

Annual Health & Safety Report covering the year 2020-21

1. Purpose of the report

This report is an information item presenting the Annual Health & Safety Report, covering the year 2020-21, taken to Corporate Management Team (CMT) on 20 January 2022. 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

20 January 2022

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 20 January 2022, 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 fifth 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.

The report notes the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic both on health & safety activities – the audit, fire risk assessment and training programmes were all affected, and on accident and aggressive incident numbers – all of which fell

dramatically due to many staff working from home and our public facing services often closed or offered remotely for large parts of the year.

The report also highlights some of the ways the health & safety team, and others, helped get our services up and running again – particularly in schools where the team ensured each of our schools had a fit for purpose Covid-secure risk assessment in place prior to reopening.

Covid will, no doubt, continue to challenge how we work; however, despite Covid, we are committed to continuous improvement in health & safety, and to building a positive health & safety culture. The report sets out some of the ways we intend to achieve this.

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.

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