

AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

15 JULY 2026

HEALTH & SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT 2025-26

Report by Director of Property & Assets

RECOMMENDATION

The Audit & Governance Committee is **RECOMMENDED** 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

1. The Annual H&S Report (attached at Annex 1) is a summary of performance and is part of the corporate governance framework. It seeks to provide the Audit and Governance Committee with assurance that arrangements for managing health safety are suitable and sufficient whilst identifying areas for improvement.
2. This annual report contains information about the work of the Health and Safety (H&S) functions, the council's health and safety performance over the year and its plans for the coming year.

Background

3. This report is submitted on behalf of the Health and Safety Assurance Board (HSAB) as part of the Council's Corporate Governance Assurance Framework.
4. 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.

Key Issues

5. **Areas of Focus**
6. Efforts on fire safety and estate compliance are ongoing, including enhancements to compartmentation. Preventive measures address specialist risks such as hazardous substance controls and firefighter exposure. Staff support now includes practical tools like the lone worker app (81% uptake), with no major alarms reported. Initiatives around occupational health and broader wellness are increasingly prioritised.
7. **Performance Picture**
8. Incident data is mixed: total events dropped by 4%, violent behaviour by 12%, and work-related ill health by 14%. However, injuries rose by 7%, vehicle incidents in fire service by 47%, and incidents in some services increased.

9. Strategic Implications

10. Continued improvement requires data use, focused attention on high-risk areas, and converting compliance into reduced risk. Leadership should reinforce prevention, reporting, and accountability while addressing specific operational risks.

11. Recommended Priorities for 2026/27

- Intervene in higher-incident services, focusing on injury and vehicle rates
- Advance fire safety and estate compliance
- Protect frontline and lone workers through rollout and training
- Strengthen hazardous substance controls
- Embed consistent reporting and learning

Financial implications

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

Comments:

Drew Hodgson, Strategic Finance Business Partner

Legal implications

13. The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and subsequent legislation places a general duty on the Council to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees and others such as the general public who use the Council's facilities and may be affected by the carrying out of the work the Council undertakes.

14. This report provides a review of health and safety activity during 2025/26 and there are no direct implications arising from this report.

Comments:

Jay Akbar – Head of Legal & Governance Services (Deputy Monitoring Officer)

Equalities 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 is no sustainability 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 health and safety performance the Senior Leadership Team 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.

Communications

18. The annual report will be published internally and externally and presented to Audit and Governance Committee.

Report by: Vic Kurzeja, Director of Property & Assets

Annex: The Annual H&S Report 2025-26

Background papers: None

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