

**HOMES & COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE**  
**15 MARCH 2021**

**HEALTH AND SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT**

**1.0 Purpose of Report**

1.1 To update Members on performance with regard to corporate health and safety within the previous calendar year and to demonstrate that the council's legal responsibilities are being met.

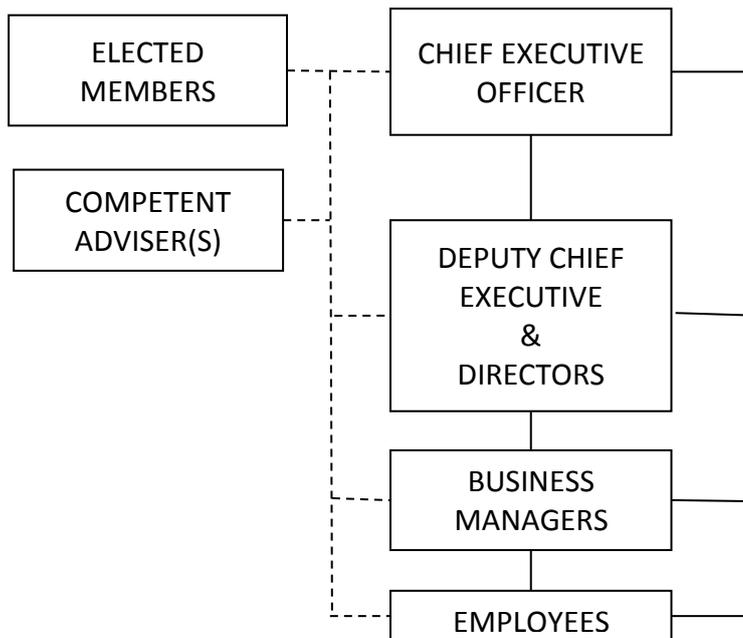
**2.0 Background Information**

2.1 The council's corporate Health & Safety Policy sets out the responsibilities of various posts within the organisation. Elected Members provide the council with leadership and strategy direction and determination in the allocation of budgets to enable services to be delivered. Because of their influence on budgets and policy decisions, elected Members can affect how health and safety is managed. Therefore Members, when carrying out their functions, shall ensure:

- a) The provision of such resources, that are necessary, for securing the health, safety and welfare of the council's employees and anyone else who may be affected by its undertakings.
- b) That the decision making process they employ includes and considers risks to employees and others in the decisions they make.
- c) The Chairman of the Homes & Communities Committee shall be the lead elected Member for corporate health and safety.

2.2 As part of fulfilling this responsibility Members are given the opportunity to receive an update report on current performance around compliance with our corporate health and safety responsibilities and duties.

2.3 The diagram below shows the structure of how the health and safety responsibilities and accountabilities are set up. The solid black lines show the route of responsibility whereas the hashed lines illustrate the route of accountability.

