

Audit Committee

30 September 2019



Report of: Director – Homes & Landlord Services

Title: Asbestos Management Update

Ward: Citywide

Officer Presenting Report: Richard Noakes – Construction Safety Manager
Gillian Durden – Head of Service – Planned Maintenance

Recommendation

That the Audit Committee notes the progress made to address asbestos safety management .

Summary

This report provides information setting out the improvement in asbestos management with a focus Homes and Landlord Services. It maps progress against the asbestos action plan that was drawn up as a result of an asbestos review in September 2018 and details where further progress is ongoing.

The significant issues in the report are:

- Asbestos remains present in BCC premises and action is being taken to continually improve the management of Asbestos at BCC
- Progression against the asbestos action plan from September 2018



Policy

The Asbestos policy, termed as the 'Asbestos Arrangement' is owned by Corporate Health and Safety services and was introduced in February 2013, it was again reviewed in June 2018. Recognising that maintaining the Bristol City Council (BCC) housing stock holds significant risks from asbestos a subsidiary 'Asbestos Management Plan' sitting under this policy was introduced by Housing and Landlord Services in 2015. Both of these set governance arrangements to achieve compliance with the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012.

Consultation

- 1. Internal**
Not applicable

Context

2. Corporate Risk

Premises are managed within the BCC in three areas;

1. Housing and Landlord Services
2. Building Practice
3. Premises Management

Due to the age and complexity of the BCC assets, asbestos surveys are routinely carried out in all premises and there is an ongoing programme to keep registers up to date.

Specifically for housing, The large housing stock is made up of many different designs having been constructed over the last century. Asbestos was a material commonly used to serve many different roles and because of this its presence is widespread throughout BCC housing stock. Asbestos should be less prevalent in housing stock constructed after the mid 1980's, thereafter being subject to banning although it was not fully banned from use until 1999.

Legislation to manage asbestos has been predominant for a number of years and BCC has over this time introduced asbestos management systems and supportive arrangements to prevent the likelihood of exposure and the risk of harm. In further support to this BCC has operated with 'Keystone' software which performs the role of an asbestos register holding asbestos survey results and other related information. Keystone is available to staff, managers and planners and it is routinely interrogated ahead of pursuing planned works or response repairs to enable safe working.

Asbestos has been used over many years for many different purposes and because of this it is not always possible to accurately determine where every piece of Asbestos Containing Material (ACM) may have been placed by builders at the time. Historical construction methods and commonality with asbestos use can however provide an informed indication of where it is likely to be found, but this cannot be relied upon to prevent ACM exposure.

Asbestos surveys are the key resource in providing accurate information of where it is located

and BCC have invested purposefully to gain an accurate register of ACM's, this work continues routinely on a weekly basis.

3. Asbestos Action Plan

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The Corporate Health and Safety Team carried out a review of the asbestos arrangements in 2018 as a number of incidents occurred that were reportable under the Reporting of Injury Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations. An action plan was produced and a risk was added to the corporate risk register. The action plan has been governed twice since it was developed and progress has been noted by the Corporate Health and Safety Team.

This report provides a summary of the actions that were identified and of progress to mitigate risk. The action plan is available as Appendix 1.

The asbestos action plan looked to address findings of the review giving prioritisation to elements carrying higher risk and requiring immediate action as well as intermediate and lower risk that have an extended time for completion.

Ownership of the asbestos action plan is shared between Corporate Health and Safety team and Housing and Landlord services.

The action plan has 13 actions addressing higher risks for which 12 have been completed, 10 addressing medium risk for which 7 are completed and 5 addressing lower risk for which 4 are completed. In summary, 23 of the original 28 actions are completed, subject to a follow up review which is planned for September 2019.

- Notable progress has been made to raise the risk profile of asbestos amongst managers and operatives and this has led to the introduction of more robust strategies for managing staff and contractors, asbestos good working practice is also regularly communicated.
- Significantly a high number of staff and operatives (425) have attended asbestos training that has included a practical focus to challenge the attendees understanding of risk and the use of asbestos surveys. A management directive has made this training a mandatory requirement for staff at every level with Housing and Landlord Services and mop up sessions are in progress. Training feedback from attendees has been excellent.
- A new dedicated safety Team based within Housing and Landlord Services has been created. The structure of the new team is currently being formulated by the newly

appointed Construction Safety Manager. The new Team will serve and support the health and safety needs of Planned Programmes and Responsive Maintenance in all construction areas of risk. The terms of reference for the new Team are at this time being developed, it is envisaged that the team will take working responsibility for the Keystone asbestos management software and for leading asbestos and other safety improvement strategies. The health and safety team will likely take responsibility for all health and safety training, this increasing resilience to deliver training of the right type to the right people at the right time.

- Outstanding actions are controlled and scheduled to a point of planned closure.

In addition to the work carried out in Housing and Landlord Services, the Building Practice team have been working with the asbestos survey contractor to ensure that BCC premises under its remit (c.283 Properties) is up to date with asbestos surveys.

The current model of devolved risk management (nominating persons within a building to manage the premises) is also being reviewed; there is work planned within the Corporate Health and Safety Team action plan to create a toolkit for those persons in these roles and develop a training package for them. A plan is underway to develop a compliance team in Building Practice to further strengthen its management of all Health and Safety compliance activities. This has been approved by CLB.

The Corporate Health and Safety team can confirm that the number of RIDDOR incidents involving accidental exposure to asbestos has reduced.

- 21 in 2016
- 6 in 2017
- 17 in 2018
- 2 in 2019 to date

It is noted that the number of exposures appear to oscillate. A second year of reduction and retaining zero/ low numbers will identify if the actions taken have been effective. In the meantime, the Corporate Health and Safety Team, working in partnership with the new Construction Health and Safety Manager will as a next step, audit the arrangements again to take additional assurance that action place are preventing exposure.

Proposal

4. That the Audit Committee notes the action that has been taken to date to reduce the risk identified.
5. The Audit Committee are asked to acknowledge the investment made to increase competent leadership of this agenda both in terms of the investment in Housing (H&S Construction Manager), Building Practice (CLB approval for additional Compliance posts).

6. There has been widespread action taken to reduce the risk and work to address the current action plan and completion of a section follow up audit will continue into 2020.
7. Asbestos, given the age and profile of the building stock remains a risk however, BCC continues to be committed to ensuring that exposure incidents do not occur.

Other Options Considered

8. None

Risk Assessment

9. The management of asbestos is a live risk on the corporate risk register.

Public Sector Equality Duties

No implications

Legal and Resource Implications

Legal

<Consult Legal Division - relevant solicitor will provide a view which should be typed in here>

Legal advice provided by <Insert name and job title>

Financial

There are no new financial implications arising from the report

(a) Revenue

<Consult Finance Division>

(b) Capital

<Consult Finance Division>

Financial advice provided by <Insert name and job title>

Land/Property

There are no new property implications arising from the report

Land/property advice provided by <Insert name and job title>

Human Resources

Implication with recruitment for additional health and safety resources, completed.

HR advice provided by <Insert name and job title>

Appendices:

Asbestos Action Plan

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers:

None