

AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

18th September 2024

HEALTH AND SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

Report by Vic Kurzeja

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. In line with our health and safety policy aims, we continue to focus on our strategic themes:
 - Leadership - It is a requirement that the council is led from the top and that health and safety is given the same priority as any other service activity. It

will be necessary to encourage strong leadership in championing the importance of, and a common-sense approach to, health and safety.

- Risk Management - To achieve a good foundation the council must make appropriate arrangements to have a health and safety policy which commits the company to meeting health and safety standards and a management system that aligns with HSE Guidance (HSG65).
 - People – The council will provide appropriate arrangements for communication and enable a competent workforce.
 - Place – The council will ensure a safe and healthy work environment whether in a premises or out in the community.
 - Learning and improving – The council will as part of the governance framework ensure it has effective monitoring arrangements to review and measure compliance. Performance will be reported to senior management and actions set against areas of improvement.
7. The total number of accident and incident reports has decreased by 43% and incidents of violence and aggression by 28% compared to the previous year 23/24 (positive indicator).
 8. 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.
 9. The Health and Safety Assurance Board will ensure key risks and issues are identified and mitigation plans are sufficiently developed.
 10. As part of organisational redesign, we will be reviewing health and safety support functions across the council to ensure we are maximising efficient ways of working, improving cross organisation collaboration and matrix working.

Corporate Policies

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

Financial Implications

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

Legal Implications

13. There are no legal implications associated with this report, although this demonstrates compliance with duties under The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and other regulatory requirements.

Staff Implications

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

Equality & Inclusion Implications

15. 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

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

Risk Management

17. 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.

Vic Kurzeja
Director of Property and Assets

Annex: ANNEX 1 H&S Annual Report 2023/24

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August 2024