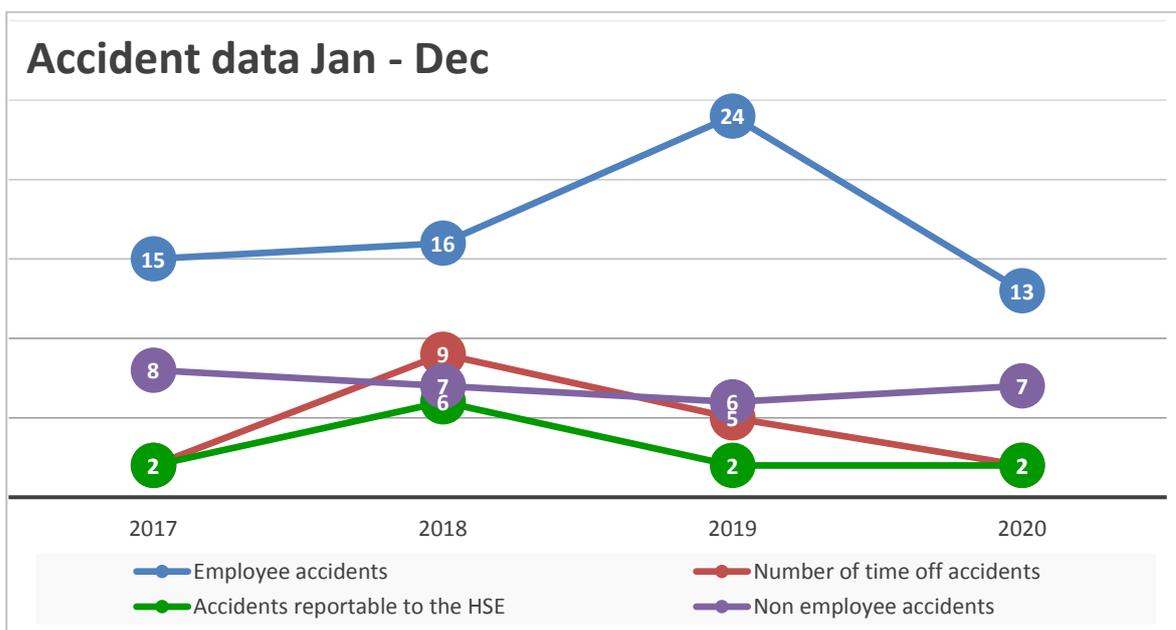


———— = Responsibility  
 - - - - - = Accountability

2.4 The current Health and Safety Policy is presently being reviewed and updated. On completion of this technical review the policy will be reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). Once approved by SLT it shall be sent on to the Joint Consultative Committee for consultation with the Unions and staff. As soon as this process is complete, it will be formally approved and communicated to all staff.

### 3.0 Accident Statistics

3.1 The graph below illustrates the council’s accident data for the previous four years, reporting period (1<sup>st</sup> Jan to 31<sup>st</sup> Dec inclusive).



- 3.2 A total of 20 accidents were reported for the period between the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2020 and 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020.
- 3.3 13 of the 20 reported accidents involved employees with the remaining 7 accidents involving non-employees.
- 3.4 There was a decrease in the number of reported employee accidents and fewer lost working days. The number of severe accidents requiring reporting to the Health and Safety Executive remained the same.
- 3.5 A total of 2 accidents resulted in employees taking time off work during the last year. The total number of days lost due to these accidents was 4.5 days. Both these accidents occurred within the Environmental Services Business Unit.
- 3.6 The following table identifies the number of employee accidents reported in 2020.

<b>EMPLOYEE ACCIDENTS - 2020</b>			
<b>Business Unit</b>	<b>Number of accidents reported</b>	<b>Days Lost</b>	<b>RIDDOR</b>
Environmental Services	4	4.5	1
Housing Management, Responsive Repairs	5	0	0
ICT	2	0	0
Palace Theatre	1	0	0
Asset Management & Car Parks	1	0	0

- 3.7 The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrence Regulations 2013 (known as RIDDOR) puts duties on employers, the self-employed and people in control of work premises (the Responsible Person) to report certain serious workplace accidents, over 7-day absences from work, occupational diseases and specified dangerous occurrences (near misses) to the Health and Safety Executive.
- 3.8 One employee accident required notification to the Health & Safety Executive. This accident involved a soft tissue injury received during refuse collection. Notification was triggered due to the amount of time taken off (greater than 7 days) rather than type or severity of the injury.
- 3.9 The following table identifies the number of non-employee accidents reported in 2020.

<b>NON-EMPLOYEE ACCIDENTS - 2020</b>			
<b>Business Unit</b>	<b>Number of reported accidents</b>	<b>Locations</b>	<b>RIDDOR</b>
Heritage and Culture	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NCWC</li> <li>• Palace Theatre</li> </ul>	0
Environmental Services	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sconce &amp; Devon Park</li> <li>• Vicar Water</li> </ul>	1
Asset Management & Car Parks	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beacon Centre</li> <li>• Castle House</li> </ul>	0
Housing Management	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Domestic housing</li> </ul>	0

3.10 The single non-employee accident, requiring notification to the Health & Safety Executive, involved a volunteer. The volunteer was undertaking unsupervised and unauthorised pruning works which resulted in a cut injury to a finger. This injury resulted in the injured person being taken directly to hospital, where stitches were administered. All accidents involving non employees being taken from site to hospital, for treatment, are reportable as defined by the RIDDOR.

#### 4.0 **Violent Incidents**

4.1 The following table illustrates the number of serious incidents, involving violence towards council staff, reported in 2020. Figures for the preceding 3 years have been added to help with comparison. Violent incidents include verbal abuse and threats.

Business Unit	Violent incidents leading to inclusion on Incident Risk Register			
	2017	2018	2019	2020
Legal	1			
Environmental Services	2	1		
Revenues & Benefits	1	1		
Housing Benefits	1			
Customer Services		6	1	5
Public Protection			1	2
Housing, Health & Community Relations			1	
Housing Management	na	na	na	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>13</b>

4.2 There are currently 13 entries within the council's Potentially Violent Person Risk Register. This is an increase of 10 on the previous year. Whilst this is a significant increase, when compared to previous years, it should be noted that 6 of the 10 can be directly attributed to the adoption of the housing register, following the bringing back of this service into council early last year.

