

MANAGEMENT BOARDS

SAFETY ASSURANCE

Note by DG HR & Change (Commons) & by Director of Facilities (Lords)

Purpose

1. This note sets out proposed arrangements for strengthening the governance of safety management in the two Houses, through the establishment of a high-level Safety Assurance Committee.

Action for the Boards

2. The Boards are asked to agree the proposed improvements in governance.

Consultation

3. Senior staff directly affected have been consulted as have the Health and Safety committees and the trade unions.

Background

4. An audit report in October 2010 by Deloitte proposed a number of improvements to the management of Health and Safety. Most of their recommendations have been implemented. However, one concern – high-level ownership and governance – remains to be addressed. At present the oversight of safety issues in the two Houses is fragmented, with separate Health & Safety Committees in each House, a bicameral Fire Safety Committee, and separate arrangements for food hygiene within the line management structures of each catering department. All of these have been improved in recent years, and the Houses' record on all fronts is acceptable. There have been recent improvements in the management of Health and Safety bicamerally through the introduction of a new online safety recording system (Assessnet). From April 2012 we will be able to collate management information concerning accident reports, risk assessments and permits to work which will support better governance arrangements

Providing assurance

5. In order to manage the risks effectively, it is important now to pull the threads together to provide the assurance that is needed. Senior managers in both Houses have concluded that the best way to manage the risks and provide the two Boards with assurance is to set up a small, high-level committee which will meet twice a year to:

- a. Advise on the strategic direction on safety issues including H&S, fire safety & food safety for both Houses
- b. Receive an annual assurance statement & report from each area
- c. Commission, receive and consider other audit or assurance reports as required
- d. Consider serious safety failures and ensure that lessons are learned
- e. Render an overall annual assurance report to the two chief executives in April each year.

The committee would be chaired jointly by DG HR & Change (Commons) and Director of HR (Lords), DG Facilities (Commons) and the Director of Facilities (Lords) will attend, and the trade unions will be asked to nominate one representative. The committee would be supported by the SHWS. Terms of reference are attached.

6. Chairmanship of the Commons Health & Safety Committee will pass from DG HR & Change to DG Facilities, and the Lords Health & Safety Committee will be chaired by the Director of Facilities.

Risks

7. The proposal is itself a risk mitigation measure, to provide assurance that unnecessary interruptions to business through safety failures can be avoided, and that lessons are learned when incidents occur.

Financial, procurement and equality aspects

8. None.

Conclusion

9. The Boards are asked to agree the proposed arrangements.

Andrew Walker
Carl Woodall
January 2012

ANNEX**SAFETY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE
MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS OF REFERENCE****1 PURPOSE**

The Parliamentary Safety Assurance Committee provides the strategic direction on safety issues including health and safety, fire safety & food safety for both Houses. It also provides the House of Commons and House of Lords management boards with assurance that there are adequate arrangements in place to discharge their responsibilities related to safety and risk management.

2 MEMBERSHIP

The membership of the Committee will comprise:

Joint Chair DG HR & Change (Commons) and Director of HR (Lords).

Secretariat Safety Adviser, SHWS.

Members DG Facilities (Commons),
Director of Facilities (Lords),
Director (HR and Development), PICT,
One nominated Trade Union Side Representative,
Head of Safety, Health and Wellbeing Service,
External Representative

The Committee will co-opt other stakeholders to attend as required, including senior representatives from the Catering and Retail Services and the Parliamentary Estates Directorate, the Corporate Risk Management Facilitator, OCE and the Head of Fire Safety and Environment. It may also set up Sub-Committees as appropriate.

2.1 Quorum

A quorum will be three representatives - a representative from the House of Lords, a representative from the House of Commons and the Head of, or a senior manager from the, Safety, Health and Wellbeing Service.

2.2 Meeting arrangements

- a. Meetings shall be held twice a year or as agreed by the Committee.
- b. The Committee shall agree the date, time and place of the meetings.

- c. The Committee Secretariat will agree the agenda with the Chair and circulate it and accompanying papers to Committee members ten working days before the Committee meeting. Items for discussion are to be submitted to the Secretariat by an agreed closing date.
- d. No business other than that appearing on the agenda shall be transacted at any meeting unless its introduction as a very urgent item is agreed.
- e. The minutes of all meetings of the Committee shall be drawn up by the Secretariat as soon as possible after each meeting and copies supplied to:
 - Members of the Committee,
 - Management Boards,
 - House of Commons and House of Lords Safety Committee members.
- f. The secretariat will ensure that a copy of the minutes is put on the relevant pages of the parliamentary intranet.

3 TERMS OF REFERENCE

- a. Advise on the strategic direction on safety issues including H&S, fire safety & food safety for both Houses
- b. Receive an annual assurance statement & report from each area
- c. Commission, receive and consider other audit or assurance reports as required
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