

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

**EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM'S
REPORT TO**

Audit & Standards Committee
26 July 2021

Report Title: Health and Safety Annual Report 2020-21

Submitted by: Executive Director – Operational Services

Portfolios: Finance, Town Centres and Growth

Ward(s) affected: All

Purpose of the Report

To inform Members of issues and trends regarding health and safety matters at the council.

Recommendation

That

1. The report be noted.
2. That the necessity for a six month health and safety report is removed and solely the annual report continues.

Reasons

1. To update and inform members of any recent issues and trends in relation to the management of health and safety at the council.
2. To reduce officer time involved in collating the six month report in order to provide additional resources towards proactive health and safety measures.

1. **Background**

- 1.1 Attached as an Appendix is the health and safety report submitted to the council. It covers the period 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021.

2. **Issues**

- 2.1 COVID-19 has required a shift in many areas of service delivery. Associated with that has been work around the risk assessments and return to work assessments to ensure legal compliance across the council.
- 2.2 Extensive work around the preparation for the Elections held in May also involved many departments. All sites were inspected prior to opening to ensure COVID compliance was sufficient and this monitoring continues regularly.
- 2.3 Work has continued on policies and guidance. The Employee Handbook, COVID addendum and Workplace Policy on Smoking were approved at Corporate Health and

Safety Committee and the Employee Protection Policy also followed after consultation with a working group. Lone worker device provision is under contract review and conflict management training was undertaken by Environmental Health as a trial. Online lone worker training is in the process of being implemented.

- 2.3 First aid provision was reviewed and staff received training in a COVID secure manner in November / December 2020. Defibrillator units were maintained as necessary.
- 2.4 Fire evacuation procedures were reviewed in light of reduced occupancy level due to COVID and fire drills were subsequently undertaken to identify any remedial measures required.
- 2.5 Accident statistics are contained within the report, the notable change is a reduction in overall accidents / near misses however it should be noted that this is likely due to reduced service provision and staff working from home wherever possible. RIDDOR reported accidents remained stable indicating most serious accidents occur in the services which have continued throughout the various lockdowns.
- 2.6 All committees continued to meet, albeit in a COVID secure manner using 'Zoom or Teams' or socially distanced rooms where necessary.
- 2.7 Castle House works have included the introduction of a trial blind to reduce glare which was successful and will be extended as necessary. Extensive works on the ventilation and heating system have been undertaken which, have to date, helped to rectify the conditions felt in some zones. Facilities and Staffordshire County Council are working together to source and install an efficient emergency alert system, with the evacuation procedure to follow.

3. **Proposal**

- 3.1 That the report be noted
- 3.2 That the necessity for a six month health and safety report is removed and solely the annual report continues.

4. **Reasons for Proposed Solution**

- 4.1 Regular updates in relation to health and safety service delivery, information and trends ensures effective review of service delivery.
- 4.2 To improve efficiency which will be replaced with providing additional resources towards proactive health and safety measures. This option remains compliant with good health and safety practice.

5. **Options Considered**

- 5.1 Not applicable

6. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

- 6.1 The council is required to comply with all relevant Health and Safety legislation.

6.2 Failure in ensuring suitable and sufficient arrangements for health and safety may lead to investigation and/or enforcement action by the Health and Safety Executive as the enforcing authority for the council's activities.

7. **Equality Impact Assessment**

7.1 The health and safety policy and procedures apply equally to all employees. Training is available to all employees as required.

8. **Financial and Resource Implications**

8.1 The majority of health and safety service delivery is carried out in-house from existing resources, this also includes training courses. On occasions, external providers are required to conduct specialist training courses i.e. first Aid. The cost of this is met from within the existing Corporate Training budget.

8.2 Good health and safety management also ensures that insurance claims can be effectively managed.

9. **Major Risks**

9.1 Failure to adopt best practice health and safety standards could result in wastage of council resources and the provision of an inefficient service.

10. **UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)**

10.1 No sustainability or climate change implications identified

11. **Key Decision Information**

11.1 This is not a key decision.

12. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

12.1 Annual and 6 month reports are currently presented to Audit & Standards committee each year, the recommendation as above is to reduce this to an annual report.

13. **List of Appendices**

13.1 Appendix 1 – Annual Health and Safety Report 2020-21

14. **Background Papers**

14.1 None