

**Annual Health & Safety Report covering the year 2019-20**

**1. Purpose of the report**

This report is an information item presenting the Annual Health & Safety Report, covering the year 2019-20, taken to Corporate Management Team (CMT) on 18 February 2021. This report is aimed at Members, but with key data of interest to all senior managers in Walsall Council.

**2. Recommendations**

Members are recommended to:

1. Note the contents of the Annual Health & Safety Report and share it as appropriate to help promote a positive health & safety culture across the council.

**Sponsoring Director**

**Simon Neilson**

Executive Director – Economy Environment & Communities

**18 February 2021**

**3. Report detail**

- 3.1 CMT agreed to the production of an Annual Health & Safety Report, to be presented at Personnel Committee. This year's draft report was agreed at CMT 18 February 2021, and the final version is attached to this report (Appendix 1).

The report gives an overview of how we manage health & safety in Walsall Council, along with key statistical information and key achievements for the year.

This is our fourth annual report since they were reintroduced in 2017. The reports have been well received and so we have stuck with the format.

We believe the underlying message is that health & safety is well managed across the council. We have systems to ensure that the right controls are in place, and regularly audit those systems both for reassurance, and to help identify areas for improvement – after all, we are a complex organisation and standards can slip from time to time, particularly during times of restructure and change.

Looking at our accident and aggressive incident data on the whole there have been no dramatic changes and we appear to be very much in steady state – as would be expected with relatively mature systems in place. There has been a

jump in non-employee accidents in Economy & Environment; however, we believe that this is due to increased reporting by Leisure Services, albeit with some potential over-reporting of sporting incidents – many of which appear to be pure “accidents” not connected to our facilities and hence not reportable. Work to understand the nature of these incidents and ensure greater consistency was unfortunately curtailed by the start of the first lockdown and few service users have used our leisure facilities since then.

Despite having relatively mature systems, we are committed to continuous improvement in health & safety. As such, we continue to develop policies, systems and procedures to achieve that aim – we have a rolling programme to review our internal standards, and many of our processes have been simplified and modernised over recent years – a trend that will continue.

Please note: the period covered by the report is predominantly before the covid-19 pandemic – the impact of which will be reflected in next year’s report.

That said, it is worth noting that the start of 2020/21 impacted on the health & safety service in quite dramatic ways – due to lockdowns and other restrictions, most of our auditing and fire risk assessment activities were put on hold for much of the year in order to avoid any non-essential visits. However, this did allow the health & safety team to concentrate on the many Covid-19 challenges that quickly started to come through – this included providing model risk assessments; undertaking reassurance checks on school Covid-19 risk assessments before they were allowed to reopen to more pupils; carrying out reassurance checks on risk assessments for corporate buildings before they were allowed to reopen; supporting both the Reset and Space Occupancy (SOG) Group; and, whilst liaising with Public Health, Children’s Services and other colleagues, dealing with numerous enquiries and contributing to communications relating to coronavirus.

#### **4. Financial**

There are no direct financial implications of this report; however, Members will be aware that having the right systems in place and keeping people safe helps prevent both criminal and civil proceedings against the authority, and helps mitigate if things go wrong. Members will also be aware that the level of fines for health & safety offences has increased significantly in recent years, in line with Sentencing Council guidelines.

#### **5. Legal**

Other than the general duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of staff and others, which our policies, monitoring and reporting help achieve, there are no direct legal implications of this report.

#### **6. Risk Management**

Our policies, systems and procedures help us mitigate against the health & safety risks faced by the council. Audit programmes are also in place to help monitor systems and give a level of assurance that our risks are being managed effectively.

## **7. People**

Our health & policies, systems and procedures help keep our staff and customers healthy and safe.

## **8. Consultation**

The Annual Health & Safety Report will be shared with directorate Health & Safety Committees, where the contents and learning points will be discussed with union colleagues and management representatives.

## **Author**

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