

POLICY, FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE**1st JULY 2014****REPORT OF HEAD OF REGULATORY SERVICES****ASBESTOS POLICY****1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek approval for the Asbestos Policy.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that the policy be approved with immediate effect.

2.2 That the Strategic Director (CM) be granted delegated authority to amend the policy in line with Health & Safety legislation and best practice guidance.

3.0 KEY ISSUES

3.1 Asbestos was extensively used as a building material in the UK from the 1950s through to the mid-1980s. It was used for a variety of purposes and was ideal for fireproofing and insulation. Any building built before 2000 (houses, factories, offices, schools, hospitals etc) can contain asbestos. Asbestos materials in good condition are safe unless asbestos fibres become airborne, which happens when materials are damaged.

When these fibres are inhaled they can cause serious diseases which are responsible for around 4500 deaths a year. Asbestos fibres are present in the environment in Great Britain so people are exposed to very low levels of fibres. However, a key factor in the risk of developing an asbestos-related disease is the total number of fibres breathed in. Working on or near damaged asbestos-containing materials or breathing in high levels of asbestos fibres, which may be many hundreds of times that of environmental levels can increase your chances of getting an asbestos-related disease.

The Council is committed to ensuring the health, safety and welfare of its employees and those affected by its activities. This policy is to ensure that suitable and sufficient assessments are undertaken to determine potential location of asbestos in Melton Borough Council properties in order to:

- Avoid significant risks, so far as is reasonably practicable; or
- Develop control schemes to reduce significant risks.

Monitoring arrangements are being established to ensure that any precautions taken to avoid or reduce the risks remain effective and that suitable records are kept

In practice the policy is in operation; recent training has been given to relevant staff, the assessments have been made and are cloned for similar property types. However to increase intelligence additional surveys are being carried out through void inspections. Records are kept on file of the surveys carried out. Final approval following this managed introduction of the Policy and system is now sought.

4.0 POLICY AND CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

4.1 This Policy compliments the key areas of focus identified in the Council's Housing Asset Management Plan and will apply to all Melton Borough Council properties and is applicable to relevant staff working with such properties.

5.0 FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Any financial implications are currently met from existing budgets but demand for increasing intelligence could have an impact in future.

6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS/POWERS

6.1 No direct implications although the policies reflect good practice and comply with current health and safety legislation.

7.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY

7.1 The policy is to protect community safety.

8.0 EQUALITIES

8.1 Most cases of asbestos related illness occur in trade people (boiler workers, plumbers, electricians) who come into contact with asbestos whilst working. Smoking also increases the risk of illness related to asbestos exposure.

9.0 RISKS

9.1 Breaches of Health and Safety law give the courts considerable scope for punishing offenders and deterring others. For example, a failure to comply with an improvement or prohibition notice, or a court remedy order, carries a fine of up to £20 000, or six months' imprisonment, or both. Unlimited fines and in some cases imprisonment may be imposed by higher courts.

10.0 CLIMATE CHANGE

10.1 There are no climate change implications.

11.0 CONSULTATION

11.1 The Policy has been developed in consultation with Housing Repairs and in particular the Officers who leads on Health & Safety aspects of council housing. The Safety Committee has been consulted and contributed to the content of the policy prior to its completion. The policy has been presented to the Joint Staff Working Group who supported its submission to this Committee for approval.

12.0 WARDS AFFECTED

12.1 All Wards are affected, as the Policies relate to all Council properties and any works carried out on this.

Contact Officer: Victoria Clarke
Date: 10th June 2014
Appendices : Appendix 1: Asbestos Policy