

AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

19th July 2023

HEALTH AND SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

Report by Lorna Baxter

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Committee is asked to note and accept the contents of the Health and Safety (H&S) Annual Report and the work of the H&S Team to support services and improve performance keeping employees and customers safe.

Executive Summary

2. The H&S Annual Report is a summary of performance and is part of the corporate governance framework. It seeks to provide the Committee with assurance that arrangements for managing health safety are suitable and sufficient whilst identifying areas for improvement.

Key Issues

3. This annual report contains information about the work of the Health and Safety functions, the Council's health and safety performance over the year and its plans for the coming year.
4. This report submitted on behalf of the Health and Safety Assurance Board and approved by the Council Management Team as part of the Council's Corporate Governance Assurance Framework.
5. It is a statutory requirement of all employers to establish occupational health and safety management arrangements so that harm is either eliminated or reduced to an acceptable level. The Council has adopted best practice guidance published by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to ensure that an effective health and safety management system is in place and that the duty of care objective is met.
6. Throughout the 2022/23 the H&S Team have re-focused on service operational risk following the pandemic.
7. In line with our health and safety policy aims, we continue to proactively take action to reduce risk, including our priority areas:
 - Personal safety and lone working
 - Improve system for reporting safety events
 - Provide safe and compliant buildings

- Improve corporate assurance in fleet management
 - Monitor compliance
 - Engage with trade unions on H&S matters
 - Improve H&S competency of workforce
8. The total number of accident and incident reports has increased but in line with pre-COVID pandemic levels. There has been no enforcement actions or intervention by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).
 9. Looking forward we continue to ensure appropriate health and safety arrangements are effective across all services and operations, whilst, ensuring good practice underpins our strategic and organisation priorities such as enabling safe and healthy agile workforce and meeting our obligations for providing safe property.

Corporate Policies

10. The H&S Annual Report details how the Council is meeting it's aims, objectives, responsibilities and arrangements as set out in it's Health and Safety Policy.

Financial Implications

11. There are no financial implications associated with this report.

Legal Implications

12. There are no direct legal implications associated with this report, although this report demonstrates compliance with duties under The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and other regulatory requirements, Health and Safety Executive Guidance, Approved Codes of Practice and other industry best practice
13. Section 2(3) of the Health & Safety at Work, Act 1974 requires that employers produce and revise, as appropriate, a written statement of health and safety policy. It is therefore important that the Council's statement is kept up to date.
14. The Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 places duties on the Council and individuals within the Council to ensure the health, safety and welfare of employees and those that are affected by the Council's activities, so far as is reasonably practicable.

Comments checked by: Anita Bradley, Director of Law and Governance
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Staff Implications

1. There are no staffing implications associated with this report.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

2. Health, safety, well-being, and equality, when proactively addressed, are all matters which improve the working environment for our employees and ensure that the council remains an attractive, safe and equitable place to work. In turn, this will support the efficient delivery of services to the people of Oxfordshire.

Sustainability Implications

3. There are no staffing implications associated with this report.

Risk Management

4. The Council must ensure have robust systems of internal control, covering health and safety. By reporting on H&S performance the Committee can be provided with assurance that the following risks are being managed:

Reduce Injuries: Accidents and incidents can lead to persons suffering harm. This can lead to increased sickness absence, resourcing pressure, loss of motivation.

Legal Compliance: Failure to comply with the legal obligations of health and safety can result in liability for prosecution by regulators, such as the HSE. In the most serious cases this has potential to include unlimited fines and prison sentences.

Reduce Claims: Accidents and incidents can lead to more claims which in turn can affect premiums and excess payments.

Reputational: Any adverse health and safety incident or prosecution can result in negative reputational impact.

Lorna Baxter
Director of Finance

Annex: ANNEX 1 H&S Annual Report 2022/23

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July 2023