

Leicestershire and Rutland Branch

Minutes of 2009 Members Forum/Annual General Meeting

VENUE: Committee Room 3, Charnwood Borough Council Offices, Loughborough

Wednesday, 18th November 2009

Annual General Meeting

Present

OFFICER	AUTHORITY	OFFICER	AUTHORITY
M Elliott	Leicester	D Gould	Blaby
G Mandora	Leicester	J Cox-Rogers	Blaby
S Quick	Leicester	A Norman	NW Leicestershire
M Grange	Leicester	F West	NW Leicestershire
R Chubb	Rutland	S Bruce	Oadby/Wigston
E Bird	Harborough	S Price	Oadby/Wigston
S Bidwell	E Mids Trustee	D Robertson	Oadby/Wigston
D Ingram-Hall	Charnwood	P Fasham	Oadby/Wigston
K Taylor	Charnwood	S Merry	Hinckley/Bosworth
S Birch	Charnwood	S Simmons	Hinckley/Bosworth
A Whitmore	Charnwood	V Clarke	Melton
S Adkins	Charnwood	R Seal	ODA
A Green	Charnwood	R Howell	Kettering BC
B Green	Charnwood	M McIntyre	Self-Employed

1. Apologies

NAME	NAME	NAME	NAME
J Belcher	H Clark	J Scutter	J Talbot
P Minhinnet	J Broster	V Smith	A Woodhouse
R Hollingsworth	S Haigh	J Frear	C Howat
L Huband	D Statham	H Mark	B Docherty
J Gee	D Murray	P Trow	D Yard
K Younger	R Limb	D Hillier	M Lammin
A Ghelani	A Lea	M Holford	

2. Consideration of AGM Minutes for 19th November 2009.

The minutes were agreed to be a true and accurate reflection of the meeting.

3. Matters arising from the minutes.

None.

4. Reception of reports.

4.1 Trustees Report

S Bidwell presented a written Trustee's Report (which attached at the end of these minutes) and provided an insight into recent developments at Chadwick Court, the successful 5+1 training and his new role as regional Business Support officer.

4.2 Honorary Treasurer

S Simmons (SS) gave verbal report as to the current status of Branch funds. SS explained that these were provisional and not full year figures. SS also stated that Branch funding was limited and encouraged members and groups/committees to think of ways to raise funds similar to the Pest Control Group that provided a surplus of £150 this year.

4.1 Environmental Health Management Group Report

S Bruce (SB) presented a written report to the meeting and provided an overview of the Group's activities which attached at the end of these minutes. SB also discussed how LA's could do efficiency savings maybe by sharing services, more county-wide working and the very successful 5+1 training that would continue next year. The knock-on from the successful 5+1 training was more regular discussions by managers at regional level. SB also thanked the Branch for organising the event and asked for members to be more involved with branch activities as they would receive full support of the EH Managers Group.

4.2 Food Sub-Committee Update

Duncan Robertson, Food Safety Sub-Committee Acting Chair, presented a written report to the meeting and provided an overview of the Sub Committee's activities. A full copy of this report is attached at the end of these minutes.

4.3 Occupational Health and Safety Sub-Committee Update

Susan Simmons, Occupational Health and Safety Sub-Committee Chair, presented a written report to the meeting and provided an overview of the Sub Committee's activities. A full copy of this report is attached at the end of these minutes.

4.4 Health Improvement Group

Unfortunately, no-one was available from the Health Improvement Group and no written Report had been forwarded either.

4.5 Private Sector Housing Sub-Committee Update

Elaine Bird, Housing Sub-Committee Chair, presented a written report and gave an overview of the Housing Sub Committee's activities. A full copy of this report is attached at the end of these minutes.

4.6 Pollution Sub-Committee Update

The new Chair Phil Fasham (PF) presented a verbal report and gave an overview of the Pollution Sub Committee's activities. PF had only recently taken over but a number of changes had been agreed including the formation of a Contaminated Land Sub Group, the new name of the group was now - Environment Best Practice Group. Focuses for 2010 are to be permits, public health, industrial noise and nuisances issues in relation to ASBO's. A full report would be forwarded to the Secretary after the meeting and is attached to these minutes.

