

Health and Safety Policy

GENERAL STATEMENT OF INTENT

1. It is the policy of the South Oxfordshire District Council and Vale of White Horse District Council (the councils) to comply with the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work (etc.) Act 1974 and such other health and safety legislation that may from time to time be introduced and be relevant.
2. The councils recognise that high standards of health, safety and welfare are integral to efficient management objectives and contribute to their overall operational success. The councils are committed to maintaining and developing high standards of health and safety for our employees and others who may be affected by our activities, including councillors, volunteers, contractors and members of the public.
3. For such standards to be achieved, adequate financial and physical resources shall, so far as is reasonably practicable, be made available to ensure continuing development of the competence of employees and the provision of any necessary expert advice.
4. Health and safety is a management responsibility of equal importance to other objectives, thus the chief executive and all managers shall continuously progress health and safety performance by establishing and maintaining control, communicating the necessary information, and encouraging co-operation between individuals and groups, to ensure that a positive health and safety culture is promoted.
5. Equally, it is recognised that all employees have a duty of care to themselves and others to avoid hazards, prevent accidents and co-operate with the councils by complying with all instructions and recommendations on health and safety.
6. So far as is reasonably practicable, the councils will provide adequate control of the health and safety risks arising from its work activities by ensuring that:
 - safe and healthy work methods and conditions are provided and adopted
 - safe plant and equipment is provided and maintained
 - substances are safely handled and used
 - statutory requirements are complied with and accepted as the minimum standards in all work areas and activities
 - employees are consulted on matters affecting their health and safety
 - employees are actively encouraged to participate in health and safety arrangements and submit ideas and suggestions for improving standards
 - employees are made aware of potential hazards and the precautions to be adopted, by providing information, instruction, training, supervision and appropriate safety equipment

- other people, including councillors, the public, contractors, and volunteers that may be affected by our activities are informed of any risks and the action that has been taken to reduce them
 - accidents and cases of work-related ill health are prevented as far as possible
 - steps are taken to identify the immediate and underlying causes of work related injuries and implement any preventative action necessary.
7. This policy will be reviewed at least every three years or when procedural, legislative or best practice changes occur to ensure it remains effective, and any necessary amendments communicated to all employees.
8. Employees who wilfully disregard the councils' health and safety policies and procedures may be subject to the councils' performance and disciplinary procedures, which may include summary dismissal.



Mark Stone
Chief Executive
September 2017

ORGANISATION – ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Councillors

9. Councillors are not responsible for managing health and safety services on a day-to-day basis, but must understand the strategic way in which they can affect health and safety management in the councils. Councillors will have both individual and collective governance responsibilities.
10. In particular the councils' cabinets will ensure that:
 - the chief executive has in place an effective health and safety policy, including making provision within available resources, to ensure the successful implementation of this policy
 - their decision making systems allow for health and safety implications to be given appropriate and proper consideration and are in line with the councils' policies and procedures
 - a senior councillor is nominated as the lead councillor for health and safety for each authority and sit as a member on the health and safety review board
 - the lead councilor will receive copies of the health and safety annual report, minutes of the councils' health and safety review board, details of major incidents or accidents and where necessary ensure that any recommendations made have been acted upon.

Chief Executive

11. Overall responsibility for effective health and safety management in the councils lies with the chief executive, who will chair health and safety review board meetings and ensure that:
 - an up to date statement of the councils' policy for health and safety is prepared and brought to the attention of all employees and councillors
 - an effective management system is in place to implement the health and safety policy, by which risks will be assessed, priorities decided and objectives set for eliminating hazards and reducing risks
 - the risk register is regularly reviewed
 - agreed programmes of investment in health and safety risk control measures are properly accounted for in the councils' corporate plans
 - annually, corporate health and safety objectives are agreed by the health and safety review board (HSRB), with key measures and success criteria established to monitor performance, and that heads of service are held accountable for ensuring these are met by their respective services
 - heads of service and councillors commit to the health and safety management system and actively foster health and safety awareness
 - health and safety responsibilities of heads of service are clearly understood
 - councillors understand and receive adequate information, instruction and training to enable them to discharge their responsibilities under the health and safety policy

- arrangements are put in place to measure, monitor and review health and safety performance.

