

20 October 2020

Report of	Assistant Director of Policy and Corporate	Author	Carl Free
Title	Health and Safety Report 2019/20		☎ 506579
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 2019/20 and approval of the Health and Safety Policy for 2020/21.

## 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 only changes to the policy in 2020 are updates the Organisation Structure to make it accurate to the latest 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.

## 5. **Summary of Policy outcomes during 2019/20**

- 5.1 Due to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic, significant changes in ways of working and priority of ensuring staff, customer and member of public safety during this time, some regular health and safety scheduled tasks and other non-critical work for 2020 was paused in order to provide Covid-19 focused health and safety support to the Council.

As reported last year, the audits and reviews in progress at the time had longer terms action plans being worked towards, which has continued during the pandemic, but were not able to be fully completed due to the shift in priority of work. Necessary improvements to serious risks or breaches were actioned without delay as usual practice, and where possible 'easy win' immediate actions. A full review of these audit and review action plans will be completed in 2021 to ensure no learning points are missed, and the outstanding actions are completed.

- 5.2 During the pandemic, the Corporate Health and Safety Officer prioritised supporting and providing advice to the Council widely and specific services on Coronavirus matters, 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, or due to urgent new demands and significant changes in ways of working
- Providing updates to the CBC Covid operational and strategic groups
- Delivering health and safety training to redeployed staff
- Managing the procurement and distribution of personal protective equipment (PPE) and hand sanitiser to all teams and CBC corporate sites, including protective screens
- Implementing the changes necessary to make Rowan House Covid-secure for safe staff return to the office and assisted with preparing the reopening of CBC staff and customer sites, such as Leisure World, Town Hall and Castle Museum.

- 5.3 The "Skyguard MySOS" personal monitoring device remains in place as the corporate approach to supporting lone workers, with around 50 shared devices in use by CBC lone workers. No emergency alarms were activated during the 2019/20 period covered by this report.

A successful trial of the Skyguard smartphone app, which works in the same way as the devices, was recently completed within several teams. Staff preferred the app over the devices, and work is in progress to transfer lone workers over from the shared devices to the smartphone app system. This maintains lone worker safety, while reducing the costs to the Council and risk of spreading coronavirus through shared devices.

- 5.4 The internal audit of health and safety at Colchester Borough Council provided an opinion of "Reasonable Assurance" in 2020. The main recommendations made were regarding missing record of regular H&S inspections at CBC sites and delays of incident and investigation reporting by managers. Details of actions already taken to resolve these main recommendations are as below:

The inspections record keeping process has been updated to give managers more time for completion, and ensure missed records are monitored and obtained utilising the Business Support officer who was new in post and has now been trained.

An updated Health and Safety incident report form is in its final draft stages, and due to be released in the next few months bringing numerous improvements and using the

latest ICT systems, this will help ensure timely incident and investigation reports are submitted as per audit recommendation.

- 5.5 Fire Risk Assessments for all corporate buildings (primarily used as CBC staff workplaces) are due to be completed in October and November. Previous reports had no findings or recommendations identified at a high-risk rating.
- 5.6 Corporate Health and Safety face to face training has been limited during the pandemic. However, the health and safety induction course was converted to a eLearning package at the beginning of the year so new starters have continued to receive this training.

First Aid training was able to be delivered in a Covid-secure way and first aiders were able to maintain their certification to ensure first aid provision on numerous CBC sites.

Practical Manual Handling training was delivered to all the Neighbourhood Services Waste & Recycling collection staff, and to the staff redeployed to the service at the beginning of the pandemic.

- 5.7 There has been a continued positive low number of incidents involving serious injuries to staff or members of public taken to hospital for treatment, which are notifiable to the Health and Safety Executive often referred as “RIDDOR incidents”. Since the previous report there has been 2 RIDDOR incidents (staff fractured ankle from a slip/trip, and member of public taken to hospital for treatment following an asthma attack), previously 2, 4 and 7 in 2019, 18 and 17 respectively.

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.

- 5.8 People & Performance and Corporate Health and Safety, with the Live Well / Work Well (Wellbeing) Group, continue to work together on Stress Management and Mental Health, which is included as a priority in the updated People Strategy. Staff will be surveyed on their wellbeing and stress indicators to help us identify the sources of work-related stress within the organisation, so resources can be focused to help eliminate or reduce the main factors of stress, reduce sickness absence and improve staff wellbeing.

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

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

## **7. Standard References**

- 7.1 There are no particular references to publicity considerations or financial; community safety; health and safety or risk management implications.

## **8. Strategic Plan References**

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

## **9. Consultation**

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

## **10. Publicity Considerations**

10.1 None

## **11. Financial implications**

11.1 None

## **12. Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety Implications**

12.1 None

## **13. Health and Safety Implications**

13.1 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.

## **14. Risk Management Implications**

14.1 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.

## **15. Appendices**

15.1 Appendix A: Health and Safety Policy 2020/21

15.2 Appendix B: Health and Safety Arrangements