4.7 Pest Control Sub-Committee Update

D Gould, presented a written report and gave an overview of the Pest Control Sub Committee's activities. A full copy of this report is attached at the end of these minutes.

5. Election of Officers for 2009

5.1 Chair

S Price (SP) explained that she was standing down as Chair. SP explained that following an agreed convention, the next Authority to provide a Chair would be Rutland County Council. SP proposed Richard Chubb for Chair, V Clarke seconded this and this was agreed by the meeting.

5.2 Vice Chair

Following the same convention, Blaby CC were next in line to provide a 'Vice-Chair'. SP proposed D Gould for Vice-Chair, G Mandora seconded this and this was agreed.

5.3 Honorary Branch Secretary

Govind Mandora said he would carry-on unless someone else was interested. Govind Mandora was nominated by SP, seconded by S Birch this was agreed by the meeting.

5.4 Honorary Branch Treasurer

S Simmons said she would carry-on unless someone else was interested. S Simmons was nominated by G Mandora, seconded by D Gould this was agreed by the meeting.

5.5 Retired Members Representative

Doug Murray was nominated by Govind Mandora, seconded by Karen Edmonds and this was agreed by the meeting.

5.6 Events Secretary

E Bird said she would carry-on unless someone else was interested. E Bird was nominated by SP, seconded by R Chubb and this was agreed by the meeting.

5.7 Auditor

Rob Parkinson volunteered to take on the role of 'Checker' as an auditor was not needed. Govind Mandora stated this arrangement would continue.

6. Motions for consideration:

6.1 Confirmation of 'Out-Of-Pocket' Expenses

S Simmons, Honorary Treasurer proposed:

"As a token recognition of the work involved in Sub Groups, the Secretary of each Sub Group shall be entitled to a contribution towards out of pocket expenses of £10 per minuted meeting during 2009."

Chairmen of Sub groups should submit a return detailing names and number of meetings to the Treasurer by 31st December 2009.

No contribution will be made to the Branch Secretary or the Branch Treasurer for out of pocket expenses this year as funding from the CIEH has for the Branch has been reduced significantly."

"Such payments to be made as soon as funds allow".

This motion raised a number of discussion points including fairness, how the work of secretaries was carried as meetings were normally during office hours, not all secretaries claimed expenses, could the contribution per meeting be reduced, was it more appropriate for the Branch Secretary and Treasurer to be given out-of-pocket expenses etc.

As there being no seconder to the motion, S Price then proposed 2 revised motions, that were seconded by S Simmons:

Revised Motion 1

"As a token recognition of the work involved in Sub Groups, the Secretary of each Sub Group shall be entitled to a contribution towards out of pocket expenses of £5 per minuted meeting during 2009."

Chairmen of Sub groups should submit a return detailing names and number of meetings to the Treasurer by 31st December 2009.

No contribution will be made to the Branch Secretary or the Branch Treasurer for out of pocket expenses this year as funding from the CIEH has for the Branch has been reduced significantly."

"Such payments to be made as soon as funds allow".

This was voted upon and no-one at the meeting agreed with the motion.

Revised Motion 2

No contribution will be made to the Branch Secretary, the Branch Treasurer or Sub-Committee secretaries for out of pocket expenses this year as funding from the CIEH has for the Branch has been reduced significantly."

"Such payments would be re-instated as soon as Branch funds allow".

This revised motion was unanimously agreed by the meeting.

SP wished it to be minuted that the hard work carried out by the Secretary's of the Sub-Committees was much appreciated and that this would hopefully continue in 2010 and beyond.

AOB

D Gould (DG) provided details on the Regional matters including the successful 5+1 training, the Regional Conference (Weekend School) that in 2010 would be organised with our W Midlands colleagues.

