

**REPORT TO:** East Lothian Council

**MEETING DATE:** 23 April 2013

**BY:** Executive Director (Support Services)

**SUBJECT:** Health and Safety Partnership Arrangements with Midlothian Council

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## **1 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To present the Council with a review of the current partnership arrangements with Midlothian Council in relation to Health and Safety and to recommend that the existing arrangements be continued and further consideration be given to extending partnership arrangements in relation to Health and Safety, Emergency Planning and Business Continuity, Risk and Internal Audit.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 Council agrees to the continuation of the current arrangements for partnership working in relation to Health and Safety and further consideration be given to extending partnership arrangements in relation to Health and Safety, Emergency Planning and Business Continuity, Risk and Internal Audit.

## **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Midlothian Council and East Lothian Council jointly recognised that both organisations face largely similar health and safety risks, based on the activities and services of each organisation, although the approach to manage these differ slightly. Following a review of the Health and Safety function within Midlothian Council, it had become evident that further specialist resourcing was required to drive forward improvement at an appropriate pace. Midlothian Council was seeking to explore cost sharing options to support their need for additional resourcing in this area.
- 3.2 East Lothian Council had a vacant Corporate Health and Safety Adviser position in August 2012 and required to access support as East Lothian Council considered this post to be a pivotal element of the Council's health and safety management system. Crucial to the success of the current

approach is the co-ordination and management of specialist work programming of Health and Safety Professionals and performance monitoring.

- 3.3 An initial six month Partnership was agreed by the Joint Liaison Group meeting on 22 August 2012, whereby Midlothian Council's shared their Health and Safety Manager with East Lothian Council, with the formal Partnership work beginning on 1 September 2012. East Lothian Council contributed 50% of the salary costs of the Health and Safety Manager during this period utilising the saving from not filling the vacant Corporate Health and safety Adviser post.
- 3.4 Following the six month pilot period an evaluation has been carried out to determine the benefits to Midlothian and East Lothian Councils from working in partnership going forward to deliver efficient internal health and safety services. Throughout this time both councils have utilised the services of the Health and Safety Manager from Midlothian Council.
- 3.5 Midlothian Council accessed support from specialist Officers from East Lothian to review the Fire Safety risk assessment arrangements within the Council and had a review of Asbestos Management arrangements carried out by East Lothian Council's Asbestos Manager during the exploratory period.
- 3.6 A status review was conducted by the Health and Safety Manager within East Lothian Council which highlighted the strengths of the current health and safety arrangements and areas for development. The status review identified particular health and safety risks where current arrangements now require to be reviewed and those areas where formal policy/ management arrangements require to be developed.
- 3.7 The report also highlighted the need to review the current health and safety staffing resource across the Council (currently, Corporate Health and Safety Adviser (vacant), Corporate Health and Safety Adviser, Fire Safety Adviser, Asbestos Manager, Gas Monitoring Officer and four service based Health and Safety Implementation Officers) with a view to realigning this to best meet the needs of the organisation going forward.
- 3.8 The pilot period has reinforced that the Councils have similar needs going forward to develop and review organisational health and safety policy arrangements. It has been confirmed this presents the Councils with an opportunity to spread the effort of developing these arrangements between the Councils, taking a more common approach to managing particular workplace hazards and thus reducing the staffing time to undertake this work in each authority.
- 3.9 Further benefits would stem from joint policy/management arrangement development with the ability to partner on training development and delivery associated with these policy arrangements, creating further cost efficiencies.
- 3.10 It is expected that such partnering arrangements could result in the saving between the two councils equivalent to 0.75FTE resourcing requirement.

- 3.11 Aligning policy/management arrangements also makes any further partnering between Councils more straightforward with standardised employee approaches to managing workplace hazards.
- 3.12 Initial enquires have been made to examine the potential to utilise the health and safety management information system currently used in East Lothian Council, Rivo Safeguard, across both Council areas. The shared use of this system would facilitate joint policy/ management arrangement development in specific areas, e.g. management of risk, hazardous substance assessment, incident reporting, incident investigation, auditing and performance monitoring. Initial feedback from the system supplier has suggested the cost to each Council using this system would result in a lower cost per Council than East Lothian currently pay.
- 3.13 The review of the initial period of partnership working has suggested that it has proven successful with both Midlothian and East Lothian Councils benefiting from the arrangement, in the form of improved organisational awareness of current management arrangements and the steps required to address these. The Councils have also been able to realise real cashable savings from this partnership.
- 3.14 It has been possible to establish that both Councils have similar needs going forward to develop and review organisational health and safety policy/ management arrangements and embed these policies into practice. Through the policy and procedural development, training development and delivery there is significant opportunity to reduce the resource demand within both Councils by sharing the workload and achieving associated efficiency benefits. Projecting future benefits of partnership working in this area, it is considered that both Councils could benefit from improved services and real savings.
- 3.15 This partnership working has benefited both Councils over the initial six month period and is capable of returning longer term benefits both in terms of service delivery and cost saving to the Council's.
- 3.16 During the pilot period Midlothian Council have carried out a review of Risk Management, Health and Safety and Audit within Midlothian. This has resulted in a realignment of resource within Midlothian Council to increase resourcing within the health and safety function. Midlothian Council's Health and Safety Manager now also has a management lead on Risk Management and Civil Contingencies/ Emergency Planning. This may create further opportunity for partnership working going forward. Midlothian Council has also separated responsibility for Internal Audit from Risk Management and this has opened up the opportunity to consider partnership arrangements in relation to the Internal Audit function.
- 3.17 In view of the successful pilot the Joint Liaison Group has agreed to recommend that the partnering arrangement for the sharing of Midlothian's Health and safety manager be continued and that further consideration be given to extending partnership arrangements in relation to Health and Safety, Emergency Planning and Business Continuity, Risk and Internal Audit.

- 3.18 The review of the Council's Health and Safety resource (see para 3.7) will incorporate the partnering arrangement and consideration of further partnering arrangements for Health and Safety. Separate work will be undertaken to evaluate the business cases for partnering arrangements relating to Emergency Planning and Business Continuity, Risk and Internal Audit.

#### **4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The continuation of the arrangements for sharing Midlothian Council's Health and safety Manager and further consideration of partnering arrangements in relation to Health and Safety, Emergency Planning and Business Continuity, Risk and Internal Audit will aim to ensure that these services are provided in accordance with best value principles as effectively and efficiently as possible. A pre-requisite of any partnering arrangement in these vital services is that the Council's resilience in these areas at least should be maintained and, if possible, should be improved.

#### **5 EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 5.1 This report is not applicable to the well being of equalities groups and an Equalities Impact Assessment is not required.

#### **6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Financial – continuing to share Midlothian Council's Health and Safety Manager between the authorities creates a saving for the Council of approximately £22,000pa. This saving was included in the 2013/14 Revenue Budget approved by Council on 12 February 2013. Further savings may be achieved from extending partnering arrangements in Health and Safety or in the other service areas detailed in this report but have not been specified within the Council's budget.
- 6.2 Personnel – The proposal to continue with the shared Health and Safety Manager post means that the currently vacant Corporate Health and Safety Advise post will remain vacant. This post will be included in the review of Health and Safety resources across the Council. Any personnel implications arising from consideration of extending partnering arrangements to Emergency Planning and Business Continuity, Risk and Internal Audit will be reported in future reports.
- 6.3 Other – none.

#### **7 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 7.1 None

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