4.3 There was a small increase, based on previous year's figures, in incidents reported by Customers Services based at Castle House. Of the 5 incidents reported only 2 related directly to council staff and our services. The remaining 3 involved partners based at Castle house and their customers.

4.4 The Potentially Violent Person Risk Register records details of people who present a risk to our staff. It exists to act as a point of reference for officers who may have to deal with potentially violent members of the public. All entries remain on the register for a period of 18 months.

4.5 All individuals entered onto this register are notified of their inclusion, warned that the council is not prepared to accept such behaviour towards its staff and will, where necessary, take appropriate legal action.

## 5.0 COVID 19

5.1 COVID 19 has placed exceptional and unprecedented demands on the council, over a prolonged period, to provide its services in a COVID secure and safe manner.

5.2 Responding to COVID 19 and ensuring the safe delivery of district council services has been the prime focus for the corporate health & safety team. Significant resource of this small unit has been focused on:

- Producing COVID secure safe systems of work and risk assessments for council services,
- Visiting all sites and operations to develop new methods of work and ensure compliance with current COVID regulations and ensure COVID secure operations.
- Ensuring the safety of those staff required to undertake higher risk activities,
- Ensuring the safety of those staff required to work from home,
- Providing advice and information to all business units,
- Ensuring availability of COVID 19 PPE and cleaning materials are available to services with an identified need. This has included participation in a regional response co-ordinated by the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) in ensuring supply COVID PPE to front line services.
- Assisting in ensuring the council is able to respond to the wider COVID issues within our communities.

5.3 The corporate health & safety unit have ensured that all NSDC sites and activities have been visited/inspected and safe systems of work developed, reviewed and approved. Higher risk sites/services such as front line service delivery and extra care housing sites (Gladstone House and Vale View) are constantly monitored and assistance provided as necessary to ensure vulnerable tenants are safe and services can continue to function.

5.4 The government has required, since late March 2020 that people do not travel unnecessarily and where possible work at home. As a direct consequence of this government instruction a significant number of council staff have been working from home since late March 2020.

The number required to work from home has increased further following notification of the current lockdown and the emergence of the more virulent new UK COVID variant.

5.5 The Health & Safety at Work Etc. 1974 requires employers to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable the health, safety and welfare of all its employees whilst at work. This includes whilst working from home.

5.6 To ensure the continued health and safety of those required to work from home a number of initiatives have been undertaken. These have included:

- Working from home risk assessments
- Provision of information and training
- Provision of working from home equipment
- Mental health support and services

5.7 To date a total of 321 working from home Display Screen Equipment assessments have been carried out. This has resulted in the provision of the following equipment being provided to staff:

- 180 ergonomic chairs
- 47 footrests
- 6 back supports for chairs
- 5 mouse wrist rests
- 4 keyboard wrist rests

5.8 The above items are in addition to working from home kits (including keyboards, mice and laptop risers) provided to all staff working from home. Older, surplus display screens, made available following a recent upgrade of equipment at Castle House, have also been made available to those staff who have requested them.

## **6.0 Fire Risk Assessments.**

6.1 The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 requires that employers and/or owners in control of workplaces undertake fire risk assessments of all buildings under their direct control.

6.2 An annual review of fire risk assessments for all council owned/managed buildings is currently being undertaken. There are 22 sites identified as requiring fire risk assessments. Of those 12 have been completed to date.

6.3 It is currently estimated the review will be completed by the end of March 2021.

Whilst every attempt will be made to complete these assessments by this date it should be noted that COVID restrictions have significantly hampered this project to date.

6.4 A management/action plan is currently being produced by Asset Management and the Safety & Risk Management Officer. This plan details all actions identified within the fire risk assessments, identifies a responsible person and prioritises actions with a suitable target completion date.

6.5 Outstanding actions identified will be monitored by Asset Management, reported to the Risk Management Group and where necessary escalated to the relevant Director and SLT.

## **7.0 Asbestos Registers.**

7.1 The Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 requires that employers and/or owners in control of workplaces suitably manage all asbestos materials within all buildings under their direct control.

7.2 This duty requires the duty holder to undertake a suitable survey to initially identify asbestos materials within the buildings under their control and to implement suitable management arrangements to ensure that asbestos materials identified within the surveys are suitably managed.

