



## **SENIOR OFFICER AND APPOINTMENTS STAFFING SUB-COMMITTEE**

**Tuesday, 13 July, 2021**

<b>REPORT TITLE:</b>	<b>HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES</b>

### **REPORT SUMMARY**

This report seeks approval from the Sub-Committee for the Council's Health and Safety Policy Statement.

The report also provides an update on the work that is being undertaken to identify and manage risks and improve health and safety practice across the Council and the specific work undertaken in response to covid.

### **RECOMMENDATION/S**

The Senior Officer and Appointments Staffing Sub-Committee is requested to;

- a) Approve the Health and Safety Policy Statement;
- b) Note the ongoing work to identify and manage health and safety risks and improve health and safety practice across the Council.

## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1.1 The Council has a legal obligation to produce and publish a Health and Safety Policy Statement. This should be approved by this Sub-Committee. It is also an opportunity to update members on the wider work being undertaken to manage health and safety risks across the Council and increase the profile of health and safety issues with elected members.

### **2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 2.1 There were no other options considered as the Council has a legal requirement to produce a Health and Safety Policy statement.

### **3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (Section 2) requires employers of five or more people to have a written health and safety policy statement. It should be specific to their business, setting out their general policy for protecting the health and safety of their employees at work, their organisation and arrangements for putting the policy into practice.
- 3.2 The Council's Health and Safety policy statement is also relevant to Wirral schools where the Council is the employer (excluding academy schools). All organisations such as partners, contractors, voluntary, community and faith organisations who are working with the Council are expected to be aware of Wirral Council health and safety policy and any particular management arrangements that may apply to their activities.
- 3.3 The Council's Health and Safety policy statement has been reviewed and revised to ensure it is fit for purpose and relevant to the current structures and management arrangements in the organisation. The proposed policy statement is attached at Appendix A.
- 3.4 The Health and Safety policy statement comprises of 3 sections; the General Statement of Intent; Organisation Management Arrangements & Roles & Responsibilities
- 3.5 The roles and responsibilities of key officers have been updated and the policy includes details of the formal arrangements that are in place within the Council to support the management of health and safety issues.
- Health and Safety Practice and Culture**
- 3.6 The Council is a large employer and delivers a wide range of services. We have a legal responsibility to ensure we operate safe services for our workforce and public. The Council must have good systems in place to identify and manage risks and ensure that our workforce have the appropriate skills and resources to work safely. Whilst many council budgets are under pressure, we must continue to ensure that the health and safety of our staff remains paramount.

3.7 Over the past 18 months we have undertaken significant work to raise the profile of health and safety, reinforce compliance and best practice and promote a health and safety culture in the organisation. This includes:

- A new Health and Safety Board has been set up, chaired by the Chief Executive and attended by senior officers and representatives from relevant disciplines including Asset Management and Risk Management.
- The development of a Health and Safety Improvement Plan with the aim of achieving best practice across several themes; Leadership and Accountability, Policy Framework, Governance, Performance Management, Risk Management, Wellbeing, Resourcing and Learning and Development. The plan incorporates best practice from the LGA and HSE standards.
- The development of a range of performance indicators for Health and Safety to provide greater oversight and assurance.
- A new system which is in final stages of development for completion of risk registers to identify risks, improve oversight and track actions required to mitigate.
- A revised Health and Safety Training strategy for generic and specialist role-based training across the organisation.
- Raising the profile of health and safety through regular items on the agenda at Senior Leadership Team, Corporate Management Team and Departmental Management Teams and in organisational communications. We also held a dedicated session at our Leadership Conference.

### **Managing Workforce Health and Safety issues arising from Covid 19**

3.8 As the Committee are aware, covid-19 has presented major challenges to health, safety and wellbeing of our workforce.

3.9 From the outset of the pandemic the Health and Safety Team, Public Health, HR/OD, Assets and Communications Teams have worked together to develop guidance mandatory requirements for staff to work safely and to ensure that buildings and workplaces that have remained open or re-opened are covid safe. This has been communicated regularly. This is an ongoing process.

3.10 All services have been required to produce health and safety risk assessments setting out how they will seek to manage the risks arising from covid, identifying PPE required for staff and any physical adaptations to buildings that were required. There has been a requirement to review and update risk assessments in line with evolving government and public health advice. This has been co-ordinated via a Strategic re-mobilisation group with services, activities and buildings that had closed only given approval to re-open once the group was satisfied all risks had been assessed and had plans to address them.

3.11 An individual risk assessment was developed for staff who were classed as clinically extremely vulnerable in line with government advice. Again, this has been reviewed

and re-issued through different stages of the pandemic, taking into account government and public health advice.

- 3.12 All staff working in Council buildings are required to complete a mandatory Keeping Safe at Work e-learning module prior to return.
- 3.13 Approximately 1,900 of the Council's workforce have been working at home since March 2020. Our duty of care and health and safety obligations as an employer includes homeworkers. We have invested in IT kit and furniture and rolled this out to ensure staff can work at home safely. Staff are required to complete an online Working at Home Safely e-learning module and home risk assessment.
- 3.14 Council Officers meet Trade Union H&S representatives regularly to discuss health and safety issues and seek to address any concerns and issues.
- 3.15 It is acknowledged that the Council's management of health and safety issues and risks should have a greater profile with elected members and therefore it proposed to provide regular reports in relation to performance, assurance and work being undertaken to the appropriate committee.

#### **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no new financial implications arising from this report. The Council's revenue budget makes appropriate provision for professional advice and guidance to be provided from the Council's Health and Safety Team and for relevant training to be provided.

#### **5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 As identified within the body of this report there is a statutory requirement under section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work, Etc Act 1974 for the Council to have in place a general policy with respect to the health and safety at work of its employees and the organisation and arrangements for carrying out that policy. The Act requires a written statement of policy and for that statement to be kept under review and updated where necessary. This policy, and any revision of it, must be brought to the attention of all employees.

#### **6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS**

- 6.1 The approval of the health and safety policy does not introduce any new resource implications. It strengthens the Council's approach to the management and strategic leadership for health and safety.

#### **7.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 7.1 The Health and Safety General Policy Statement sets out the Authority's commitment to compliance with its duties and achieving high levels of health and safety. It is itself reinforced by a broad range of supporting policies and guidance to ensure processes are in place for the Council to adequately identify and manage work place risks.

- 7.2 A failure to make necessary changes to the policy and approve them would lead to the Council being in breach of its Section 2 duty and at risk of prosecution, and without an adequate overriding policy the underpinning arrangements may not be effective.

## **8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 The draft policy has been shared with Unions via the joint Trade Union and Management Health and Safety Committee and once approved, all managers will be made aware of the new policy via managers brief with a link to the Council intranet. The General Statement of Intent will be displayed in all Council premises.

## **9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 There are no equality implications arising from the report.

## **10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 The content and recommendations contained within this report are expected to have no impact on emissions of greenhouse gases or environmental implications.

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## **APPENDICES**

Appendix A                                   Health and Safety Policy Statement

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

[Prepare a health and safety policy - HSE](#)  
[Health and safety at work: criminal and civil law - HSE](#)  
[Health and safety in local government \(hse.gov.uk\)](http://hse.gov.uk)

## **SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>