DG also informed the meeting that The East Midlands Region Members Forum will be held at Melton Mowbray Baptist Church, Leicester Road, Melton Mowbray at 16.00 on Thursday 3 December 2009. This will immediately follow the 5 + 1 event taking place at the same venue that day. It would be useful if members intending to attend could let the Region Secretary (russhowell@kettering.gov.uk) know so that we can have an idea of numbers for seating arrangements. Anyone having any motion for the Forum should submit it to the above by Friday 20 November 2009.

Chairs Final Comments

S Price said she had enjoyed the last 12 months as Chair. She thanked the Branch Executive for all their hard work and input.

Sue also praised the work of all the Sub committees (the heart of the branch) for all their hard work, organising training, providing networking opportunities, sharing good practice etc.

Hopefully this will continue into 2010.

Members Forum:

This year's theme for the Members Forum is the role of EHP's at Major Events and Incidents.

An exciting pair of speakers have been lined-up for the Forum:

Ros Seal, Olympic Delivery Authority - EHP's and the 2012 Olympics

Russ Howell, Kettering Borough Council: Wicksteed Park Fireworks Display Incident

S Price on behalf of the Branch thanked all the various speakers for their interesting and varied presentations.

CIEH Leics & Rutland Branch Members' Forum & Annual General Meeting

Trustee's Report

2009 has been a funny year in that it seems to have passed by all too quickly and to have provided little to report upon.

It has felt that little was happening but I am aware that much has been going on in the background and all will be revealed in the next few weeks.

Early in 2009, the effects of the recession started to be felt in Chadwick Court and warnings were issued about the anticipated fall in income as a result of training budget cuts within the organisations to whom Chadwick House Group sell course materials.

As a result the CEO was tasked with reviewing the whole organisation to prepare it for tough times ahead.

Much energy within Chadwick Court has been directed to this ongoing review which should result in savings being made and the organisation being better placed to handle the challenges ahead. I have been very much at the fringe of the reviews and it is anticipated that a significant report will be before us at the December Council meeting although John Freear in his role as Chairman of Council has been very much involved in the reviews.

One of the noticeable problems within Chadwick Court has been the feeling that CIEH and CHGL were two very independent organisations and with tensions evident between the two. So often we have been told that this is not the case and everyone got on well together but I can't say I am reassured.

As the review has progressed the CEO has become very aware that there is not the togetherness he would wish to see and he has now taken over the role of leading both organisations to ensure commonality of direction. As a result there has been a casualty in the form of the Managing Director of CHGL and I guess in the coming weeks we will learn of any other casualties of the process. It is fair to say that the energies that have gone into the reviews have impacted on the routine work carried out by Chadwick Court.

Last year the CEO embarked on a series of roadshows to re-energise the regions but the roadshows were generally poorly attended. However they did show up where Regions or Branches were moribund and there has been a determination to address this by putting more resources and support into the regions. There is a new funding formula to be applied which will determine how much funding goes into each region. Active regions will earn more money than inactive ones although there are a couple of other factors in the equation.

The East Midlands is regarded as active and we have been able to evidence the activities and the funding formula is not detrimental to the region. The 5+1 Pack initiative has been well received in the region and it will continue next year. Whilst it provides very low cost training it has also assisted in demonstrating "activity" which should mean we attract a good level of funding into the region. At the next Council meeting in early December the Budget for next year will be set and we will then know what funding we have been allocated. There has been a suggestion that the formula should have a green element to it and Branches and Regions will be encouraged to undertake an environmental audit to assess their carbon footprint.

Steve Bidwell
East Midlands Trustee

LLR Environmental Health Managers Group Report

Members of the Group

Clare Proudfoot & Jon Wells (Blaby), Alan Twells (Charnwood), Norman Proudfoot (Harborough), Steve Merry (Hinckley and Bosworth), Malcolm Grange & Mike Broster (Leicester), Victoria Clarke (Melton), Kathryn Preece (NW Leics), Steve Haigh (Rutland)
Secretary - Steve Bruce (Oadby and Wigston)

For 2009, the group elected not to have a formal chair and that meetings would be chaired by the host authority.

