

Agenda Item 32.

TITLE	Health and Safety Annual Report 2014/15
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on 30 July 2015
WARD	None specific
STRATEGIC DIRECTOR	Graham Ebers, Director Finance and Resources
LEAD MEMBER	Pauline Jorgensen, Executive Member for Resident Services

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

The Council has a legal duty to protect the health and safety of its employees and other people who come into contact with the Council's services e.g. service users, pupils, contractors etc.; the standard of that duty is set by law with employers required to do what is considered to be 'reasonably practicable'.

The effective management of health and safety is an essential part of good corporate governance; furthermore, the active management of accidents at work is essential, not only to protect our employees and others but to also minimise financial loss through employee absence and other direct and indirect related costs.

The legal responsibility and thus accountability for health and safety lies with the employer. In addition to service staff, the Authority is the employer in the case of community schools, community special schools, voluntary controlled schools, maintained nurseries and pupil referral units. The Governing Body is the employer in respect of foundation schools, voluntary aided schools, academies and free schools.

Although a wholly owned subsidiary of Wokingham Borough Council, Optalis is an employer in its own right and as such must discharge its own health and safety statutory duties. The Council's Health and Safety Annual Report 2014/15 does not include Optalis health and safety performance or issues; it is up to the Optalis Board to regularly monitor and review their own health and safety performance.

RECOMMENDATION

The Executive is requested to:

- 1) note the corporate health and safety performance for 2014/15; and
- 2) endorse the approach described and the health and safety priorities for the current municipal year.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to introduce the Wokingham Borough Council Health and Safety Annual Report 2014/15 for consideration by the Executive. Whilst not a statutory report, the preparation and issue of an annual health and safety report by a local authority (a health and safety regulator in its own right) reflects good practice and provides assurance. The annual report relates to occupational health and safety in respect of this Authority's services and schools and provides:

- a summary of the corporate health and safety performance during the reporting year;

- an update on the progress made to date in respect of the three year corporate Health and Safety Plan which provides the mechanism for the formal follow through and tracking of actions to support the key objectives for health and safety; and
- for recommendations in relation to the corporate health and safety priorities for action during the current municipal year.

Background

The Health and Safety Annual Report 2014/15 looks back at the corporate health and safety performance within the Council during that period, highlights the main achievements and significant issues and outlines the key priorities for the current year.

The annual report is transparent; it provides stakeholders with information on health and safety performance to enable an understanding of the key issues facing Council staff and provides assurance that the main risks have been identified, appropriately prioritised and are being adequately addressed.

The annual report is reviewed internally by various management and staff consultation groups; the Corporate Leadership Team and the central employee consultation forums for services and schools receive supplementary information in the form of statistical charts with data breakdowns, for example, by work area and hazard type to aid analysis, identification of trends and patterns and to support the ongoing development of suitable risk prevention strategies.

Analysis of Issues

Overall the Council's internal health and safety performance for 2014/15 can be viewed as positive although the statistics themselves may at first glance indicate otherwise.

High levels of incident reporting do not necessarily equate to poor health and safety performance; in fact they can often be viewed as a positive indicator of good health and safety management.

The number of incident reports raised by employees during 2014/15 is nearly double that of the previous year; however, that increase has been mainly driven by one school's efforts to bring about total reporting. Addington School, a special school whose standard of incident reporting has always been high, increased its efforts over the last year to focus on this area of management to help meet the challenges of providing education to a more complex pupil population. The majority of incidents reported by Addington staff resulted in minor injuries, for example, a scratch, bruise or hair pull; however, the collection of this information is vital to the ongoing development of tailored support plans designed to protect staff and pupils alike.

The introduction last year of an additional reporting classification to provide an indicator of severity in relation to the outcome of an incident has added a new dimension to the data being collected centrally. 98.5% of school employee incidents and 94% of those raised by service employees fell into the 'minor injury' or 'no injury' category i.e. either no attention was required after the incident or the injured person received basic first aid.

Whilst the number of reports submitted by the Council to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) under The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR) in respect of serious injuries sustained by employees went up from three in 2013/14 to five in 2014/15, the Council's reportable injury rates are considerably lower than the most recently published national average for comparable sectors. All of the Council's RIDDOR incidents were subjected to a detailed corporate investigation and appropriate remedial action was taken in all cases.

RIDDOR requires for work related injuries involving members of the public to be

reported where the injured person was taken straight to hospital for treatment. The one report of this nature in 2014/15 related to an incident involving a basket swing at Dinton Pastures Country Park; a subsequent investigation by an external specialist concluded that the play equipment’s design, installation and condition were not at fault.

2014/15 saw a relatively small decrease in employee slip/trip incidents compared to the previous year with no discernible trends in the service areas and poor housekeeping the main issue in schools. Awareness raising efforts amongst staff of slip and trip hazards and the need for personal responsibility in preventing accidents of this type continue.

There was one report of a work related violent incident in 2014/15 involving a public car park user who aggressively challenged a member of staff over a parking ticket; fortunately the staff member was not hurt but the matter was taken up with the Police. On a general note, violence at work has been recognised as a priority area for 2015/16; a project has been initiated to ensure that the Council’s policy and arrangements remain appropriate, supportive and suitable.

The annual report lists some of the highlights from 2014/15; two of note were: the Council’s policy to support and encourage schools to consider installing an Automated External Defibrillator and, where feasible, to do so in partnership with Parish Councils in order to extend the potential benefits to the wider community; and the upgrade and development of WiSER which has created opportunities to capture additional information about incidents and provide service managers with the ability to be self-sufficient in their monitoring of incident reports within their areas of responsibility.

Looking forward to 2015/16, the HR Service is working on a number of key projects designed to support the continuous improvement of the Council’s overall health and safety management system, the most major of which is a complete review and update of the policies and guidance in the health and safety manuals.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£0	Yes	
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£0	Yes	
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£0	Yes	

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision
None

Cross-Council Implications
Health and safety is a cross cutting issue that should be given due consideration and be integrated into all the Council’s decisions and priorities.

List of Background Papers

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 and 'Managing for Health and Safety' (HSG65), a guide published by the HSE.
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