



REPORT TO: CORPORATE COMMITTEE ON 15 MARCH 2022

SUBJECT: HEALTH AND SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT 2021

BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (EDUCATION, COMMUNITIES AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT)

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To ask the Committee to consider the annual Health and Safety report and approve the progress noted, proposed future actions and carry forward of outstanding actions for the next year.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (B) (24) (c) and (25) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to formulating, supervising the implementation of and review as necessary the policy and practices of the council for all employees in relation to the recruitment, training and development, health, safety and welfare and practices of the Council.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
- i) **considers the content of the annual health and safety report, as set out in Appendix 1, and the progress towards the outcomes established in the last report;**
 - ii) **approve the carry forward of outstanding actions and proposed future actions for 2022; and**
 - iii) **note that the report will be presented to Corporate Committee on 15 March 2022 for consideration and approval.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Health and Safety at Work Act requires that organisations ensure the safety of employees and others who may be affected by their actions.

The main elements needed to provide protection are:

- Making plain the organisation's commitment to have good standards of health and safety management;
- Defining the roles that people at all levels play in ensuring the good standards are maintained;

- Having systems in place to ensure awareness of hazards and assessment of risks to employees, customers, partners and others who may be affected by our activities;
 - Having in place effective arrangements to eliminate or control those risks;
 - Monitoring the system in place and reviewing it on an ongoing basis;
 - Providing access to health and safety advice and support;
 - Engagement with employees at all stages of the process to ensure adequacy.
- 3.2 As part of this process, a report is provided every year on the Health and Safety provision within the Council.
- 3.3 The Annual Health and Safety Report for 2021 is set out in **Appendix 1**. It summarises the Council's health and safety performance corporately and is based on statistics for the period 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2021. The report highlights the Council's safety performance and provides information on the types of accidents reported.
- 3.4 This report relates to the calendar year January to December 2021 and over this period, the organisation as a whole and the services within it continued to be affected by the response to the Covid-19 pandemic, through phases of emergency response, recovery and renewal and back to emergency response in the latter part of the year, due to the emergence of the Omicron variant. This impacted on health and safety at both a corporate level and within services to a significant degree. As in 2020, some services continued to operate in the usual workplaces, with appropriate advice and guidance provided on risk assessments, mitigation and control measures, resulting in different operating procedures to ensure everyone's health and safety, all in accordance with national guidance issued by the Scottish Government, Public Health Scotland and the HSE. Those services which were operating from home began to phase back in to the usual workplace environment within the parameters of the organisations policy and guidance on returning to the workplace, again with appropriate advice and guidance provided on risk assessments, mitigation and control measures. Then towards the end of the year, there was a need to revert to working from home again as the default position. The information provided in this report needs to be regarded within this overall context.
- 3.5 The report highlights that the number of accidents and dangerous occurrences reported in 2021 has decreased compared to the numbers reported in the previous three reports. Overall, incidents were down by 13% compared to 2020 and down 42% as compared to 2019. As in 2020, it is most likely that the reason for this is that there were fewer employees working in their usual workplaces as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and the varying restrictions that have been in place again during 2021. However, within this, there is variation at departmental level. For the first time since 2017, Environmental Services recorded the highest number of health and safety incidents with total incidents during 2021 increasing by 31% compared to 2020. Education recorded a decrease in reported incidents, down by 37% compared to 2020 with those in Social Care down by 25%.

There is some concern that all incidents are not being reported, resulting in the data perhaps not being fully representative of what is actually happening across Council services. For example, there were only 12 Violence and Aggression incidents reported for all other Council Services (apart from the Care Facility and Education) when anecdotal evidence would suggest that this is an underrepresentation. Part of the planned work of the Health and Safety Team is to finalise improvement work around incident reporting including the development of an electronic form which will be launched, supported by a communications plan to heighten awareness and ensure as far as possible that all incidents are reporting in accordance with the required procedures. This work encompasses Violence and Aggression incidents as well as other types of incident.

