

**Health and Safety Policy**

**Purpose**

1. The purpose of the report is to provide the Staffing Policy Committee with an update on the review of the Corporate Health and Safety Policy and to consult with the Committee on the proposed revised policy.

**Background**

2. Wiltshire Council is a large and dynamic organisation with an ambition to be exemplar with respect to health and safety. As Wiltshire Council grows and evolves it is essential that it maintains its statutory responsibilities.
3. In accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act etc (1974), and associated regulations, the organisation is required to provide a safe working environment. This includes conducting risk assessments, implementing safety control measures and ensuring compliance with health and safety standards.
4. Failure to adequately identify, manage and control health and safety risks can potentially lead to death or serious injury, corporate as well as individual criminal & civil litigation, poor productivity, poor staff morale, high staff turnover and significant reputational damage.
5. A Corporate Health and Safety Policy is essential for the organisation to fulfil its legal obligation, protect its employees, contractors, members, school children and the public, manage crisis effectively, maintain accountability and promote a culture of safety.
6. Everyone must play a part in achieving and maintaining the highest standards of health, safety and wellbeing. Members, Leaders, Directors and managers must strive and commit to developing, educating and empowering our employees to achieve the highest possible standards of health and safety, a safe working environment and a positive safety culture. Therefore, a policy should clearly demonstrate those responsibilities and have a clear delegated accountability structure to maintain transparency.
7. Wiltshire Council approved the organisation's current Corporate Health and Safety Policy in September 2023, and this policy was due to be reviewed in September 2024.

8. As part of a wider Health and Safety Improvement Programme that is being performed, the review of the Corporate Health and Safety Policy has been identified as a priority.

### **Main considerations**

9. With a diverse range of responsibilities, the organisation is obliged to prioritise health and safety of their employees, contractors, residents and visitors.
10. The Council is responsible for delivering a wide range of services performed by employees and contractors therefore, a comprehensive health and safety policy safeguards against workplace hazards, reducing the risk of accidents and near misses and in turn, fosters a more productive workforce.
11. As the Council is also responsible for a wide range of assets and facilities, a strong policy also helps mitigate risks associated with directorate specific activities, protecting the public from potential harm and enhancing trust.
12. Transparency and accountability are paramount for organisations like Wiltshire Council therefore, having a clear delegation of roles and responsibilities and visible accountability and governance structure will demonstrate the Council's commitment to public and employee welfare, enhances its reputation and fosters confidence across the organisation.
13. The current Health and Safety Policy (appendix 1) incorporates a statement of intent, the organisational structure for health and safety and the roles and responsibilities of employees across the organisation.
14. A review has been performed and whilst the principles of the revised proposed policy are not too dissimilar, the following changes have been made –
  - Reformat of policy
  - Review of roles and responsibilities
  - Inclusion of premises related responsibilities
  - Inclusion of Governance and Accountability Structure

### Reformat of policy

15. The proposed Corporate Health and Safety Policy has been separated into three separate documents –
  - Statement of Intent (HSP001)
  - Roles and Responsibilities (HSP002)
  - Governance and Accountability Structure (HSP003)

16. The proposed Statement of Intent (appendix 2) details the organisational commitment to health and safety. It is proposed that the statement is co-signed by the Chief Executive Officer and the Leader of the Council as this will clearly demonstrate the dedication and culture with respect to health and safety across the organisation.

#### Review of roles and responsibilities

17. The proposed Roles and Responsibilities (appendix 3) are not too dissimilar to the existing section of the Corporate Policy however, an opportunity arose to remove or reduce any ambiguity with respect particular phrases that were used. The purpose of this document is to ensure that there is clear delegation of responsibility across the organisation and everyone who works towards this policy, clearly understand what their role and responsibility is with respect to health and safety.

18. The concept of a 'CLT Health and Safety Champion' has also been included and the Chief Executive Officer is appointed to demonstrate their commitment to this agenda.

#### Inclusion of premises related responsibilities

19. A Fire Safety Audit was performed in August 2024 and an action was identified whereby the Corporate Health and Safety Policy needed to be updated and it should increase the level of detail within the structure and provide more in-depth information for premises related tasks.

20. The current Policy doesn't clearly delegate premises related responsibility, or outline what that responsibility entails, so this has been incorporated to achieve a clear understanding for all within Roles and Responsibility and the Governance and Accountability structure.

#### Inclusion of Governance and Accountability structure

21. The current Corporate Policy refers to the 'organisation structure for health and safety' however, doesn't clearly detail the overarching governance.

22. As referenced above, a Health and Safety Improvement Programme has been initiated to update the management, monitoring and performance of all health and safety matters across the organisation.

23. An integral part of this programme is the development of a robust governance framework which will promote better assurance and scrutiny of performance,

activity and risks. A Strategic Health and Safety Board, Operational Health and Safety Committees and Steering Groups have all been initiated.

24. It was also identified that the original organisation structure within the Policy does not include the Council's adopted quality assurance framework, Performance and Outcome Group(s) and Board(s).
25. To ensure the policy reflects the new governance, these have been included in the newly revised Governance and Accountability Structure (appendix 4).

### **Equalities impact of the proposal**

26. It is important that the policy, and its implementation and understanding, consider all protected characteristics and reasonable adjustments required for employees.
27. A full Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) was performed and discussed at the Equality Impact Assessment panel on the 15<sup>th</sup> January 2025.
28. All comments from the panel were considered prior to formal adoption of the new policy.

### **Risk Assessment**

29. There are minimal identified risks associated with the decision to approve the revised policy.
30. With any implementation of a revised policy, there will need to be clear and robust internal communications across the organisation to ensure that all those impacted by this policy are aware of the newly adopted policy and the roles and responsibility laid out in it.
31. The Health and Safety Service will rely on leaders and managers across the Council to truly imbed this policy.
32. The Health and Safety Service can provide ongoing training and advice to services.
33. If the policy is not approved, whilst the principles of Council's current policy are still applicable, this Policy was due to be reviewed in September 2024 therefore, this will remain outstanding.
34. The lack of clear delegation (especially with respect to premises related responsibilities) could result in there being uncertainty across the organisation.

35. The Organisation Structure in the existing Policy also doesn't reflect the newly developed governance adopted by the organisation and this does not promote transparency.
36. The Council will not be adhering to the action outlined in the Fire Safety Audit performed in August 2024.

### **Recommendations**

37. It is recommended that the Staffing Policy Committee support this updated policy.

**James Barrah**  
**Director of Assets**

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### **Appendices**

1. Current Corporate Health and Safety Policy
2. Proposed Health and Safety Policy - Statement of Intent (HSP001)
3. Proposed Health and Safety Policy - Proposed Roles and Responsibilities (HSP002)
4. Proposed Health and Safety Policy - Governance and Accountability Structure (HSP003)