7.3 Asset management have appointed competent contractor to resurvey and produce new updated asbestos registers for all commercial buildings.

7.4 There are 103 sites identified as requiring asbestos surveys. Of those, 99 have been completed to date.

7.5 It is currently estimated the review will be completed by the end of March 2021.

Whilst every attempt will be made to complete these assessments by this date it should be noted that COVID restrictions have significantly hampered this project to date.

7.6 The existing asbestos register is updated, as necessary, when individual surveys are received.

In addition to the register update an asbestos management/action plan is currently being produced by Asset Management and the Safety & Risk Management Officer. This plan details all actions identified within the building surveys, identifies a responsible person and prioritises actions with a suitable target completion date.

7.7 The asbestos management plan will be monitored by Asset Management, reported to the Risk Management Group and where necessary escalated to the relevant Director and SLT.

## **8.0 Significant Incidents**

8.1 A contractor, whilst preparing a commercial unit for occupation by a tenant, cut through a live incoming 100amp electric mains supply cable with an angle grinder. This subsequently caused a loud bang and electrical short. Fortunately, the contractor's employee (site manager) was extremely lucky and did not receive any injuries.

8.2 Power was lost to the unit and due to the presence of an unsafe live incoming power cable the service provider (Western Power) were required to attend site as an emergency to make the cable safe.

8.3 The incident was fully investigated by ourselves, the Principal Contractor and the Principal Designer. The findings of this investigation concluded:

- The unit's electric meter had been safely and correctly removed by Western Power prior to commencement of the unit's refurbishment. However, the live feed cable could not be removed at this point. It was therefore made safe by Western Power, to their required standards. This included the installation of a "cap end" to insulate exposed live conductors and labelling with hazard warning tape, conforming with relevant safety signs regulations, identifying "Live Dangerous – Electricity".

- Even though it was clearly labelled and instruction had been issued confirming this, the contractor's site manager incorrectly believed the cable was dead. He had also incorrectly tested the cable prior to works and believed it was safe to remove. It should be noted that there were 4 electricians on site at the time of the incident. At no time did the site manager request the onsite electricians to undertake a test of the cable.

- The contractor acknowledges that their site manager did not adhere to HSE guidelines or their own safe working arrangements for handling/removing electrical services.

8.4 It was therefore determined by all parties that the contractor's operative was at fault.

8.5 Although this was a serious incident it did not require reporting to the Health & Safety Executive.

- 8.6 No enforcement action was taken as a result of this incident.
- 8.7 The incident has been reported and discussed by SLT. After consideration of the investigation report SLT acknowledged that the incident was due to contractor error. It was subsequently agreed, by SLT that due to the identification of significant health and safety failures, by the contractor, they would not be utilised in future works.

## **9.0 Proposed Work Plan - 2021**

- 9.1 Set out below are the significant objectives identified within the Corporate Health & Safety work plan for 2021:
- a) To develop, implement and embed the new corporate risk assessment software. This includes:
- Development of the software to suit the council's requirements
  - Provision of appropriate training to approximately 100 users
  - Support risk assessors in producing suitable and sufficient risk assessments for their relevant areas
  - Ensure that risk assessments are suitable embedded with the operation of all business units
  - Implement a review and reporting process for risk assessment performance
- b) Review, update, and implement the Health & Safety Policy
- c) Review and evaluate health & safety arrangements. Utilise the findings of this review to develop and implement a risk based corporate health and safety inspection programme.

## **10.0 Equalities Implications**

- 10.1 None of the incidents reported had any equality implications identified at the time. Incidents which involve any of the 'protected characteristics' set out under the Equalities Act 2010 would be taken account of as part of any investigation.

## **11.0 Digital Implications**

- 11.1 There are no implications for the council's digital services arising from this report.

## **12.0 Financial Implications (FIN20-21/7669)**

- 12.1 There are no direct financial implications from the recommendation within this report. Where appropriate, analysis of the incidents and resultant improvements to prevent reoccurrences can reduce the financial exposure of the council.
- 12.2 An effective health and safety management system, in which risks are identified and either eliminated or reduced will result in a reduction in costs to the organisation.

### **13.0 RECOMMENDATION**

**Members are asked to:**

- (a) note the health and safety activity for the past year, and to;**
- (b) support the action plan set out in paragraph 9.1**

#### **Reason for Recommendation**

**To allow the Committee to satisfy themselves through the process of scrutiny that corporate health and safety is being adequately managed and resourced across the authority.**

#### **Background Papers**

Nil

For further information please contact Richard Bates on Ext 5593

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