



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Health and Environmental Services Committee
Subject:	Local Authority Pollution Prevention Control Function Audit Report
Date:	5th November, 2008
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Relevant Background Information

District Councils, including Belfast City Council, deliver Pollution Prevention and Control functions (PPC) alongside the Industrial Pollution and Radiochemical Inspectorate (IPRI), controlling emissions from industrial processes. The local authority PPC functions are outlined in Appendix 1.

As for many of the functions undertaken by the Environmental Health Service, a variety of quality control methods are used to ensure that the services provided by all the district councils are efficient and effective. One method used is that of inter-authority auditing, in which one district council (or Group Environmental Health Service) inspects the activities of another against an agreed standard.

As part of a pilot driven by the Chief Environmental Health Officers' Group (CEHOG), one council from each of the four Environmental Health Group Areas and Belfast City Council were audited in 2008. These councils were selected by agreement ensuring that they each had a reasonable range and number of regulated industrial processes. The councils were audited against a number of agreed standards, based on the most recent audit of Industrial Pollution work in Great Britain.

The PPC auditing process is designed to reflect compliance with regulatory service requirements and actions which are representative of best practice in the delivery of these functions. The process itself involved discussions with the lead officer responsible for the Industrial Pollution function and other officers as appropriate, together with an examination of premises files and other documentation. A very extensive questionnaire covering all aspects of the provision of the Industrial Pollution Prevention Control (PPC) function was also completed.

The audits provided a comprehensive picture of council performance in undertaking these very specialised duties.

Key Issues

The Environmental Protection Unit of the Health and Environmental Services Department has been audited against a number of agreed standards produced by the CEHOG Pollution Control Sub-Group.

The audit of Belfast City Council was undertaken on the 26th March 2008 by officers from the Southern Group Environmental Health Committee and a report was produced highlighting strengths and any areas for improvement.

A general report on each of the councils involved has been submitted for the approval of CEHOG and has also been provided to the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA). Individual reports on performance have been submitted to each council involved

The full Belfast City Council Pollution Prevention and Control Function Audit Report is attached at Appendix 2.

In summary the report indicated the following:

- The delivery of the PPC function was being undertaken to a consistently high quality. It was evident that the PPC specialism of the officers responsible for the function has led to the development of a strong commitment to service quality.
- In general the standard of arrangements for the enforcement of the regime is good, with a strong commitment among both management and officers.

Particular strengths highlighted included:

- The consistent achievement of PPC targets;
- The regular monitoring and reporting of the PPC function as a key element of the Environmental Protection Unit's Business Plan;
- A training and development culture supported with quality procedures to ensure that staff receive appropriate training and support relative to their jobs;
- Regular, open and helpful interaction with process operators and applicants with regard to the PPC function;
- No complaints have been received regarding delivery of the PPC function or the respective officers;
- High quality maintenance of public registers and working files;
- Provision and maintenance of all necessary equipment and guidance in order to carry out the PPC function;
- The use of a comprehensive software system in parallel with hard-copy files to record all interactions and time-spend in relation to the PPC function.

Conclusion

The Audit report demonstrates that the Industrial Pollution Prevention and Control function is being carried out by the Environmental Protection Unit to a consistently high standard. A small number of recommendations and improvements have been made relating to updating risk assessments, reviewing proformas and some improvements to notice documentation and recording procedures. These are in the process of being implemented.

Resource Implications

None

Recommendation

The Committee are asked to note the report.

Key to Abbreviations

CEHOG – Chief Environmental Health officers Group
NIPG – Northern Ireland Pollution Group (This is a Sub-group of CEHOG)
IPRI – Industrial Pollution and Radiochemical Inspectorate
NIEA – Northern Ireland Environment Agency

Documents Attached

Appendix 1: Local Authority Pollution Prevention Control Function Audit 2008 – Belfast City Council.

Appendix 2: Local Authority Pollution Prevention Control Function Audit Report – Belfast City Council 2008.

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