

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 3 JULY 2019

REPORT BY THE HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES AND
ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

HEALTH AND SAFETY (H&S) AUDIT

WARD(S) AFFECTED: NONE

Purpose/Summary of Report

- Members are invited to note the Health and Safety audit report and associated action plan

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE:

That:

(A)	the health and safety audit report and associated action plan be noted; and
(B)	from the October HRC meeting a separate quarterly safety report be provided on health and safety with a more in depth annual report being provided to January 2020 meeting

1.0 Background

1.1 In May 2019 the Shared Internal Audit Service (SIAS) completed an audit of Health and Safety at the council. The findings were presented in a final report issued to HR in June 2019. The report contained four main action points for Leadership Team (LT) and Health & Safety (H&S) / Human Resources (HR).

1.2 The full and final audit report and agreed action plan can be found at **Essential Reference Paper 'B'**.

2.0 Report

- 2.1 SIAS undertook an internal audit in May of EHC's Health and Safety in line with the Council's approved 2019/20 Audit Plan. The overall assurance level suggested is Satisfactory (the highest assurance is one more up in terms of 'Good') meaning that there are effective controls in operation for those elements of the risk management processes covered by this review.
- 2.2 Four recommendations have been made to further strengthen the control environment which HR/H&S and LT have considered. One is classified as low priority and three are classified as medium priority. The low recommendation was in relation to safety committee structure (officer level) and the three medium recommendations relate to reviewing risk assessments, ensuring lone working risk assessments are understood by staff and auditing the health and safety aspects of contracts.
- 2.3 Actions undertaken to meet the recommendations should improve the assurance to 'Good' providing other standards are maintained and greater awareness and ownership is shared across East Herts Council.
- 2.4 In addition to four recommendations a further four advisory actions have also been made which have again been considered by HR/H&S, LT and at the safety committee. These were not made as recommendations on the management action plan as they were already being worked towards:
- Annual Health and Safety Training for Members: Members were given a basic overview of Health and Safety as part of the member induction on Super Saturday and this will be further strengthened by the

Executive receiving a Health and Safety briefing which has been re-scheduled for September 2019. The e-learning modules that are completed annually by staff on health and safety will also be delivered to members going forward. Member training is coordinated by Democratic Services who are aware of the annual requirement.

- Health and Safety Officer (H&SO) signing and dating checks: The checks are taking place but had not been signed in a few examples, this was an oversight as normally such checks are signed and dated, therefore H&SO will ensure this is evidenced going forward and this will be monitored by the HR Officer who manages the H&SO.
- E-learning module on lone working: This was already in development by H&S/HR but will support the 2nd recommendation made and will be rolled out in 19/20.
- Incident and Near Miss reporting through MyView: MyView is the self-serve intranet tool that links to the core HR system i.e. to request annual leave, it is already used to report accidents, again the H&SO shared that developments were underway to expand this to include reporting incidents and near misses (again this will be implemented in 2019/20) and auditors have recognised that this is an additional control under development which will be beneficial.

2.5 The four recommendations have been accepted and a management response (action plan) has been agreed as set in **Essential Reference Paper B**, in summary the following has been agreed:

1. Risk Assessments

A timetable for risk assessment review was already in place but this has not been consistently followed across services, and will therefore be monitored more closely by the Leadership Team. Annual reviews are expected to take place in September each year and are supported by the H&SO. It is proposed (see recommendation B at the beginning of the report) that as well as compliance being reported to LT it will also be reported through an annual safety report to the HR Committee, the increased reporting and monitoring should increase compliance. The annual safety report will be reported to LT and then to the January 2020 HR Committee going forward if the committee accept the recommendation.

2. Lone Working Risk Assessments

The lone working risk assessment has been established but this not currently signed off by staff who lone work and practice could be more consistent. Therefore the H&SO will attend team meetings with relevant staff groups to discuss the risk assessment and then collate a sign off which will be repeated annually. This will further be supported by the new lone working e-learning module which is being implemented in due course.

3. Health and Safety Oversight of Contracts

Currently contract managers manage the health and safety aspect of contracts locally; this will be further supported by the H&SO providing advice during the tendering stage and then receiving regular reports on compliance and supporting auditing the Health and safety aspects of these contracts with support from contract managers. A review of the contract register is already

underway by the H&SO to ensure each contract which requires H&S oversight is actioned appropriately.

4. Safety Committee Chair (low recommendation)

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development will continue to chair the meeting to ensure continuity. LT will however now receive the minutes of the Safety Committee to ensure greater join up, the minutes will be reviewed by LT to consider representation and LT participation as appropriate. The Committee is also reviewing the terms of reference and actual attendance.

3.0 Implications/Consultations

3.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.

Background Papers

None

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