



## Belfast City Council

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| Report to:         | Health and Environmental Services Committee   |
| Subject:           | <b>Consultation on a Draft Strategy for Improving the Regulation of Health and Safety in Northern Ireland</b> |
| Date:              | 4 <sup>th</sup> August 2010   |
| Reporting Officer: | Siobhan Toland, Head of Environmental Health, ext 3281  |
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### Relevant Background Information

The Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (HSENI) and the 26 district councils share responsibility for regulating workplace health and safety. They apply similar legislation in different business sectors, with district councils being responsible for regulating the service, retail and entertainment sectors. The economic and social significance of improving workplace health and safety standards in terms of reducing the number of workplace accidents, reducing absenteeism and getting people back into work creates a compelling argument for HSENI and district councils to work together in developing cohesive and complementary planning arrangements and in applying collective resources in the most effective way to raise workplace health and safety standards across Northern Ireland.

In a report to this Committee in April 2009, a set of proposals for new partnership arrangements were outlined. These included a statement of intent and an agreed joint strategic framework incorporating a set of guiding principles for the health and safety regulatory system in Northern Ireland.

The statement of intent set out 3 main commitments:

- Agree a joint strategic framework that identifies a set of guiding principles for the health and safety regulatory system in Northern Ireland;
- Work together to develop arrangements that will embed and deliver closer partnership working;
- Introduce a system that will facilitate effective joint planning and delivery at all levels between HSENI and district councils.

The Committee agreed that the Council should endorse the proposed working arrangements with HSENI and the statement of intent and strategic framework were signed by the Chief Executive on behalf of the Council in May, 2009.

Following on from this, the district councils and HSENI worked together to develop a strategy for the better regulation of health and safety at work in Northern Ireland. A copy of the draft strategy is attached.

**Key Issues**

This draft strategy represents a highly significant development in the joint commitment between HSENI and the district councils as regulators. It is a high level strategy that establishes a very clear framework for future joint planning and provides the opportunity for a fully coordinated approach to the regulation of health and safety at work.

The strategy enables HSENI and the district councils to be more proactive and innovative in sharing resources and expertise effectively to address the needs of employers, employees, and others who may be affected by work activities and in so doing it will impact positively on the wellbeing of both Northern Ireland's population and its economy.

This new single strategy sets out a 'blueprint' for health and safety regulation in Northern Ireland and the future operational plans of HSENI and the district councils will align with the goals that are set down within it.

HSENI is coordinating a consultation exercise seeking comments on the draft strategy from interested groups before 27<sup>th</sup> September, 2010. Senior officers from Belfast City Council were involved with HSENI in developing the strategy and hence it is recommended that Committee agrees to send a letter to HSENI endorsing the strategy.

**Resource Implications**

The strategy should enable the Council to regulate workplace health and safety more effectively by improved joint planning, sharing resources such as training and information provided by HSENI and by having access to additional expertise and specialist resources at no added cost.

**Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Committee agrees to continue to support the new approach to collaborative working between HSENI and district councils and endorse the draft strategy.

**Decision Tracking**

The Head of Environmental Health will ensure a letter endorsing the draft strategy is sent on behalf of the Council to HSENI before the 27<sup>th</sup> September 2010.

**Key to Abbreviations**

HSENI – Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland

**Document Attached**

Draft Strategy for the Better Regulation of Health and Safety in Northern Ireland