

Subject: Operations Team Health and Safety Update. **Status:** For Publication

Report to: Cabinet **Date:** 17th June 2009

Report of: Chief Executive

Portfolio

Holder: Environmental Services

Key Decision: Yes

Forward Plan General Exception Special Urgency

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 Receive background information in relation to the Health and Safety Executive inspection and actions for addressing issues identified.

2. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

2.1 The matters discussed in this report impact directly on the following corporate priorities and associated corporate objective.

- Keeping Our Borough Clean and Green (Environment)
- Promoting Rossendale as a cracking place to live and visit (Economy)
- Improving health and well being across the Borough (Health, Housing)

3. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

3.1 It is essential to have actions in place which will mitigate risks for refuse operatives and members of the public.

4. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

- 4.1 Rossendale currently has 12 refuse collection rounds serving approximately 29,800 properties. They consist of four vehicles for residual waste, two vehicles for dry recyclate, two vehicles for paper and card, two vehicles for garden waste, and two vehicles for farms and hard to reach properties. Each vehicle, with the exception of farms and hard to reach properties, operates on a fortnightly cycle.
- 4.2 Over the past two years the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has audited Rossendale's waste collection arrangements on a number of occasions, the last being the 18th and 19th June 2008.
- 4.3 During these assessments, the (HSE) assess current operation of waste collection against best practice. To enable local authorities to match this best practice the HSE have produced guidance in consultation with the Waste Industry Safety and Health forum (WISH). The document sets out a process that if followed, has been proven to significantly reduce the risks associated with refuse collection. The (WISH) Guidance has 5 main themes which are as follows, Risk Assessment, Managing the Risks, Management, Agency Workers and Reversing.
- 4.4 The H&S inspector during his examination observed that overall Rossendale demonstrated some examples of good practice. However they also identified a number areas for development as detailed below:-
- The need for all staff to be trained as reversing assistants preventing employees from standing behind reversing vehicles
 - The need to manage reversing
 - State of repair of wheelie bins
 - Vehicle camera technical problems
 - Reversing speeds
 - Use of different receptacles
 - Dealing with overfilled wheelie bins and side waste
- 4.5 In addition and also assisting the HSE inspection as well as part of our drive to improve services, the council itself appointed an interim Health and safety officer circa November 2007 to implement the guidance as detailed in the aforementioned (WISH) document. This officer was tasked with improving the key areas of workforce H&S as detailed in the 5 main themes above. This involved reviewing management processes and training, undertaking generic and site specific risk assessments including reversing and improving the management and skills of Rossendale's agency workforce.
- 4.6 Each round was risk assessed with a view to reducing the risks by: -
- Reviewing the reversing manoeuvre
 - Reducing distances reversed

- Creating safer systems of work (reversing assistants, additional staff, etc...)
- 4.7 As a result of these assessments, and combined with the recommendations from the H&S Executive, an improvement program was implemented to mitigate the risks identified. This program included the production of an induction programme for all existing and new employees, an H&S handbook, an induction training session which details safe working practises on or near the highway, especially in relation to reversing, manual handling, safe use of equipment and general risk assessment procedures. A training matrix was also developed linked to series of tool box talks and formal training sessions to ensure continual compliance.
- 4.8 In addition to the training and management improvements, the risk assessments considered the need to review all reversing manoeuvres to ensure the vehicles are able to drive into locations rather than reverse, or by the creation of collection points eliminating reversing altogether. In addition the round risk assessment process considered the use of extra resources to increase the workforces enabling employees to reduce reversing by manually navigating waste and recycle over larger distances to the vehicles. However the implementation of any of the recommendations would require full consultation with the community.
- 4.9 The remaining operational risks such as the need to replace damage bins, or limit the amount of side waste residents produce through targeted recycling programs can be considered within the day to day management of the operations team along with the support of the portfolio holder.

COMMENTS FROM STATUTORY OFFICERS:

5. SECTION 151 OFFICER

- 5.1. No Comments.

6. MONITORING OFFICER

- 6.1. The Council has a legal requirement to meet the requirements of the health and safety executive.

7. HEAD OF PEOPLE AND POLICY (ON BEHALF OF THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE)

- 7.1 No Comments.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1. With the improvements already implemented at Rossendale, the risks associated with refuse collection is reduced, never the less maintaining a suitably trained and competent workforce may not mitigate totally any risks associated with refuse collection and vehicle reversing, especially considering that accident statistics have shown that accidents do occur despite the use of

reversing assistants. Further efforts will be required to reduce risks even further and the need to work with the community on finding sustainable solutions for evaluating reversing manoeuvres is essential, and while the possibility of collection points is real and justified this has to be balanced against the severity of risk. However, the HSE will require any action taken against their observations to be communicated in due course, and as such any action taken will have to represent good practice as detailed in the Waste Industry Safety and Health forum.

9. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 9.1. That Cabinet agree to a rolling program for the implementation of the Health and safety action plan, following a series of member involvement workshops where ward members can participate in delivering and understanding any recommendations proposed in their wards.
- 9.2. That Cabinet delegate any action arising from these workshops to the Chief Executive and portfolio holder for Environmental Services, subject to an agreed community consultation process, and for a timescale of workshops to be communicated to members.

10. CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

- 10.1 To be agreed.

11. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Is an Equality Impact Assessment required Yes

Is an Equality Impact Assessment attached No

Each project will need an Equality Impact Assessment. Consultation, communication and the equality implications of the decisions need to be considered and will be brought back to Cabinet as appropriate.

12. BIODIVERSITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Is a Biodiversity Impact Assessment required No

Is a Biodiversity Impact Assessment attached No

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