

Report to SLT / JCSC

Subject: Corporate Health and Safety Annual Report 202/24

Date: 30th October 2024

Author: Health, Safety and Emergency Planning Manager (HSEPM)

Wards Affected

Borough wide

Purpose

To present the Corporate Health and Safety Annual report for the year 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024 to JCSC.

Key Decision

This is not a key decision.

Recommendations

THAT:

The Corporate Health and Safety Annual Report 2023/24 contents be considered

1 Background

- 1.1 Reporting 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).
- 1.2 This annual report summarises the challenges and achievements of the Health, Safety and Emergency Planning Service during the financial year from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024 and presents some of the upcoming work streams for the service in 2024/25. This report will also be presented to the Joint Consultative and Safety Committee and Cabinet.

2.0 Considerations:

- 2.1 The operating environment for Health, Safety and Emergency Planning during the year 2023-24 has been variable.

Several factors have impacted the implementation of the original workplan for Health Safety and Emergency Planning including supporting HR with a complex investigation, a period of maternity leave by the H&S Adviser, the impact of two major incidents declared in Nottinghamshire and changes to operational arrangements in one of the Council's biggest areas of risk.

3.0 **Summary of Health and Safety key performance areas**

3.1 **Quarterly reporting:**

Items maintained in 2023/24 have included the quarterly Corporate Health and Safety (CHAS) group meetings to highlight corporate Health and Safety risks in consultation with departmental representatives and Heads of Service.

A revised set of terms of reference were presented to the quarter 1, 2024/25 meeting for discussion. These have not been adopted at the time of writing due to reconsideration of internal meetings to develop more efficient ways of working.

Health and Safety matters are currently reported directly into Senior Leadership Team meetings on a quarterly basis to enable escalation of issues as appropriate.

3.2 **Inspections:**

A programme of workplace inspections has continued with a schedule provided by the HSEPM based on risks presented in the workplaces as required in line with Internal audit recommendations.

Leisure Centres receive an annual inspection from the H&S team to support their programme of Right Directions audits with the internal inspection checking on progress of audit actions.

Jubilee Depot receives a quarterly inspection. To confirm actions are being progressed, the H&S team re-inspect monthly and provide feedback to relevant supervisors.

Community Centres and Leisure Pavilions receive an annual inspection. Although they are generally simple buildings with low usage, the Pavilion inspections have identified some issues and required improvements, Property Services and Health & Safety have worked together to resolve these.

3.3 Procurement projects:

A review of current lone working arrangements across the Council has commenced with an audit to ascertain the current position of teams. Robust procedures must be in place to monitor and manage lone working including the use of a buddy procedure and an escalation procedure.

For higher risk teams, a lone worker device helps to support managers in monitoring the whereabouts and safety of their teams. As part of the audit, teams have been asked to nominate their preferred lone worker device format. The market has experienced significant technological progression since the last procurement of devices with more choice of format now available, offering greater flexibility and ease of use. There is however a budget challenge around the use of newer technology. Employee expectations, lone worker safety needs and budget restrictions need to be carefully considered and managed.

Detailed analysis is yet to be completed on lone working audit returns but initial reviews are positive. Managers are aware of issues regarding lone working and have procedures in place with only minor adjustments required.

Occupational Health provision for both medical and surveillance purposes has been reviewed and a successful procurement exercise concluded. Health & Safety worked with HR to procure an appropriate provider with local supplier David Barber Occupational Health being successfully appointed.

AssessNet, the council's current health and safety management software is also due for review by the end of the calendar year 2024. A procurement exercise will be undertaken for a bought in system for accident reporting. This system will also be used for the monitoring of risk assessment compliance.

With the implementation of the new digital strategy, it is hoped that an in-house accident reporting system can be developed in the future. Although this approach would be preferred to cut costs, it will take considerable ICT time and resource to develop such a system in the first instance. This will be explored with ICT if additional resource becomes available.

Movement on procurement issues has been slower in 2023/24 than predicted due to temporary maternity cover being in place. The team is at full strength from the start of Quarter 4 with good progress now being made in such projects which are on target for completion before the end of 2024/25.

