

Report of: Director of Legal and Governance Services**Submitted to:** Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee, 4 February 2021**Subject:** Health and Safety: Annual Assurance Report 2020**Summary****Proposed decision(s)**

That the Committee notes the arrangements in place to govern health and safety within the Council, progress in the past year, and plans to further strengthen those arrangements.

Report for:	Key decision:	Confidential:	Is the report urgent?
Information	Not applicable	No	Not applicable

Contribution to delivery of the 2020-23 Strategic Plan**People****Place****Business**

Effective health and safety management is a legal requirement and supports the achievement of all strategic priorities set out within the Council's Strategic Plan 2020-23.

Ward(s) affected

Effective health and safety management will safeguard those working for and engaging with the Council and its services across Middlesbrough.

What is the purpose of this report?

1. The aim of this report is to provide the Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee with an annual review of the corporate approach to the management of health and safety within the Council. It also provides details of the proposed action plan in the year ahead.
2. In previous years this report also set out activity relating to employee wellbeing. These matters will in future be reported separately to the Committee.

Why does this report require a Member decision?

3. To support the Committee in discharging its remit to seek assurance that the Council has good corporate governance practices, which includes the management of health and safety.

Report Background

4. Health and safety management is the collective responsibility of all elected members and officers of the Council.
5. The corporate Health and Safety Policy:
 - defines the Council's legal duty in relation to health and safety;
 - outlines the requirements of the health and safety management system; and
 - details specific roles and responsibilities of elected members, the Chief Executive and leadership team, managers, employees and the Council's Health and Safety Unit.
6. The Corporate Health and Safety Committee meets on a quarterly basis to discuss health and safety performance and advise the Council on health and safety matters. LMT is briefed on this report and any matters arising where appropriate.
7. The Health and Safety Unit is now up to full complement and work is continuing on developing team members in their new generic roles. The COVID-19 pandemic, specifically building closures, has impacted upon the Unit's ability to deliver a business as usual service, and the opportunity has been taken to implement changes around policy, procedures and manager and staff training in order to develop a fully-auditable health and safety system for the Council.

Progress in the past year

8. Progress made against the 2020/2021 health and safety action plan is set out in the following paragraphs.
9. Health and safety incident investigation training was finalised and rolled out to relevant management and staff. There is evidence to show that investigations have improved, with actions prevent recurrence provided for most incidents. However it is also recognised that further work is required to bring investigations up to the required standard and the Health and Safety Unit continues to support management in improving their knowledge and practise in this area.

10. The Council's Health and Safety Policy was revised during Quarter One 2020/21 to reflect changes made to the corporate health and safety management system. A statement of intent was also produced and signed by the Chief Executive to demonstrate the Council's commitment to health and safety. Both documents are available on the Council's intranet and the statement of intent will be displayed on health and safety notice boards in poster form in all Council premises.
11. A number of corporate health and safety procedures were produced or updated to support the Council in the implementation and maintenance of a robust health and safety management system as outlined within the Health and Safety Policy. These are:
 - Building Manager Procedure
 - Risk Assessment Procedure
 - Manual Handling of Objects Procedure
 - Lone Working Procedure
 - First Aid Procedure
 - Permit to Work Procedure
 - PVPR Procedure
 - Health and Safety Auditing procedure
 - Communication and Consultation Procedure.
12. All procedures are available on the Council's intranet.
13. Health and safety training was provided to new directors to advise them on their roles and responsibilities in line with the corporate policy and procedures.
14. A premises health and safety plan template was produced to provide building managers with a framework to implement robust health and safety management systems within their premises. Training was produced and rolled out to all relevant building managers. Premises health and safety plans are now in place for all Council premises and will be audited this year to benchmark performance and identify areas for further improvement.
15. A risk assessment procedure was produced with a new standard template including a risk matrix to calculate overall risk, an action register and a review section in line with the Health and Safety Executive's '5 steps to risk assessment' approach. Training was produced and rolled out to all relevant managers.
16. A decision was also made by risk management group to provide specific training for potentially high risk areas to improve ownership and ensure risk assessments are suitable and sufficient.
17. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, a number of specific risk assessment templates were produced for services and continue to be regularly updated in line with the Government's guidance on COVID-Secure workplaces. These documents support managers in making premises COVID-Secure, protecting staff and reducing transmission risks. Supporting checklists were also developed to provide managers with a documented system to monitor compliance. The Health and Safety Unit carried out audits as per schedule and included COVID-19 checks as part of their interim auditing process.