Head of Corporate Services

13. To support the chief executive, the head of corporate services is nominated as the manager responsible for overseeing the health and safety management system. In practical terms, this means that they will:
- develop health and safety objectives for approval, key measures and associated success criteria to monitor performance
 - consult with the chief executive as part of the annual budget setting process, to ensure adequate resources and facilities are made available to achieve agreed objectives
 - provide regular health and safety updates to the operational management group (OMG), including actions which OMG members need to put in place
 - attend or send a representative to the health and safety review board
 - ensure that there is an effective system for consultation and communicating health and safety information throughout the organisation
 - advise the chief executive, the other heads of service and Unison of all serious adverse incidents and unacceptable risks
 - review and present an annual health and safety report to the chief executive, the other heads of service and Unison, that details incident trends, levels of performance and matters of concern, plus an action plan containing objectives and prioritised risk reduction programmes
 - ensure the development of a health and safety advisory service, which facilitates compliance with health and safety legislation by promoting safety risk management through senior management and service teams. In practical terms, this will involve:
 - co-ordinating and monitoring the effectiveness of safety arrangements within the councils
 - ensuring that arrangements exist for the development and review of appropriate policies, procedures and guidance on health, safety and welfare issues.

Heads of Service

14. Heads of service are responsible for implementing this policy within their service teams by operating a safety culture and ensuring adequate communication, training and the assessment and monitoring of risks. In particular, they will ensure that:
- employees at all levels within their service are held accountable through the performance review process for their health and safety performance
 - health and safety responsibilities of employees and portfolio holders are clearly understood
 - they take an active part in discussions of health and safety issues at operational management group (OMG) meetings and implement any corrective actions

- their service management team takes full account of health, safety and welfare considerations when planning, developing or introducing new working methods, systems, equipment or premises
- risk assessments are undertaken in their service areas, actions prioritised, control measures introduced and continually monitored and reviewed to ensure that these measures are effective. Outstanding risks are put on the operational risk register
- risk assessments of work activities take into consideration all those who may be affected (including employees, councillors, volunteers, contractors and the public), and that they are informed of any risks they may be exposed to and the action taken to reduce or eliminate them
- risk assessments are reviewed at least once every three years or when a change of circumstances dictates
- operational risk registers are reviewed at least annually
- copies of risk assessments are sent to the health and safety adviser for review and retention
- all employees and portfolio holders working within their service receive adequate information, instruction, training and supervision and are competent to carry out their work safely and discharge their responsibilities under the health and safety policy
- due regard to health and safety considerations, including arrangements for monitoring performance, is given in any specification, tender or contract, prepared, let or managed by their service
- that there is an effective system for consultation and communicating health and safety information throughout the service (that includes employees, portfolio holders, councillors, volunteers, contractors and the public as appropriate)
- managers within their service co-operate with Unison representatives in carrying out their functions
- all incidents, hazards and near misses, whether injury is sustained or not, are reported and investigated in accordance with the councils' procedures. Any action to prevent recurrence must be implemented as soon as is reasonably practicable
- arrangements are put in place to measure, monitor and review health and safety performance.

All Managers and Team Leaders

15. Managers and team leaders are responsible for implementing this policy by operating a safety culture and ensuring adequate communication, training and the assessment and monitoring of risks. In particular, managers and supervisors will ensure that:

- they assist senior management in developing health and safety objectives, key measures and success criteria to monitor performance, and advising them of all serious adverse incidents and unacceptable risks
- they familiarise themselves with the requirements of health and safety legislation governing the work activities for which they have a supervisory responsibility
- employees at all levels within their service are held accountable through the performance review process for their health and safety performance

