



## Governance and Audit Committee

Item

8

19 October 2021

Report of	Chief Operating Officer	Author	Carl Free ☎ 506579
Title	Health and Safety Report 2020/21		
Wards affected	N/A		

### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Colchester Borough Council has general duties under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and specific duties under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, to ensure that employees, and others who may be affected, can work safely without risk to their safety or health.
- 1.2 Overall responsibility for Health and Safety rests with Cabinet but is overseen by the Chief Operating Officer and managed by the Corporate Health and Safety Officer and Designated Officers within services, who form the Health and Safety Committee.

### 2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 To note the Health and Safety report for 2020/21 and approval of the Health and Safety Policy for 2021/22.

### 3. Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 The Leader of the Council has the ultimate responsibility for the management and monitoring of health and safety provision across all the Council's undertakings. Cabinet are jointly and severally the primary duty holders for health and safety across the Council's undertakings.
- 3.2 The Health and Safety Policy is an integral part of the risk management process, which forms part of the policy framework. As such it is appropriate to provide an annual report on Health and Safety to the Governance and Audit Committee, to assist with the Committee's responsibility for reviewing the effectiveness of risk management.

### 4. Background Information

- 4.1 The Health and Safety policy sets out the Council's commitment to managing health and safety risks, organisation structure and the individual responsibilities, at all levels of the organisation. The policy is still considered suitable and sufficient and has been updated to include the new leader on the H&S statement and to reflect the latest organisation structure.
- 4.2 The policy (appendix A) is supported by a set of arrangements (appendix B) that detail what the Council will do in practice to achieve the aims set out in the health and safety policy and successfully manage health and safety. Services supplement these arrangements with their own additional health and safety procedures where necessary for example due to the specific or higher risks involved in their work.

## 5. **Summary of Policy outcomes – October 2020 to September 2021.**

- 5.1 Similar to last year, the Coronavirus pandemic continued to impact the ways of working and health and safety priorities of ensuring staff, customer and member of public safety during this time. The priority of usual health and safety scheduled tasks and other non-critical work for 2020/21 was lowered to provide Covid-19 focused health and safety support to the Council.
- 5.2 Audits and reviews have recommenced within 2021 and are in progress on 'A12 litter picking' and 'Hand Arm Vibration' within the Neighbourhoods Service, as these have potentially high and serious immediate injury and long-term ill health risks. The audits are in progress but no significant concerns to health and safety of staff have been identified at this time.
- 5.3 The health and safety committee meetings continued virtually using Teams with the standard agenda in place. This includes updates on the corporate items such as findings from incident reports/investigations, training and guidance updates and any other significant items. The meeting also enabled useful discussions between the designated officers and services to continue particularly regarding latest significant concerns, Covid safety measures and mental health of staff, which also adds input to the corporate health and safety action priorities going forward.
- 5.4 The prioritisation of supporting and providing advice to the Council widely and specific services on Coronavirus matters continued in 2020 and most of 2021, this included:
- Producing or updating health and safety documentation, templates and guidance based on latest Covid-19 information and research from the Government or other official sources
  - Providing updates on key changes and requirements from latest guidance to services, managers, and staff and to ensure offices and customer sites remained Covid-secure
  - Ensuring adequate supply and resupply of personal protective equipment (PPE) and hand sanitiser to services/teams and CBC corporate sites
  - Reviewing CBC H&S arrangements to ensure suitable for the new and continued ways of alternative working across the Council
- 5.5 The corporate approach to supporting lone workers remains to be using personal monitoring devices via GPS connected to an alarm receiving centre staffed by the supplier. These products are reactive and therefore an addition to proactive safety measures already in place such as training, following best safety practices and working in pairs.
- 5.6 Following the successful trial of the smartphone app last year where staff preferred this to the already in use devices, progress has been made to switch over approximately half the teams from the devices to the app where this would be beneficial for them. Having availability to the app and device from the supplier, allows teams to choose the best option for them. The app maintains lone worker safety, while reducing the costs to the Council and risk of spreading coronavirus through shared devices.
- 5.7 The internal audit of health and safety at Colchester Borough Council provided an opinion of "Reasonable Assurance" in 2020. The recommendations have been actioned and continued as ongoing improvements. The next internal audit will be in 2022.
- 5.8 Fire Risk Assessments for all corporate buildings (primarily used as CBC staff workplaces) have been completed by an experienced Fire Safety Consultant. The

- 5.9 reports are being receiving and recommendations will be collated into an action plan and will be remedied as per guided timescales. Any significant issues will be actioned without delay where possible or highlighted through H&S reporting processes to the Chief Operating Officer and H&S Committee if further resources are required.
- 5.10 The upcoming Rowan House refurbishment includes fire safety improvements including new alarm detectors/sounders and emergency lighting.
- 5.11 Face to face training has been postponed where possible due to the pandemic. However, essential courses have continued such as health and safety induction using an eLearning package and first aid training with Covid secure measures in place.
- 5.12 Additional training has been organised to take place over the upcoming months, this includes a recognised qualification for the Executive Management Team designed to help them become better influencers of health and safety, and managers health and safety training that will help them gain the knowledge and tools and get up-to-speed on the practical actions they need to take to tackle safety and health issues.
- 5.13 Reported incidents across the Council remain low compared to previous years and the new online incident report form will allow improved analysis and display of statistics at the H&S committee and for this report. There have been no serious injuries to staff or members of public taken to hospital for treatment this year. These type incidents are notifiable to the Health and Safety Executive often referred as "RIDDOR incidents". Last year there was 1 RIDDOR incident (staff fractured wrist on moving bin lift), and previously 2, 4 and 7 in 2019, 2018 and 2017 respectively.
- 5.14 Near miss reporting continues to be encouraged and promoted, and actively reported by staff and managers, helping resolve any concerns or issues before they become a potential incident and/or injury.
- 5.15 A water safety consultant will soon review the Council water ways and open water for which we have responsibility. This is taking place to ensure legal compliance and suitable documentation and safety provisions are in place to help prevent drowning and water related incidents across the Borough.
- 5.16 This is to coincide with the UK Drowning Prevention Strategy which aims to reduce accidental drowning fatalities in the UK by 50 per cent, by 2026. A central objective of the UK national strategy is to ensure that water risks are risk assessed which will identify the safety provisions needed.

## **6. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications**

- 6.1 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) [link](#)

## **7. Strategic Plan References**

- 7.1 The failure to adequately identify and manage health and safety issues will affect the ability of the Council to achieve its strategic objectives.

## **8. Consultation**

- 8.1 Details of consultation is included in Document Information section of the policy.

## **9. Health and Safety Implications**

- 9.1 The failure to adequately identify and manage health and safety issues may have an effect on the ability of the Council to deliver effective services.

## **10. Risk Management Implications**

- 10.1 The failure to adequately identify and manage health and safety issues may have an effect on the ability of the Council to deliver effective services.

## **11. Environmental and Sustainability Implications**

- 11.1 There are no environmental or sustainability implications as a result of this report.

## **12. Standard References**

- 12.1 There are no particular references to publicity considerations or financial; health, wellbeing and community safety implications.

## **Appendices**

Appendix A: Health and Safety Policy 2021/22

Appendix B: Health and Safety Arrangements