

# BARLING MAGNA PARISH COUNCIL

Report to: Wildlife Reserve Committee

Report from: Parish Clerk

Topic: Care of Substances Hazardous to Health at the Wildlife Reserve – interim report

Date: 5<sup>th</sup> December 2017

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## 1. Purpose

1.1 At its meeting held 5<sup>th</sup> September 2017, the Committee requested the Clerk to bring a report on the currency of the most recent COSHH review at the Wildlife Reserve.

## 2. Legal obligations

2.1 The Council has a Duty of Care: a general legal duty on all individuals and organisations to avoid placing people at unnecessary risk or carelessly causing injury. This duty extends to all aspects of working practice, including the use of potentially hazardous materials and chemicals. Some of the extensive legislation in this area is referred to below. This legislation is applied equally to volunteers and paid staff.

2.2 Substances hazardous to health include gases, vapours, liquids, fumes, dusts, solids and even some micro-organisms. Some materials not thought of as chemicals or substances, for example dust from woodworking or used engine oil, are included in the regulations.

2.3 Hazardous substances are covered by the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 as amended - known as the COSHH Regulations. These regulations require an assessment to be made of all hazardous substances used by an organisation. The regulations also implement European directives relating to carcinogenic (cancer causing) substances and biological agents. These regulations cover the storage and use of pesticides, which include herbicides, insecticides and fungicides. There are other regulations which apply to the use and storage of specific substances, such as the petrol, diesel and other highly flammable liquids. Very specific regulations cover the control of asbestos and the use of lead substances in the workplace.

2.4 A COSHH assessment must be undertaken by a competent person. This should be someone who understands the basic requirements of the regulations, who can gather information about exposure and risk, and can identify the necessary steps to be taken.

- 2.5 The Health & Safety Executive offers some templates to aid assessment. Assessments should be carried out for any substance that has a hazard classification label on it (orange square with a black symbol). Reviews of the assessment should be carried out as often as necessary and not less often than annually. It is not necessary to conduct a whole new assessment each time; merely to check on the currency and adequacy of the latest assessment.
- 2.6 All agencies must carry out a COSHH assessment and any agency employing 5 or more staff (including volunteers) must record significant findings.
- 2.7 COSHH best practice places emphasis on controlling exposure at its source, as this is usually much more effective than personal protective equipment (PPE). However, PPE may still be necessary in some situations. It should be recognised that PPE includes such items as rubber gloves and aprons, which should be used where exposure to potentially irritant or allergenic chemicals is possible (e.g. bleach; disinfectant).

### 3. Interim report

- 3.1 Following a search, the Clerk does not hold an electronic or documentary copy of previous assessments.
- 3.2 In any case, the most recent COSHH review for the Wildlife Reserve will now be out of date and there should now follow a new review. The free Health & Safety Executive online assessment tool, *COSHH Essentials*, may be the best place to start. It will become apparent after completing this exercise if the tool is adequate to the work of the Reserve or if we need to look for more specialist tools.
- 3.3 No progress has yet been made on identifying minimum standards for First-Aiders for the Wildlife Reserve.

### 4. Recommendations

- 4.1 It is suggested that Wildlife Reserve Committee should recommend to Council:
  - a. that a new COSHH review for the Reserve be carried out, beginning with *COSHH Essentials*;
  - b. who is competent to carry out this review. This may be the clerk or a better-experienced councillor. Alternatively, a local firm with substantial COSHH experience, might be persuaded to second a member of staff for a couple of hours to undertake this review as a piece of community benefit.