- health and safety responsibilities of employees are clearly understood
- risk assessments of work activities are undertaken in accordance with councils procedures. Risks identified are prioritised and action plans developed to eliminate or minimise exposure
- risk assessments of work activities take into consideration all those who may be affected (including employees, councillors, volunteers, contractors and the public), and that they are informed of any risks they may be exposed to and the action taken to reduce or eliminate them
- people that actually carry out the work activity are involved to ensure that control measures introduced are effective. These measures must be continually monitored and reviewed to ensure that they remain effective
- where risks cannot be eliminated, written safe systems of work are developed and employees are made aware of them through training and supervision. A risk register is maintained to record assessment outcomes
- all incidents, hazards and near misses, whether injury is sustained or not, are reported and investigated in accordance with councils procedures. Any action to prevent recurrence must be implemented as soon as is reasonably practicable
- where relevant, competent contractors are used and their work is, as far as reasonably practicable, monitored to ensure compliance with the method statement and/or contract, to ensure that the work is carried out safely and that the quality of work/service is satisfactory
- to ensure DSE assessments for employees are undertaken and any actions arising are implemented
- all machinery and equipment is maintained in an efficient state, in efficient working order and in good repair and that, where applicable safety devices are fitted and maintained, safety rules observed and where appropriate personal protective clothing (PPE) and protective equipment is provided
- arrangements are made for all portable electrical appliances used by their section, (both on and off site) to be inspected and tested at appropriate intervals
- the need for personal protective equipment (PPE) and clothing for persons working under their supervision is assessed. Where it is provided, it must be suitable, correctly used, stored, maintained and replaced as required
- ensure that there is an effective system for consultation and communicating health and safety information throughout their teams
- they co-operate with any Unison representative carrying out their functions
- the council's health and safety policy, as well as any procedures, codes of practice, etc. are communicated to their employees and that these are followed where applicable
- employees are competent and have suitable and sufficient supervision, instruction, information and training to undertake their work safely. Induction and refresher training on health and safety issues is provided to all employees, covering policies/procedures, safe systems of work and safe operation of equipment

- regular audits and inspections are undertaken to ensure that procedures/safe systems of work are being followed and that any shortcomings are identified and dealt with. Maintain written records of all audits/inspections and actions for improvement.

Health and Safety Adviser

16. The health and safety adviser will be responsible for providing health and safety advice to all levels of management and employees.

17. The health and safety adviser will support the head of HR, IT and technical services in carrying out their responsibilities under the health and safety policy.

18. The health and safety adviser will be responsible for:

- the development of a suitable health and safety training programme based on the outcome of training needs analysis, in consultation with the 5 councils HR manager
- the development of compliance testing on a regular basis to ensure that the councils are achieving compliance with legislative requirements and the implementation of agreed programmes
- monitoring and evaluating safety data, providing reports that identify incident trends, levels of performance, matters of concern requiring attention and, where appropriate the setting of targets for use as performance indicators
- reporting notifiable incidents to the Health and Safety Executive, and acting as the councils' liaison officer when dealing with external statutory bodies
- the provision of reports to Unison, advising on the implications of new legislation, incident trends, areas of concern and overall levels of performance
- the development of appropriate policies and procedures that will provide the councils with necessary guidance for achieving compliance with legislative requirements and the provision of a safe, secure and healthy environment. This will include the review of policies, etc. and revisions to take account of changes in legislation, standards and working practices
- developing, implementing and monitoring a system to ensure that managers investigate all incidents, near misses and hazards and that appropriate action follows
- assist the head of HR, IT and technical services in the preparation of corporate health and safety reports for the chief executive, health and safety review board and heads of service that details incident trends, levels of performance and matters of concern, plus an action plan containing objectives and prioritised risk reduction programmes.