3.4 Hand Arm Vibration management:

During 2023/24 Hand Arm Vibration (HAV) management procedures were

refreshed with PASC teams. Awareness training was delivered to Operatives with a HAV monitoring sheet being refreshed. Stickers showing vibration information were applied to the machinery enabling Operatives to calculate their daily exposure to vibration and therefore keep themselves safe.

Re-investment in the use of monitoring technology by Reactec, commenced in 2023. Lean departmental structures and operational change within the Depot environment have meant resource to implement this technology has been limited.

The Health & Safety Adviser has since pushed this project forward to ensure the set-up has been completed. A further site visit from a Reactec Technician has been carried out to identify any issues, further training need and to enable PASC and Transport Fitters to own and use the system regularly. H&S are available to support when issues are identified or there are queries around sampling data.

Teams will be monitored using Reactec on a rota basis with the watches rotated according to the work cycle e.g.: if it takes 6 weeks to complete a mowing cycle, the mowing team will have the watches for 6 weeks and the following week, they will be allocated to the arboriculture team and so on through the workforce.

Over time this will sample all Operatives and highlight any issues with HAV.

Due to an HSE intervention in Quarter 4 of 2023/24, this remains an area of increased focus for health and safety. Maintenance of the management system for HAVs must remain a health and safety priority for PASC.

3.5 Accident reporting:

Work was done during 2023/24 to remind employees to report accidents, near misses and incidents of violence and aggression. Reminders were issued during quarterly CHAS meetings and less formally in conversation with Supervisors and other employees. This data is key in enabling the organisation to understand the risks faced by employees and therefore where to target risk reduction measures. This activity has resulted in an increase in reported events and an increase in the quality of associated investigations.

Further work is required to ensure the message to report accidents and near misses is embedded with frontline workers, especially those in more traditional roles such as Waste, Fleet, Parks and Street Care.

To enable timely reporting it was planned to combine introducing QR code stickers, (enabling quick access to AssessNet), to works vehicles with the introduction of a new waste management software system. The waste

management system would enable smartphone technology in vehicles cabs. This has not been possible to date due to unforeseen circumstances. Employees could use their own mobile phones whilst out on their rounds to do this but with access to personal messages and social media etc. this could cause distractions and impact on worker safety. It has therefore not been pursued.

The Health and Safety team have scheduled a series of site visits to PASC and Waste teams in 2024/25 to improve communication with these teams and reinforce the importance of reporting. This also enables a series of recorded visits to peripatetic teams to evidence that on site supervision takes place.

3.6 Training:

Health and Safety Awareness training is still offered quarterly on a face-to-face basis but this will be reviewed. Sessions are rarely full. There is a recorded version available which new employees will be referred to and face to face sessions can be delivered on request to operational teams.

Training in 2023/24 and into 2024/25 has taken place across a range of departments and included sessions on:

First Aid – including Forestry bolt on for relevant employees

Manual Handling and Manual Handling Train the Trainer

Ladder User and Inspection

Personal Safety and Conflict Management – pitched at different levels adapted to the risks presented to different job roles

Defra Level 1 Water Safety and Flood Awareness

HAV Awareness

Legionella Responsible Person

Fire Marshall and Fire Safety Awareness

Further courses are planned for after the summer months but will not cover service specific training.

In the last annual report, issues with the induction process for Refuse teams were highlighted. Induction has been strengthened significantly. Refuse Supervisors have completed a “Train the Trainer” course on bin lift operation and this is delivered to all new employees and agency workers before work commences. A letter warning of the dangers of loose or inappropriate work wear is also given to new employees and agency

workers. Along with this, an improved Driver competency checking regime has been implemented with appropriate record keeping ensuring drivers are competent with company vehicles.

Further improvements are scheduled for later this year with the Waste, Fleet and Depot Manager arranging for training in reversing manoeuvres for relevant employees.