Meetings

5 meetings have been held so far in 2009, with a 6th scheduled for December 10th. These comprise 4 regular, quarterly meetings and 2 special meetings, at which discussions took place about achieving efficiency savings across the county.

Representation on the Technical Groups

We have following representatives on each of the county technical groups and we do try to attend as many of their meetings as far as other commitments allow:

- Health and Safety – Malcolm Grange
 - Housing – Victoria Clarke
 - Food – Steve Merry
 - Pest Control/Animal Welfare – Steve Bruce
 - Pollution – Kathryn Preece
 - Health Improvement Liaison Group – Clare Proudfoot/Norman Proudfoot
 - Branch Committee – rep provided by the authority hosting the meeting
-

Topics of interest during our 2009 meetings have included –

1. Guest speakers

Guest speakers in 2009 have included –

- Helen Richmond (East Mids Improvement and Efficiency Partnership)
- Sue Thomson (Principal Inspector – HSE)
- Victoria Smith (Leics Health Improvement Liaison Group)
- Steve Jorden (Head of Environmental Health Wychavon DC)

2. Closer ties with Leics Trading Standards

During 2009, David Bull (Head of Leics Trading Standards) has attended the first part of our regular meetings, to discuss issues that affect both EH & TS. In 2009, these have included:

- NI 182
- LBRO and the development of the Primary Authority scheme
- Shared intelligence
- opportunities for shared working

3. Low Cost Training (5+1)

This was a major development in 2009 and 4 events have taken place so far, with two more scheduled on December 3rd and March 4th. This will complete the first 5+1 cycle. 5 + 1 low cost training is the result of a partnership between CIEH East Midlands and Local Government Employers (East Midlands), with the latter undertaking much of the time consuming administration that is inevitably part of organising training events.

The CIEH element comprises a rep from the managers group of each of the East Mids counties (5 in all) and John Freear, CIEH Trustee.

Each training day is led by one county and I am grateful for the contributions of my fellow county managers to the very successful Leicestershire/Rutland event on Emergency Planning. Feed back for this event was very positive, as it has been for all the events so far, and Leicestershire branch members who have attended one or more of the 5+1 events will be pleased to hear that efforts are continuing to improve the catering!

All 5 counties have committed to continue the 5+1 programme in 2010/11. As the result of the 5+1 programme, reps from the 5 East Mids counties have been meeting on a regular basis for the first time. In 2010/11, these meetings are likely to pursue the development of environmental health across the region, and in addition to training, working together and efficiency savings are key issues that will be discussed.

4. Other matters in 2009

- response submitted to LBRO on Primary Authority statutory guidance
- common authorisations
- European Services Directive
- Joint working for efficiency savings across the county
- Linking with, supporting and contributing to LAA targets
- Annual review of Terms of Reference

Stephen Bruce

Secretary

Food and Technical Sub-Committee Report

The year began with the need to elect a new Chair as Clare Proudfoot stepped down due to work commitments. Natalie Moore was duly elected but is currently on maternity leave and Duncan Robertson has stepped into this role during Natalie's leave.

Activity wise, the Sub-Committee have been extremely busy, including:

Peer Review Exercise - In June a kitchen was hired and set up for the majority of Food Officers in Leicestershire to undertake a mock inspection to establish if there are inconsistencies with inspection results and where these inconsistencies arise. The event was a great success and highlighted some interesting results which are being explored further and likely to lead to future similar exercises. Caroline Harbour and Duncan Robertson deserve recognition for their work in setting the exercise.