All Employees

19. All employees have a duty to themselves, colleagues, and any person who might be affected by their actions, to work in a safe manner. In particular, this will include:

- taking reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and any other person who may be affected by their acts or omissions

- co-operating with managers and supervisors to ensure that all relevant statutory regulations, policies and procedures are followed
- attending as required, health and safety training sessions designed to further the cause of health and safety, and increase individual awareness
- ensuring that where required, safety equipment/devices are used as directed and appropriate protective clothing worn
- reporting to their manager/supervisor all faults, hazards, unsafe practices, accidents, adverse incidents, dangerous occurrences and near misses whether injury is sustained or not (the councils have a joint whistleblowing policy in place)
- ensuring that any ill health or medical condition, which may affect their ability to work safely, is reported immediately to their manager.

(NB: Intentionally interfering with, or misusing any equipment or materials provided to ensure a healthy and safe environment, is a disciplinary matter. In some circumstances, it could lead to prosecution by the Health and Safety Executive.)

Agency Workers

20. Any manager using agency workers must ensure that:

- before any agency worker starts work they must be given basic induction training appropriate to the service
- before any agency worker uses equipment they are shown the correct operation
- minimum health and safety competency requirements shall be identified in all contractual agreements between the councils and agency providers, to ensure safe working practices for all employees and workers.

Health and Safety Organisation Structure

21. Attached at Appendix A is a flowchart describing the arrangements for team debate, consideration and action planning in relation to health and safety risks identified within the councils'.

ARRANGEMENTS

Resources for Health and Safety

22. Not all working environments within the premises managed by the councils are ideal. The councils are faced with substantial demands on capital and maintenance programmes to effect improvement to meet current political and legal requirements. The councils anticipate that where additional funds cannot be found for capital replacement or maintenance works, a written safe system of work will be developed by managers, with involvement from employees, which minimise risks to those concerned.

23. The councils remain committed to improving the working environment and have therefore given priority to programmes of work necessary to effect improvements in health and safety and to minimise risk. In addition, the councils will provide adequate resources in the form of senior management level support to ensure the promotion and maintenance of the appropriate level of safety performance.

Health and Safety Review board

24. The health and safety review board (HSRB) is responsible for ensuring the proactive, progressive and continuous improvement in the councils approach to health and safety is achieved. This includes reviewing the health and safety management system, and approving and monitoring the safety action plan. The terms of reference and membership for the HRSB are available on the councils' intranet.

Occupational Health Service and General Practice

25. An occupational health referral service is available for managers to utilise; referral is via human resources.

26. A local general practice is used to ensure that employees are physically and mentally suited for the job they are undertaking through pre-employment screening.

Consultation

27. The councils see communication between employees at all levels as an essential part of effective health and safety management. Consultation will be facilitated by means of Unison and direct consultation with employees.

28. One of the purposes of Unison and direct consultation with employees is to provide a platform for promoting health and safety, information exchange and assessing the effectiveness of the health and safety management system within the councils.

Contractors

29. All contractors engaged by the councils have a responsibility, as specified in all contract documents, to carry out their work in a safe manner in respect of their own employees, subcontractors, council's employees and premises, and members of the public.

30. The councils will ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the employment of competent contractors who are able to demonstrate that they have in place management systems for safely undertaking work for which they have been employed.

31. The work of contractors used by the councils will, as far as reasonably practicable, be monitored to ensure compliance with the method statement and/or contract, to ensure that the work is carried out safely and that the quality of work/service is satisfactory.

32. Contractors will be advised of any required standards, codes of practice, procedures, rules or other guidance applicable to the work to be undertaken. Special care is required to ensure that these matters are covered, although nothing in contract documents can free those engaging contractors, the contractors or council employees from their own liability under health and safety legislation.

Risk Assessment

33. In accordance with the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, managers will identify hazards and undertake assessments of the associated risks for all work activities (whether regular or occasional) using the council's risk assessment process. In assessing these risks, account will be taken of the effectiveness of existing control measures. The assessments will include the hazards and risks arising out of tasks/activities undertaken and assess their potential to, for example:

- cause injury or ill health to people

- result in claims or litigation
- result in enforcement action, e.g. from the Health and Safety Executive
- cause damage to the environment
- cause property loss or damage
- result in operational delays (impact on day to day activities)
- result in loss of reputation.

