

Report to Cabinet

Subject: Corporate Health and Safety Annual Report 2020/21

Date: 2 November 2021

Author: Health, Safety and Emergency Planning Officer

Wards Affected

Borough wide

Purpose

To present the Corporate Health and Safety Annual report 2020/21 to Cabinet.

Key Decision

This is not a key decision.

Recommendations

THAT:

- 1) The Corporate Health and Safety Annual Report 2020/21 be noted.

1 Background

- 1.1 The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 imposes a number of obligations on employers, employees and others in regards health, safety and welfare in connection with work activities. In relation to the Council's role as an employer, these are executive functions that fall within the remit of Cabinet. These statutory duties are separate from the Council's role as an enforcement body, which ensures that other employers within the borough comply with their obligation under the Act and other applicable Health and Safety (H&S) legislation. It is important to note that the Health, Safety and Emergency Planning Officer (HSEPO) is not responsible for enforcement of these activities of other employers within the borough where the Council is the responsible enforcement body. Those functions

are a non-executive functions falling within the remit of the Environment and Licensing Committee and the Public Protection service area.

- 1.2 Reporting annually on H&S performance is considered good practice by the Health and Safety Executive, the Institute of Directors and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA). The Management of Health and Safety at Work regulations 1999 also requires all employers to periodically review their H&S management system.
- 1.3 Cabinet are asked to receive this annual H&S report to inform them of health and safety performance covering the period April 2020 – March 2021.
- 1.4 The Council manages a wide portfolio of services for a Borough of more than 117,900 people. Some of these services involve a potential significant risk of harm to our staff and others that our work activities could affect. To this end, to prevent injury and ill health, the Council's objective is to have a positive health and safety culture, a robust H&S management system and be committed to the principles of sensible risk management and compliance with our legal obligations.
- 1.5 To achieve this the Council has implemented a H&S management system that involves all staff, our partners, others and wider Council work activities. We retain a specialist Chartered Safety and Health Practitioner to maintain this system and train managers and staff to understand and control the risks that arise from our service to the community.
- 1.6 The HSEPO service and H&S Annual Report supports the Council's priorities and assists service areas in achieving the Council's overall vision of Serving People Improving Lives.

The HSEPO service supports the following Gedling Plan objectives:

- High Performing Council: To be a high performing, efficient and effective Council, to maintain a positive and supportive working environment and strong employee morale and improve use of digital technologies
 - Healthy Lifestyles: To promote the health and well-being of our residents, to improve health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities.
- 1.7 The Annual report covers summarised findings of the impacts of the Coronavirus emergency and other factors that have all had a knock-on-effect to the HSEPO work programme and delivery of planned objectives. The report also covers HSEPO support of the Council's Risk Management Strategy and operational risk management.

- 1.8 In 2020/21, a significant proportion of the HSEPO's time was taken up handling the Council's response activity to the Covid-19 pandemic. This involved joint collaborative response and recovery work across the Council and with wider partners. This involved working with officers and Senior Leadership Team within the Council both directly and through the Council's Incident Management Team established to respond to the pandemic, as well as working with districts and the County Council through the Local Resilience Forum and other coordinating groups. The Council's response required additional emergency planning input from officers across the Council. Officers across all areas worked together to provide an outstanding response managing staffing and furlough, test centre mobilisation, humanitarian response, homeworking, remote meetings as well as responding at pace to changes in regulation, closure and reopening of services and in some areas maintaining services, such as waste collection under the most challenging of circumstances. The response required complete overhaul of risk assessments to mitigate the risk of infection from Covid-19, as well as a risk management around the changing ways of working with home working risk assessments required for a large proportion of staff. The HSEPO was instrumental in monitoring and assessing risk areas throughout the pandemic and supporting the ongoing delivery of the Council's functions throughout 2020/21.
- 1.9 Given the impact of the pandemic on health and safety resource, the year involved a significant re-prioritisation in work for the HSEPO. The pandemic also affected the number of accident and incidents (adverse events) reported through the Council's AssessNET system with a significant reduction in 2020/21 from 231 in 2019/20 to just 137 in 2020/21 this is attributed to the closure of the Council's leisure facilities for period through 2020/21. Staff work related injuries and ill health related cases did not see a decrease in 2020/21 and in fact increased from 45-61. These statistics however included injury associated with the pandemic, and those Covid-19 related incidents. In fact all but one illness and disease report related to Covid-19. Hazard reporting and property damage reporting also saw a reduction in 2020/21.
- 1.10 Whilst routine health and Safety training, usually delivered by the HSEPO was reduced through the pandemic, bespoke essential training provided by external organisations was undertaken in quarter 3 and 4 including fire safety, water safety and vehicle fire safety courses. In addition, throughout the pandemic regular safety briefings and guidance were issues to staff by the HSEPO. Additional training has already been put in place for 2021/22 to address risk areas with the provision of an eLearning package to be utilised for some essential training needs.
- 1.11 Occupational health management continued throughout 2020/21 with a change in external supplier. Some support was provided to the HSEPO temporarily to deal with the supplier change and support the organisation

with any necessary surgeries. The Covid-19 pandemic did affect the ability of certain occupational health sessions to be run but these have now been resolved.

- 1.12 The annual audit and inspection programme of the HSEPO was impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, however individual risks to services were identified and addressed. In respect of business continuity, all services reviewed and updated business continuity plans in 2020/21 and the Council now has a robust business continuity plan which will be kept under regular review.
- 1.13 Risk management has remained a priority for the HSEPO throughout 2020/21 with a separate risk register created to capture Covid-19 risks. Effective utilisation of the risk management processes has enabled the HSEPO to prioritise work throughout 2020/21 and ensure that any significant risks are addressed. The workplan for 2021/22 whilst still linked to Covid-19 also addresses any risks which may have emerged due to the re-focus of resource in 2020/21 and involves an increase in audit and inspections as well as the delivery of training through eLearning and review of policies to ensure they remain up to date.
- 1.14 2020/21 was a challenging year for all with health and safety being at a higher profile across the organisation than ever before. Officers across the Council worked together to address risk and protect staff and customers throughout the year.

2 Proposal

- 2.1 It is proposed that the Corporate Health and Safety Annual Report 2020/21 at Appendix 1 be noted.

3 Alternative Options

- 3.1 Not to present an annual Health and Safety report, in which case Executive members will not be updated on H&S activity across the Council and understand whether the Council's commitment to the management of H&S risks are being managed effectively.

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are no financial implications directly arising from this report.

5 Legal Implications

- 5.1 The Council must comply with a number of statutory obligations in the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and other H&S legislation, Health and Safety Executive Guidance, Approved Codes of Practice and other

industry best practice.

6 Equalities Implications

- 6.1 There are no equalities implications directly arising from this report. Equality implications and any reasonable adjustments which may be required for staff and customers who fall within a protected characteristic category are considered as part of risk assessment, audit and policy review for specific functions of the Council and staff roles.

7 Carbon Reduction/Environmental Sustainability Implications

- 7.1 There are no carbon reduction/environmental sustainability implications directly arising from this report.

8 Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1. Corporate Health and Safety Annual Report 2020/21

9 Background Papers

- 9.1 None identified.

10 Reasons for Recommendations

- 10.1 To ensure the Executive is updated in respect of Health and Safety activity across the Council in order to provide assurance of the Council's commitment to the management of health and safety and associated risks are being managed effectively.

Statutory Officer approval

Approved by the Chief Financial Officer

Date: 22 October 2021

Approved by the Monitoring Officer

Date: 26 October 2021