Safer Food Better Business (SFBB) - This past year saw the vast majority of work and conclusion of the SFBB project funded by a grant from the Food Standards Agency. The project targeted the introduction of SFBB in premises which have been hard to reach, either due to a need for direct coaching or due to language barriers. Following the initial grant allocation, the project was awarded more grant resulting in 270 premises across Leicestershire being targeted for coaching, with a take up rate in excess of 60%. Of those that took the coaching up improvement was noted in 87% of the premises. A lot of lessons were learnt from this initiative in terms of bidding for and managing an inter authority project, mainly by Natalie Moore and Caroline Harbour, both of whom deserve recognition for their work on leading and managing the project.

Pennington Report - Following on from the Pennington Report, work commenced across the county on a joint campaign targeting premises handling raw and cooked

meats/products and using one vacuum packer. The results of this campaign are due early in the new year.

Policies and Protocols - A revised countywide Food Enforcement Policy template was approved following the introduction of the Compliance Code along with a revised Joint Enforcement Protocol between the Trading Standards Service and Environmental Health Services.

Newsletter Template - A food business newsletter template, available across the County on current food safety topics was developed by Blaby District Council with articles submitted by other Councils across the county.

Presentations - Informative presentations were received on Swine Flu from the Health Protection Agency and from Oadby and Wigston Borough Council on their Food Standards Agency audit process and results.

Sampling - The Sub-Committee continues to work closely with staff from the Glenfield Laboratory in drafting and implementing sampling programmes. Last year 88% of the group's allocated budget was used. This compares with a national average of around 50% for 2007/08.

Scores-on-Doors - This scheme continues to be a success in the county with all authorities reporting high levels of usage by consumers and many press enquiries resulting in additional publicity. The group are keeping an open brief on the move to a national scheme under the auspices of the Food Standards Agency and have put themselves forward as being interested in becoming a pilot for a national scheme.

Egg Inspectorate - In June the Sub-Committee received an informative presentation from the new local DEFRA Egg Inspectorate. This enhanced members' understanding of the Egg Inspector's role and led to increased awareness of the requirements of new legislation requiring all large Egg Packers to be Approved by Local Authorities by year end. Members are now progressing with increased liaison on processing these approvals with the Egg Inspector.

This report is a precise summary of the major elements of the Food & Technical Sub-Committee's work over the past intensive year. The year coming up also appears to be just as intense with further developments expected on Inter Authority Audits, SFBB, Sampling, Scores-on-Doors, FSA monitoring arrangements, Pennington Report recommendations etc.

Steven Merry
Secretary

Health and Safety Liaison Group Report

Membership

Susan Simmons (Chair)-Hinckley & Bosworth; Jo Belcher (Secretary)-Rutland; Govind Mandora-Leicester City; Ella Wheeldon-Blaby; Lee Mansfield-NW Leicestershire; Hayley Clark-Oadby and Wigston; Kerry Bowley-Charnwood; Peter Minhinnett-Harborough; Nick Speight-Melton; Sue Thompson-HSE ELO; Roger Monaghan-Partnership Manager HSE; and Malcolm Grange-CEHOs Group Rep.

Meetings

Four meetings have taken place since the last AGM in November 2008. These were held in December 2008, March, June and September 2009. As with previous years, minutes are

produced and circulated to all the local authorities represented on the group. Copies are also sent to the Chief Officer's Group representative and posted on the HELA Extranet site.

2009 Training/Group Activities

As usual, its been a busy year for the Group and the following main activities taken place:

Partnership Working -The Mercury News Project was successfully completed earlier this year and will be the subject of a presentation to the Midlands Partnership Conference on 9th December. Two projects are ongoing dealing with violence at work and gas safety.

RDNA -This is a new tool that was launched in December 2008 and is being used to identify and address development needs .Common themes are being fed through to the Partnership Manager so that if necessary training events can be arranged.

Tyre & Exhaust Fitting - Leicester City organised a training event on safety in tyre and exhaust fitting centres. A training day was also held in August covering the new LAC 67/1 & the EMM tool.

Flexible Warranting - All LAs are signing up to a flexible warrant scheme initially to allow enforcement of health & safety in domestic premises where beauty treatments are being carried out.