34. When completing the assessment, managers will rank the risks in accordance with the councils' risk assessment process, and formulate action plans that identify the necessary actions to either eliminate or control exposure to the risks. Copies of risk assessments must be sent to the health and safety adviser.

35. The outcomes of risk assessments and action plans will be made known to employees or anyone else that may be affected and discussed with them, to ensure actions are being taken. Managers will regularly monitor and review the risk assessments to ensure proactive action is being taken. Any significant health and safety risks will be recorded in the operational risk register which is reviewed by the relevant head of service and where necessary escalated to the chief executive.

Incident Reporting

36. Incident and hazard records are crucial to the effective monitoring of health and safety performance and revision of policy and must therefore be accurate and comprehensive. All incidents causing injury and property damage and hazards must be reported promptly on the appropriate form and submitted through the correct channels as laid down in the council's procedures on incident and hazard reporting. It is also important to report all adverse incidents and near misses, as they may be indicators of potential more serious incidents.

37. It is a line manager's responsibility to ensure that all incidents and hazards are properly investigated. The immediate and underlying causes must be identified and recorded, and appropriate remedial action and lessons learnt, and longer-term objectives relating to health and safety are introduced.

38. If incidents/hazards reported or trends identified, the line manager must review risk assessments and written safe systems of work, and develop action plans addressing any concerns.

39. Incident statistics and trend analysis reports will be produced for the chief executive, heads of service, Unison and health and safety review board on an annual basis (or on request) with recommendations on the appropriate actions to be taken for matters of concern.

40. The councils adopt a "fair and just" approach in relation to incident reporting. Involvement in an incident will not lead to disciplinary action except where acts or omissions are malicious, criminal, fraudulent or constitute gross professional misconduct.

41. There is a legal duty that all occurrences covered by the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) 2013 are directly reported to the Health and Safety Executive. Fatal, major injury accidents, over seven day injuries, diseases and dangerous occurrences fall into this category. It is the responsibility of the council's health and safety adviser (or in their absence the policy, partnership and engagement manager, or head of HR, IT and technical services) to ensure that reports are submitted.

Training and Information

42. Training is a key element of an effective health and safety system. It is essential that all employees are trained to perform their job effectively and safely. It is the view of the councils that if an activity is not undertaken safely, then it is not being done effectively.
43. The 5 councils HR manager will ensure that general aspects of health and safety are incorporated into the councils' training and development policy and relevant training programmes. It is the responsibility of all managers to identify the health and safety training needs of their employees as part of the performance review process and individual development planning.
44. General health and safety awareness is included in the corporate induction programme, reinforced with more specific training as part of service team induction. Additional training will be provided when employees are exposed to new or increased risks because of a change in responsibilities or place of work. Refresher training will be provided as appropriate.
45. The 5 councils HR manager will ensure the maintenance of training attendance records, and that inadequate attendances are notified to the relevant head of service.
46. Councillors will be offered adequate training to allow them to understand their health and safety role and enable them to carry out their duties under the health and safety policy.

Policies, Procedures and Guidance

47. In addition to this policy, the councils will produce other policies, procedures and guidance to cover all significant health and safety risks. The health and safety adviser will identify and arrange for such documents to be drafted, consulted upon and presented to the chief executive, heads of service, Unison and all employees.
48. Managers must ensure that each employee is made aware of and understands those documents that apply to them.

Emergency Procedures

49. The chief executive must ensure that arrangements are in place for the development of robust plans to deal with all situations, which may present serious and imminent danger to the health and safety of people. These include for example:

- emergency plan
- fire emergency plan
- business continuity plan.

Records

50. All heads of service must ensure that records are maintained, which are available for inspection by employees, safety representatives and auditors, of the following:

- service team risk assessments and written safe systems of work
- personal protective equipment issued.

51. The 5 councils HR manager will ensure that records are kept centrally of the following:

- display screen equipment assessments
- training undertaken.