18. Advisors within the Health and Safety Unit have continued to upskill as part of the commitment to towards a generic role. They have completed 'train the trainer' courses to provide them with training delivery skills and fire safety qualifications to support their development as fire risk assessors.
19. An evacuation chair training course was developed internally and rolled out to all relevant staff to enable them to operate evacuation chairs in emergency situations. This course has ensured compliance with training requirements and brought about significant costs savings when compared with the cost of external courses.
20. As set out in paragraph 10, a permit to work procedure was developed and a number of templates produced to support managers and staff in controlling the risks associated with high-risk, non-routine work, including work carried out by external contractors. A training course has also been developed internally to support staff who are responsible for implementing the permit to work system within their service area.

Planned activity for this year

21. Key activity to be delivered during 2021/22 includes:
22. Procuring and implementing a new health and safety management system, digitising a number of key functions including incident reporting and the health and safety auditing systems together with a comprehensive action tracker to monitor the closure of actions.
23. Producing and communicating the following corporate health and safety procedures:
 - Work at Height Procedure
 - Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Procedure
 - Manual Handling of People Procedure
 - Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Procedure
 - New and Expectant Mothers Procedure
24. Continuing to support the Council throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, offering advice and guidance to managers as required.
25. Development of a series of health and safety plans for individual service areas in order to benchmark performance. Audits will also be developed to ascertain performance levels using the proposed framework.
26. Implementing the premises health and safety audits in accordance with the requirements of the health and safety auditing procedure. Performance across the organisation will be benchmarked to identify areas requiring improvement and support provided to managers to ensure continuous improvement.
27. Developing and delivering a bespoke permit to work course and rolling this out to relevant services, supporting managers to implement the procedure and auditing progress.
28. Continuing to support services to implement the Potentially Violent Persons Procedure throughout the Council.

29. Continuing to upskill the Health and Safety Unit and relevant others in order for them to deliver effective manual handling training within the organisation. Training sessions will be arranged on the basic manual handling principles and advanced lifting techniques with the aim of changing the way manual handling is delivered within the organisation. Manual handling procedures will be reviewed on completion of the CPD courses and training amended to reflect changes.
30. Amending the fire warden training to incorporate the requirements of the fire safety procedure and associated documentation, providing building managers and fire wardens with a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities.
31. Developing a face-to-face risk assessment training course to enable managers and staff to complete suitable and sufficient risk assessment in accordance with the requirements of the updated risk assessment procedure and associated forms. This will ensure risk assessments meet the requirements of the HSEs “5 steps to risk assessment” approach. Scenarios within the training will concentrate on service area scenarios in order to improve ownership.

What decision(s) are being asked for?

32. That the Committee notes the arrangements in place to govern health and safety within the Council, progress in the past year, and plans to further strengthen those arrangements.

Why is this being recommended?

33. To support the Committee in discharging its responsibility in relation to corporate governance, including health and safety.

Other potential decisions and why these have not been recommended

34. Not applicable.

Impact(s) of recommended decision(s)

Legal

35. Health and safety is governed the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 and a range of other associated regulations. This report sets out, at a high level, the measures that the Council is taking and plans to take in order to ensure compliance with this legal framework and minimise health and safety risk.

Financial

36. It is anticipated that all activities set out in this report are achievable within existing and planned budgets.

Policy Framework

37. Current and planned activity outlined is consistent with the direction of travel set out in the 'Business' section of the Strategic Plan, so this report does not seek to vary the Council's Policy Framework.

Equality and Diversity

38. Not applicable.

Risk

39. Effective health and safety management contributes to the mitigation of a number of risks within the Council's risk registers. The Council must comply with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to ensure risks are appropriately managed to avoid accidents and HSE prosecutions (O7-026). The activity set out in this report will contribute to the achievement of the targeted risk score for this risk.

Actions to be taken to implement the decision(s)

40. The activity outlined in the main body of the report will result in continued improvements in the Council's health and safety arrangements, with progress reported to the corporate Health and Safety Committee on a quarterly basis.

Appendices

None.

Background papers

06/02/20 Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee Annual Assurance Report 2019

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