Training/Activities Planned for 2010

The following issues are to be included in the group's work plan for the coming year:

- Implementing the Section 18 standard having trialled two of the tool kits.
- Organising training for enforcement officers
- Loading and unloading
- LPG project with HSE

And Finally

A big thank you to all members of the Group for their continuing support and valued contributions.

Susan Simmons

Chair

Housing Best Practice Group Report

The Housing Sub Committee has already met on 5 occasions during 2009 and is due to meet again in December.

Generally the agenda covers three main areas of work –

- Housing Act 2004 which covers HHSRS and HMO's
- Decent Homes
- Disabled Adaptations

However there is always scope to discuss other issues arising during the year.

Housing Act 2004

For the Housing Health and Safety Ratings Systems, the sub committee is a useful mechanism for officers to discuss unusual cases and share best practice. Areas of discussion include excessive cold, overcrowding (new lacors guidance) and authorisation's required to carry out inspections.

With regards to HMO's the main area for discussion is fire safety and means of escape. The Fire Service attended one of the meetings to improve working arrangements especially in emergency situations and to introduce a joint memorandum of understanding with local authorities and the police which will be discussed at the next meeting.

Decent Homes

Funding has been available from the Regional Housing Board for local authorities to carry out work to bring properties up to the decent homes standard. Some authorities have used their allocation to target specific works such as heating or insulation schemes whilst others target areas in the district. Funding is to continue into 2010.

Disabled Facilities

During the year, the Audit Commission looked at the disabled facilities grants carried out across Leicestershire and early indications highlighted potential problems with the service delivery. This lead to the start of a review of the DFG's and all authorities and officers from the County Council met to identify potential areas for improvement and sub groups have been developed to look in detail at specific areas. REAP funding has been obtained to finance a project manager to oversee the process. This work is still on going.

At one of the meetings, officers from the County Council attended to discuss changes in how they were to procure stairlifts for disabled occupants. Social Services were to undertake an EU procurement process which eventually should speed up the process for getting quotes for stairlifts.

The group also tried to get RSL's involved with the DFG process with a view to trying to establish agreed contribution rates for work however it has been very difficult to engage with the RSL and a questionnaire was sent out to 34 RSL's working across Leics and Rutland however only 5 responded.

Other work

Several authorities will be, or are in the process of, undertaking House Condition Surveys across their areas and have taken advantage of the framework Hi4em has developed with 2 chosen suppliers and East Northamptonshire DC which has reduced the work individual authorities have had to undertake to appoint contractors to undertake the survey work. Future work of the group will be to develop Best Practice Guides with each meeting focusing on a particular service area.

Pest Control and Animal Welfare Best Value Group - Activity 2009

Membership

David Gould (Chair)	Blaby District Council
Michelle Ikin	Blaby District Council (Senior Dog Warden)
Elaine Bird	Harborough District Council
Gareth Crossley	North West Leicestershire District Council
Richard Chubb	Rutland District Council
Tony Thompson	Melton Borough Council
Victoria Clarke	Melton Borough Council
Simon Smith	Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council

Keith Taylor (Secretary)
John Davison
Tony Farrant
Jon Rudbach
Geraldine Fleming
Steve Bruce
Peter Dunne

Charnwood Borough Council
NPTA/Charnwood Borough Council
Leicester City Council (Env. Health)
Leicester City Council (pest control)
Leicester City Council (dog warden)
Oadby & Wigston Borough Council
Severn Trent Water

The liaison group has continued to be active in relation to pest control and animal welfare issues. It met on three occasions during the year – January, April and August (next meeting December).

Drainage services have been discussed at this year's meetings, as it is felt appropriate to include these within the remit of the group, with there being a close relationship between pest control and drainage. In addition, the attendance by Severn Trent officers allows input in terms of public sewers. The implications of the Water Act 2003 will continue to be followed, with the associated possibilities for action on private sewers.