- 3.6 Against the particular context within which services and the health and safety team were operating during 2021, the main areas of progress on planned work in 2021 have again been balanced with responding to the work required from specific issues arising throughout the year, in particular work related to the ongoing impact of Covid 19. Nevertheless, progress has been made on the issues reported on last year, including, for example, violence and aggression, lone working, vehicle incidents, health and safety culture. Work will continue on these areas in accordance with the plans in place which will be the subject of continual review, taking account of any competing priorities and demands. In addition, work has continued in accordance with the rolling programme of fire risk assessments, audits and inspections using the agreed risk based, priority approach.
- 3.7 Main themes arising from the report are the requirement to continue to ensure a safe return to work, particularly with the return of an increasing number of staff into, mainly office environments and supporting the requirement for hybrid work to become a more permanent feature, to continuing to focus on improving the health and safety culture across the council, to continue to target support in high risk areas, involving an OD approach as appropriate, to support the work on challenging behaviour in schools and reducing the number of incidents based on human error. The increase reported in Environmental Services will be a particular focus with more detailed work with the Waste Service being required.
- 3.8 The Annual Health and Safety Report for 2021 identifies the main areas for development and planned work over the next year as continuing to audit high risk area risk assessments, providing training and guidance to managers as appropriate; to implement measures required to ensure improvements in vehicle incidents/driver behaviour supported by a revision of the Council's Safety Management System (SMS) as regards Driving Safely Policy, progressing with actions to improve the behaviour challenges in schools, develop a joint inspection programme with Trades Unions, and continue to deliver on the rolling programme of fire risk assessments. Work will also continue with the OD team to support managers in targeted areas to monitor and raise awareness amongst their teams and on the implementation of revised working arrangements to support increased numbers of staff returning to, mainly office environments, and the more permanent move to hybrid working. This will include ensuring implementation of the agreed changes to,

for example, DSE and Lone Working Policies. A high level review of SMS and identification of priorities for the revision of policies, ensuring availability of up to date resources for managers is also proposed. In addition, the profile and awareness of normal health and safety risks both within and across the council activities will continue to be maintained.

- 3.9 Finally, further measures of improvement and progress will be developed over the course of 2022 with a focus on outcome based performance measurement.

4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

This report provides information relating to Health and Safety activities within the Council to enable this learning and to ensure that the council continues to provide a safe and healthy workplace for employees to deliver services.

(b) Policy and Legal

Ensuring the health and safety of staff and service users is a statutory duty on the Council. An annual report is an effective method of recognising achievement and highlighting opportunities for further improvement.

(c) Financial implications

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. Accidents can have implications for Council resources and may result in losses that are difficult to quantify.

(d) Risk Implications

Health and safety is included within all levels of the Council's risk register.

(e) Staffing Implications

Staff time will be required to implement the actions set out in the report. This will be accommodated within existing resources by adjusting the priorities to be worked on.

(f) Property

None.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

None.

(h) Climate Change and Biodiversity Impacts

None.

(i) Consultations

CMT and the Central Health and Safety Committee have been consulted about the report at **Appendix 1**.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The 2021 annual health and safety report shows that the Council continues to provide a healthy and safe environment for its employees and service users. Given the ongoing nature of the pandemic and the various phases that the Council had to operate within, it is possible that the decrease in incidents may again be attributed to the impact of the Covid-19 restrictions, rather than an indication that the incident rate across the Council has decreased as a result of other measures, although there has been significant progress in a number of areas that may be a contributory factor. There is a need to continue to build on the work that has progressed on the main areas outlined in previous reports, through to implementation stage and focus on developing improvements identified for 2022. In particular, it is planned to focus particularly on the Council's safety culture, supporting managers and employees to take responsibility for and give priority to the health and safety of themselves and others.**

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Background Papers:

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