

## JOINT AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE



Report of the Head of Corporate Services

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To: Joint Audit and Governance Committee

DATE: 29 March 2022

### AGENDA ITEM

## Health and Safety Progress Review

### Recommendation(s)

(a) That the committee undertakes a half-yearly progress review of Health and Safety actions as outlined in the Health and Safety strategic review and notes the progress made against the corporate Health and Safety Action Plan.

### Purpose of the review

1. This is the end of year progress review of the Health and Safety actions as outlined in the Health and Safety Strategic review undertaken in 2019 and subsequent action plan. This review follows on from the joint audit and governance committee report on 5 July 2021.

### Strategic Objectives

2. Managing the business safely underpins all of our strategic objectives.

## Background

3. As part of the ongoing commitment to a robust health and safety management system some key actions were outlined in the report to this committee in January 2021.
4. The actions support and contribute to more efficient procedures and services, provide for an assessment where necessary and an update of health and safety compliance. They introduce mechanisms for the escalation of health and safety performance outcomes and enable the councils to demonstrate adherence to the requirements of UK health and safety legislation.

## Progress on actions

5. The councils have re-organised the Health and Safety team and relocated to People and Culture, alongside HR and Equalities. This move will facilitate the councils' drive to continually improve health and safety culture across the organisation.
6. The Health and Safety Policy has been revised to conform to the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (HASAWA) and support the development of the councils' health and safety management system in accordance with the HSE guidance, HSG65. Following successful UNISON and employee consultation, the policy was approved by SMT and is now live.
7. To support the integration of the health and safety management system into the councils' operational activities, a protocol for a Safety Champion's forum has been developed. This protocol has now completed its consultation and SMT approval stage. Selection of suitable Safety Champions by the heads of service is to begin shortly and, therefore, the precise start date for the forum is still pending.
8. Training is an integral part of the competency framework for staff and ensuring good health and safety performance for the councils. A corporate training matrix is being developed to support job-based safety. Once complete, the matrix will enable the development and delivery of cost and time efficient training programmes for employees across the council. To date, health and safety have organised first-aid, fire warden, manual handling, DSE assessor, working at height and ladder inspector training to facilitate the councils. The sourcing and development of personal safety and conflict management training have moved to high priority to address the increasing number of incidents involving threats and abuse to staff.
9. Measuring health and safety performance continues and evidences the significant improvement by staff in reporting near misses. This positive trend enables the councils to proactively capture opportunities to enhance efficiency and ensure compliance. A summary of the councils' performance is provided in appendix 1.
10. Communication of health and safety matters is fundamental for good health and safety performance. Current processes have been reviewed and a programme of work is underway, including a new process to monitor staff awareness of changes in policies and processes through Leah, the councils' learning management system.

11. Health and safety general activities continue to support across the whole organisation, with development of policies and procedures, advice and guidance for risk assessments, specific projects, new activities and incident investigations. Health and safety will continue to administer the lone worker system, organise and procure core health and safety training courses such as first-aid, fire warden, manual handling, personal safety etc. and assist with site inspections as needed.
12. Continuous improvement of the health and safety management system is a key deliverable for enhancing the councils' performance. Health and safety are undertaking activities to simplify and reduce the documentation and work burden on staff, centralise policies and procedures and involved in the corporate programme to help shape and support the councils' corporate landlord model.

### **Key performance indicators**

13. Current key performance indicators relate to the number of incidents and near miss incidents. Appendix 1 provides a summary of incidents and near misses between April 2021 to present. The trend is positive as, with significantly improved reporting and investigations, the councils are actively capturing opportunities to reduce and prevent incidents.

### **Financial Implications**

14. There are financial implications if we fail to fulfil our duties under HASWA. These range from prosecution and fines for lack of suitable safety management procedures and implementation through to specific prosecution fines and claims payments for not delivering safe plant, equipment, buildings, locations and processes.

### **Legal Implications**

15. As above there are legal implications if we fail to fulfil our duties under HASWA.

### **Risks**

16. Risk identification is an integral part of our health and safety management system and of this progress review.

### **Other Implications**

17. Any major incident or injury caused to staff, the public or our contractors as a result of failure in our health and safety system could result in significant reputational damage.

### **Background Papers**

None

## Appendix 1 - Health and Safety Key Performance Indicators

The graphs below provide a brief summary of all the incidents that have occurred between 1 April 2021 to present. Notably, the data reflects the increase in incidents of abuse/threat to employees as the councils return to business as usual following the lockdown periods.

Health and safety continue to champion the reporting of near misses / potentially dangerous (PDS) by staff. These incidents provide an opportunity for the councils to reduce their liability and protect from more serious and costly incidents occurring in the future. It should be noted that the rate of reporting is significantly lower than theoretically expected for the type and size of the organisation.

