors charges a very similar fee, however use a different method (chemical release) and these are the main differences in the service provision. Ken assured Members that cost is not a disincentive, and the benefit of that the Council can provide is that we can bring all the services together, instead of a school approaching eleven different providers.

The main concern expressed was when schools go to an external provider, and the level of service the schools get from this.

Consensus was that those schools not buying into the Council's service should be visited in September 2007 to check the schools records. Brian James informed Members of the Risk Register for each school and Members enquired as to whether the register informed the release of school budgets. Brian explained that risks are prioritised and that this forms part of the budget monitoring process. Brian explained that linking budget to risk assessment had saved Carmel R. C. College £40,000 in the design stage.

Discussion ensued on the Education Village – the PFI are responsible for Health and Safety issues – the Council have certain elements of control, however no responsibility. Members agreed that the Education Village should appear on the table outlining services provided / not provided by the Council.