As mentioned above, Manual Handling training has been carried out and the Glass Waste crews have been included in this with training tailored to their needs. They have also been provided with high specification hearing protection to prevent hearing loss. Ongoing supervision is required to ensure techniques learned are implemented and the hearing protection used for this high hazard role.

3.7 Emergency arrangements:

Following challenges with the implementation of new Fire procedures in 2022/23, two successful drills have been carried out at Civic Centre in 2023/24. Managers and employees have taken on the responsibilities of sweeping areas in the event of an evacuation and been able to provide constructive feedback on the process.

Evacuation drills are planned in for the Jubilee Depot campus to ensure statutory responsibilities are met.

This successful foundation will lead the way to a refresh of action cards for other emergencies, including invacuation and building lockdown, in preparation for compliance with Martyn's Law. Once implemented for Civic Centre, these can be extrapolated to other sites across the Borough as necessary.

3.8 Risk assessment compliance:

Risk assessment compliance was identified as a weakness across the organisation in the health and safety internal audit. This is raised regularly at every quarterly CHAS meeting to keep the profile of this issue high.

To build resilience into the higher risk teams such as Waste, Transport and PASC, a business case has been submitted to fund an Institute of Occupational Health and Safety (IOSH) Managing Safely course. This course takes managers, supervisors and team leaders through the process of identifying risks, considering control measures, the importance of workforce consultation, how to record the significant findings and the importance of sign off and review processes. This course has previously been successfully implemented by Leisure Services in raising awareness of risk assessment. Leisure Services generally have been noted to perform better in relation to risk assessment compliance than other services

despite having more assessments to manage and monitor.

Due to the ongoing process of reviews, it is accepted that there will always be some outstanding risk assessment actions. Ongoing housekeeping and maintenance is required by managers to keep up to date with this process. This will continue to be a CHAS agenda item and be promoted via senior management.

3.9 Health Surveillance:

This is a programme of health checks to ensure Gedling Borough Council employees are not harmed by the work they are tasked to do. Ill health effects may be experienced due to exposure to excessive noise, vibration or hazardous substances for example.

Occupational Health Surveillance is consistently monitored by the Health and Safety Adviser. The programme has recently been expanded to ensure all those who drive at work for the Council are receiving eyesight and general health checks. This follows some benchmarking with Broxtowe Borough Council and the identification of this as a best practise way forward.

A review of employees requiring Occupational Health Surveillance, based on their job role and associated risks, will be completed in due course. This is to ensure the correct employees are attending and are monitored appropriately. This will likely extend into 2024/25 work

3.10 Employee Protection Register:

Through the quarterly CHAS briefings, senior managers have been asked to encourage teams to report all incidents of violence, aggression and / or anti-social behaviour towards GBC employees.

This has been successful with such reporting showing an increase. This has meant action was able to be taken to curb and control such behaviour. Mechanisms provided within both the Unacceptable Behaviour Policy and the Employee Protection Register (EPR) being used for this purpose. Action taken includes a warning that service access will be restricted, followed by restricting methods of access and in the worst cases, issuing temporary bans to locations or withdrawing access to the relevant service.

An EPR guidance review is required to remove unnecessary steps in the process. This was scheduled for quarter 4 of 2023/24 but will now be undertaken as part of the work stream in 2024/25

4.0 Brief Resume of Emergency Planning and Business Continuity work

4.1 **Emergency Planning:**

During 2023/24, the Local Resilience Forum reconvened the Training subgroup and spent a significant period developing upcoming training courses to be delivered in 2024/25. Upcoming within this year are -Tactical Coordinating Group training, Emergencies on trial, LRF workshop, Exercise Acorn (power outages) and Exercise Tollard (for vulnerable people). Gedling Borough Council are able to send a representative to each of the courses improving our knowledge, ability and resilience to respond to emergencies and to help our communities recover.

Gedling continue to actively participate in the Nottinghamshire Water Safety Partnership meetings, bringing back relevant learning to the organisation.