Health and Safety Representatives

52. The principal responsibility for health and safety lies with managers. Therefore, managers have the duty to make decisions on all matters affecting health and safety. However, the councils believe that safe working is best brought about by the participation of all employees.

53. The councils therefore, support the appointment of Trade Union/Professional Organisation nominated health and safety representatives as in accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and Safety Representatives and Safety Committee Regulations 1977. Unison as a trade union recognised by the councils has appointed safety representatives, who will represent the branch and any Unison member employed directly by the councils (or a Unison branch member in an outside “satellite” organisation) on health and safety matters. It also recognises that these representatives have certain legal rights, with regard to time off and facilities for trade union activities.

54. Employees not represented by Unison will be consulted through the councils’ normal staff consultation channels.

Information and Communications

55. The councils will ensure that managers disseminate suitable and relevant information relating to health, safety and welfare at the workplace to employees, councillors, volunteers, contractors and other users of the councils’ premises. This will include information on the hazards and risks associated with their work, and the systems in place to minimise exposure to these risks. Health and safety should be an agenda item on all regular service team meetings.

56. The statutory notice – Health and Safety Law (what you should know) will be prominently displayed at all building entrances and other identified locations within councils premises. All other statutory notices will be displayed as appropriate.

57. Each floor has a health and safety notice board containing information, such as the list of current first aiders, fire emergency plan, up to date health and safety policy, etc.

58. The health and safety policy, subsequent policies and procedures and generic risk assessments and procedures are posted on the councils’ intranet.

Shared Premises

59. It will be the responsibility of the 5 councils property manager to ensure that effective arrangements exist for the co-operation and co-ordination of health and safety measures with other employers sharing the council's facilities. Such measures include:
- exchange of information on risks within the working environment and safe systems of work
 - co-operating on matters such as implementing evacuation procedures, first aid, and waste disposal
 - safety monitoring procedures, including routine inspections of common parts of the facility.

Distribution of the Policy

60. The general statement of intent (see above) will be included in the councils guide for new employees. The health and safety policy will be issued to all employees on commencing work with the councils and be posted on the councils' intranet/health and safety notice boards.

Evaluation and Monitoring

61. Implementation of policies and a health and safety management system can only be effective with adequate monitoring and evaluation to check the system and ensure any shortcomings are identified and dealt with. Managers are responsible for initiating an on-going monitoring process within their areas of responsibility.
62. As part of the audit processes, it is the responsibility of the health and safety adviser to identify and report areas of non-compliance with this policy and deficiencies in the health and safety management system. This will include regular audits of health and safety related policies and procedures to establish compliance.
63. The policy and partnerships manager and health and safety adviser will prepare an annual corporate health and safety report detailing incident trends, overall levels of performance and matters of concern, plus an action plan containing objectives and targeted reductions. The head of HR, IT and technical services or his representative will be responsible for presenting this report to the corporate management team and Unison.

Review

64. The health and safety adviser will continually monitor and update this policy as necessary, to reflect substantial changes affecting the nature of operations or in best practice and changes in legislation.
65. Formally, the chief executive and Unison will assess and approve this policy at least every three years, to determine its effectiveness and appropriateness. All employees will also be given an opportunity to comment on the policy at least every three years. Councillors will be advised of any changes resulting from this via the 'In Focus' councilor newsletter.
66. This document replaces the councils' health and safety policy, September 2016.

Date approved: September 2017
Review Date: September 2020
Author: Health and Safety Adviser
Further Guidance: Health and Safety Adviser

References

- The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Safety Representatives and Safety Committee Regulations 1977
- The Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations 1996
- Successful Health and Safety Management (HSG 65) – Health and Safety Executive 2013
- Leading Health and Safety at Work (INDG 417) – Health and Safety Commission and Institute of Directors 2007

Appendix A: Health and Safety Organisation Structure

The flowchart below describes the arrangements for team debate, consideration and action planning in relation to health and safety risks identified within the councils. At all stages of the process, documented evidence needs to be maintained and outcomes recorded.

Health and Safety Organisation/Communication System