Liaison continues with Severn Trent Water plc over **sewer baiting**.

In **Pest Control**, the year has seen further work on benchmarking service delivery standards and charges. The results of the NPTA National Rodent Survey are always discussed, and John Davison gives a valuable insight to the figures. We are due to consider the CIEH NPAP publication

Pest Control Procedures Manual (now available on CIEH website
<http://www.cieh.org/policy/npap.html?terms=pest+management>

together with the draft procedure for Pest Control in the Housing Sector.

Tony F organised a well – received Housing and food Industry Pests course for EHPs at Leicester City Council.

The implications of the **Animal Welfare Act and Clean Neighbourhoods and Nuisance Act** continued to feature in the group's work. The group is coordinating resource issues and partnership working over service provision. The input from the dog wardens on the group is very useful, keying into work by the Dog Wardens Association. Although guidance is still due in relation to the Animal Welfare Act, the group has tried to make progress. A subgroup has recently been established between Michelle, Tony T, the local RSPCA Chief Inspector and the relevant Police Inspector at Enderby H.Q. to take forward dog issues. This subgroup reports back to the main Best Value Group.

I would like to thank all of the members of the group for their hard work.

David Gould
Chairman

2009 Report of Pollution Group

General Feedback

Throughout 2008/09 the Pollution Group has primarily been used as a forum for sharing ideas and information, keeping abreast of changes in legislation, policies and technologies with the overarching aim of trying to achieve a consistent approach across the region. The main areas discussed have been environmental permits, air quality, contaminated land (in a separate sub-group due to its highly technical nature), noise and other nuisances.

The format used was inviting officers to raise specific issues within their district and the group formulated an agreement on how to approach it. This has worked well to ensure all officers are dealing with situations in a similar manner and for individual officers where there are knowledge gaps in specific areas. The individual cases discussed are not relevant to this report and can be found contained within the minutes of the meetings. The group has also responded jointly to several consultation papers from Defra throughout the year.

Contaminated Land sub group

In addition to normal discussions the Contaminated Land sub-group has successfully compiled an information booklet on contaminated land aimed specifically at developers. This is intended to assist developers in understanding their responsibilities in relation to contaminated land and the manner in which it should be dealt with. They have also held a training event on the statistical software packages that can be used in this discipline.

Joint Working

The possibility of joint working between the authorities has been discussed and informal links have been successfully made but a formal agreement on shared services has yet to be established.

Plan for 2009/010

Following an evaluation of the previous year and input from the Chief Officers Group there will be a change in emphasis of the group during the coming year. There is to be a shift away from dealing with individual cases to considering issues at the policy and procedural level to achieve consistency and best practice across the region. There will however remain the opportunity for officers to raise specific issues within the group where that is appropriate.

The group has therefore changed its name to the Environmental Protection Best Practice Group and a detailed work plan has been established with the aim of harmonising policies procedures and actual working practices in four key areas:

1. Permits – in particular permit conditions for stage 2 vapour recovery, the use of risk assessments and the subsequent fees and charges
2. Public Health – the increasing number of complaints over problem properties (filthy or verminous) and overgrown gardens
3. Noise from industrial premises – the relationship with planning conditions, permit conditions and nuisance investigations
4. Nuisance – its links with anti-social behaviour and how to deal effectively with situations where statutory nuisance law does not apply including informal methods and joint working with the police and ASB teams

It is expected that firm outcomes will be achieved which will then influence or change policies and procedures within the individual authorities.

It has been recognised that there is a wide variety of expertise within the group and that this should be utilised better when individual officers require assistance. It is anticipated that the issue of formal shared services will be discussed further but as an interim measure the group is compiling a contact list of environmental protection officers across the region together with their areas of expertise. The intention is that officers will be able to contact people on this list for expert advice in the first instance rather than looking to external consultants.

Also this coming year, the group is aiming to raise its profile amongst local authorities to encourage full attendance at each meeting as officers can see a benefit to being involved.

Phil Fasham

Chair