Two big tests of the emergency plan arrangements in 2023/24 came in the form of Storm Babet (October 2023) and Storm Henk (January 2024). There were procedures identified from lessons learned as a consequence of Babet that were reinforced as necessary during Henk. Items such as clear, internal instructions for employees, resilience in responding out of hours and communication streams between residents and sources of additional help. A plan of these actions has been drawn up and will be worked through by the HSEP team. They will be incorporated into the update of the emergency action plan.

The emergency action plan was scheduled for review during 2023/24 but had to be postponed due to a period of maternity leave in the team meaning a reduced work plan was necessary. This is to be picked up during 2024/25.

4.2 **Business Continuity:**

During 2023/24, managers contributed to the business continuity process by participating in a training session and subsequent workshop to complete plans. This process went well, and good engagement was received. However, this was a relatively new process for officers. Gaps were identified during an Emergency Planning and Business Continuity audit.

To meet internal audit recommendations for business continuity in a timely fashion, an outside consultant has been engaged to ensure a business continuity management system is embedded within the organisation.

Again, engagement has been high with the process with all relevant teams having submitted a plan for review and held a subsequent meeting with the consultant. A business continuity policy has been drafted and once the strands of individual plans are completed, a strategic level BC plan will be drafted.

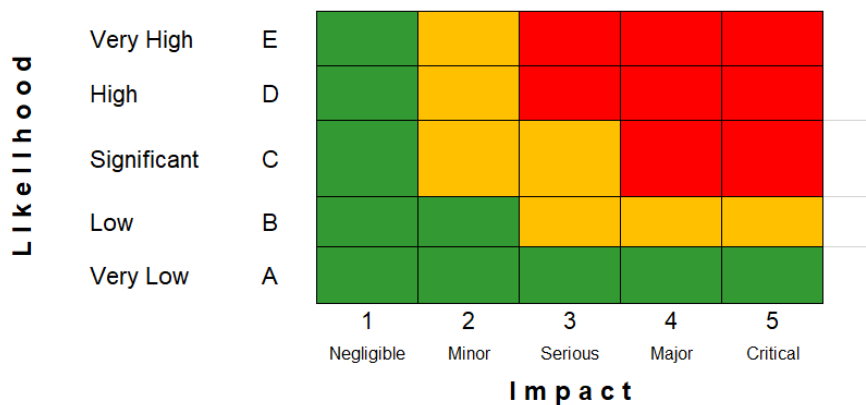
This work is due to complete in 2024/25.

5 Summary:

2023/24 has been a more stable year for the Health, Safety and Emergency Planning function. Many actions have been reactive but the move from quarter 4 of 2023/24 onwards is to step ahead of the curve and be more proactive.

There is much to do in terms of ensuring policy and guidance information is provided in a clear format and kept up to date. Incremental progress with this is expected year on year.

Using the risk matrix below, as used in the Corporate and Service area risk registers, the HSEP function is currently rated at C4 – it has a significant likelihood of experiencing major impacts (such as regulatory intervention). After a start/stop year, this is actually a reduction from the previous year rating of D4 and as such a positive step.



6 Proposal

- 6.1 It is proposed that the contents of the Corporate Health and Safety Annual Report 2023/24 above, be noted.

7 Alternative Options

- 7.1 Not to present an annual Health and Safety report, in which case SLT will not be updated on H&S activity across the Council. The report will also be taken to JCSC and Cabinet to ensure awareness of health and safety work is maintained.

8 Financial Implications

- 8.1 There are no financial implications directly arising from this report. Individual recommendations may incur additional budget requirements, but these will be addressed when necessary approvals are required.

9 Legal Implications

- 9.1 The Council must comply with a number of statutory obligations under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, Civil Contingency Act 2004 and other H&S legislation, Health and Safety Executive Guidance, Approved Codes of Practice and other industry best practice.

10 Equalities Implications

- 10.1 There are no equalities implications directly arising from this report.

11 Carbon Reduction/Environmental Sustainability Implications

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

12 Background Papers

- 12.1 None identified.

13 Reasons for Recommendations

- 13.1 To ensure SLT is updated in respect of Health and Safety activity across the Council.

Statutory Officer approval

Approved on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer

Date:

**Approved on behalf of the
Monitoring Officer**

Date:

