

**TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**Item No**

**MEETING: 15 SEPTEMBER 2008**

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**SUBJECT: EMERGENCY PLANNING UNIT: ISO 9001/2000 QUALITY  
MANAGEMENT SYSTEM CERTIFICATION**

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**REPORT OF THE CHIEF EMERGENCY PLANNING OFFICER**

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**1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 ISO 9001:2000, (previously known as the quality assurance standard 'BS 5750') is an internationally recognised quality standard which requires the organisation to manage the quality of the products they produce through stringent controls on documents, processes and systems used.
- 1.2 In recent years, significant improvements have been achieved in the management culture of the EPU. This was confirmed in February 2007 when the EPU was awarded the Investors in People (IIP) Standard. It is pleasing to report to members that the EPU has now achieved ISO 9001/2000 Quality Management System (QMS) Certification.

**2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 ISO 9000 is a family of standards for quality management systems. ISO 9000 is maintained by ISO, the International Organisation for Standardisation and is administered by accreditation and certification bodies.
- 2.2 Implementing a Quality Management System (QMS) helps to motivate staff by defining their key roles and responsibilities. Cost savings are also made through improved efficiency and productivity, as product or service deficiencies are highlighted. From this, improvements can be developed, resulting in less waste, inappropriate or rejected work and fewer complaints. Partners benefit from work projects being met consistently, on time and to the correct specification i.e. compliant with government and other statutory guidance.
- 2.3 Following achievement of IIP, the next logical step was to quality assure the EPU's systems and processes through certification to the ISO 9001:2000 standard. The need to significantly improve systems and processes was identified by the current CEPO upon appointment, where, following analysis, it was clear that significant improvements were required across a wide range of issues relating to culture, staff, planning, training, exercising, management processes and customer service. A members briefing was held at the offices of the EPU in September 2003 where the Units strengths, weaknesses, future challenges were presented, and an Action Plan put in place.
- 2.4 With members full support, work then commenced with the introduction of robust policies and procedures for staff. Whilst working towards an external standard was not thought of, or identified at the time, it was suggested in late

2006 that the improvements and processes that were now in place and well embedded, could easily lead to externally recognised quality standards being achieved, and - importantly - used as a driver for continuous improvement. The IIP and ISO 9001/2000 standards were identified as suitable vehicles to achieve this goal.

2.5 To achieve certification, the EPU needed to evidence six mandatory processes which are:

- Control of documents
- Control of records
- Internal Audits
- Control of non-conforming product/service
- Corrective Action
- Preventive Action

2.6 One reason to work within an ISO quality management system was to ensure that all work completed in the EPU is fully compliant with legislative and customer requirements. After assessing the risks of failing to comply with legislative and customer requirements in the context of the work that the EPU carries out, the following processes were added:

- Training and Exercising
- Creating Emergency Plans
- Emergency Response
- Administration and Supporting Processes
- Staff Development

2.7 The Standard also requires the EPU to conduct strict internal audits on all of the above processes on a regular basis. This internal audit process had identified a number of improvements to current working practices.

### **3 INSPECTION AND CERTIFICATION PROCESS**

3.1 An external audit is required to confirm that the management system conforms with the requirements of the ISO audit standard. This must be carried out by a third party, accredited certification body, and in the UK, the body should be accredited by UKAS (with the crown and tick' logo). The chosen certification body will review the quality manuals and procedures. This process involves looking at the Units evaluation of quality and ascertains if targets set for the management programme are measurable and achievable. This is followed at a later date by a full on-site audit to ensure that working practices observe the procedures and stated objectives and that appropriate records are kept.

3.2 A company called SGS were used to undertake the EPU inspection. SGS is the world's leading certification body in inspection, verification, testing and certification services and recognised as the global benchmark in quality and integrity. The audit inspection comprised two stages:

- A 'Part one' inspection involving a desk-top audit of the QMS in place at the EPU, where certain observations were made (that do not act as a barrier to certification, but would improve the QMS further if implemented). The minor recommendations were fully implemented by the EPU before the second stage audit took place;
- The full 'Part 2' inspection which took place on 15 August 2008, where a representative of SGS conducted a full day inspection and external audit of how the named processes are managed and controlled. The auditor inspected several examples of work which had been carried out using one of the processes.

3.3 At the end of the inspection, the Auditor confirmed that EPU would be recommended for ISO9001/2000 Certification. The next stage is for the certificate to be issued by a panel of peers. These un-named peers are organisations who act as Champions for the standard and have been certified to ISO standards for many years. The Certificate of Registration to ISO 9001/2000 is awaited, but a final audit report has been received.

#### 4 EXTERNAL AUDIT REPORT FINDINGS

4.1 The Audit report details only two minor non-conformities and both of these issues had already been identified through internal audits conducted by EPU staff and remedial action already put in place. Several examples of good practice were highlighted, with the auditor commenting that:

- *'A significant number of complimentary emails/correspondence were noted to have been received by the organisation.'*
- *'There was very good evidence in place to demonstrate how the organisation captures customer feedback following completion of exercises and how the organisation documents and reviews this feedback in the form of evaluation reports.'*
- *'Registers were noted to be well maintained for both internal and external plans.'*
- *'Evidence of good internal communication was demonstrated .... all members of staff are aware of current issues.'*
- *'Administration processes were demonstrated to be well controlled.'*

#### 5 NEXT STEPS

5.1 The next external audit will be conducted in 2009 and will follow up on the auditor's recommendations.

5.2 An organisation that has been independently audited and certified to be in conformance with ISO 9001 may publicly state that it is "ISO 9001 certified" or "ISO 9001 registered". Certification to an ISO 9000 standard both certifies and demonstrates that consistent business processes are being applied.

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- 5.3 Once the Certificate of registration to ISO 9001 is received, there will be surveillance visits (usually once to twice a year) to ensure that the system continues to meet the standard and continuous improvements are demonstrated.

## **6 RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 6.1 Achieving ISO 9001/2000 effectively reduces the risk to this Authority, as it provides both managers and elected members with an added degree of insulation against the failure of plans, procedures and the other key activities of the Emergency Planning Unit undertaken on behalf of the Authority. This is particularly important in relation to any Public Inquiry which could arise following a major emergency.
- 6.2 Further, the Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007 is a landmark in law where for the first time, organisations can be found guilty of corporate manslaughter as a result of serious management failures resulting in a gross breach of a duty of care. One purpose of the Act, which came into force on 6 April 2008, was to ensure that organisations should not replicate the sloppy corporate behaviour that led to the 'unlawful killing' of so many people in the Herald of Free Enterprise sinking 21 years ago. It clarifies the criminal liabilities of large organisations where serious failures in the management of health and safety result in a fatality.
- 6.3 To avoid contravening the Act it is recommended that organisations should keep the way in which their activities are managed and organised by senior management under review. As potential manslaughter charges will now be in the minds of the investigating authorities when dealing with fatalities, it is important that this authority continues to ensure that it is operating to the highest standards in relation to its emergency planning activities. ISO 9001:2000 demonstrates to investigating bodies that the EPU and the Authority takes such matters seriously.

## **7 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are no financial implications in respect of this report.

## **8 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 There are no equality and fairness implications in respect of this report.

## **9 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 There are no health and safety implications in respect of this report.

## **10 CONCLUSION**

- 10.1 The EPU is committed to continuous improvement in all aspects of its work. The achievement of Investors in People (IIP) standard and the ISO 9001:2000

Quality Management System (QMS) Certification is an independent, external validation of the Chief Emergency Planning Officers vision to provide a quality assured service, which is particularly important given the nature and potential impacts of the work that the EPU undertakes on behalf of the Authority.

- 10.2 Achieving this award is part of a journey, and not a destination. Opportunities to quality assure other aspects of the service are now being considered, e.g. the new 'Customer Service Excellence' government standard (formerly known as 'Charter Mark'), to provide a driver for further continuous improvement.
- 10.3 Tyne & Wear EPU is the only Emergency Planning Unit in the North East to achieve ISO 9001:2000 Certification. Notes of congratulation have been received from the Cabinet Office, Government Office and other key resilience partners. Whilst data is not available relating to the national position, it is understood that the number of EPU's achieving the standard in the UK is extremely low.
- 10.4 The certification will enable the EPU to use the SGS appointed ISO logo on all documentation. The logo will also be added to the EPU website and correspondence templates alongside the liP logo.
- 10.5 Finally, the CEPO would like to acknowledge the support afforded by an officer of the City Solicitors department, whose previous ISO experience, help, advice was invaluable in assisting the EPU to achieve the standard. In addition, the CEPO would also like to take the opportunity to recognise the excellent support provided by the City Treasurers department, the Personnel Services department, and the Fire and Rescue Service; all of whom have contributed in a significant way to help create the conditions that make such achievements possible.

## **11 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 11.1 The Authority is recommended to:
  - a) Note the EPU's achievement in obtaining the ISO 9001/2000 Quality Management System Certification;
  - b) Receive further reports as appropriate.

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## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

The under mentioned Background Papers refer to the subject matter of the above report:

- SGS Management System Certification – Audit Summary Report, 15<sup>th</sup> August 2008 (copy held in the EPU offices)