

TITLE OF REPORT: Corporate Health and Safety Policy

REPORT OF: Mike Barker, Strategic Director, Corporate Services & Governance

Purpose of the Report

1. To request that Cabinet recommends to Council approval of the revised Corporate Health and Safety Policy covering all Council employees and others affected by the Council's work activities.

Background

2. It is a legal requirement to have a health and safety policy and it is recognised as good practice to review and revise the policy from time to time to keep it up to date with the Council's overall aims and objectives and to ensure it follows the principles of current and good practice.
3. The delivery of public services will always involve a degree of potential risk. It is important, however, that the Council, wherever possible, eliminates such risks, or minimises them by being proactive in the management of risk. An effective health and safety management system is a method by which issues can be placed in an agreed framework to identify, analyse, control and monitor risks.
4. Having a policy that sets a clear direction for the organisation to follow is one of the key elements of health and safety management.
5. An effective health and safety management system will contribute towards:
 - Providing a high quality service
 - Achievement of the Council's strategic and operational objectives
 - Providing a safe and healthy working environment
 - Protection of the Council's assets
 - Ensuring compliance with statutory requirements
 - Minimising financial losses which arise from unplanned events
 - Ensuring a systematic approach to the identification of risks and the allocation of resources to control them
 - Supporting quality initiatives aimed at continuous improvement.
6. The Cabinet must ensure that the Chief Executive has in place an effective health and safety management system and that decision making systems allow for health and safety implications to be given appropriate and proper consideration.
7. The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for health and safety and must have an effective management structure and arrangements in place to deliver the policy.

8. Strategic and Service Directors will be responsible for providing leadership and implementing the policy within their portfolio responsibilities.
9. Once the policy has been implemented, it will be important to measure, audit and review performance.

Proposal

10. The Corporate Health and Safety Policy as proposed in Appendix 2 has been updated in content to cover health and safety legislation in a precise format. It is proposed that the Council adopts the revised policy.

Recommendation

11. It is recommended that the attached draft policy is agreed by Cabinet and referred to Council for approval at its meeting on 21 April 2016.

For the following reason:

To comply with the legal requirement to have and keep updated a health and safety policy.

CONTACT: Mike Barker ext: 2100

Policy Context

1. The adoption of the policy will directly contribute to the Corporate Risk Management Strategy and the Occupational Health and Safety Strategy. It will also allow the Council to support objectives within Vision 2030 and the Council Plan.

Background

2. The Council recognises that good health and safety management supports the delivery of our services for the people of Gateshead. As part of the overall risk management process and culture, good health and safety management will help reduce injury and loss, help promote a healthy workplace and help protect all who are affected by the Council's activities.
3. By having an up to date effective health and safety policy it sets a clear direction for the Council to follow and will contribute to all aspects of business performance as part of a demonstrable commitment to continuous improvement.
4. Gateshead Council is an Enforcing Authority under health & safety law and has statutory responsibilities to enforce the relevant legislation. As a result of this the Council should be seen as an 'exemplar' and ensure the Health and Safety Policy is reviewed annually and revised whenever necessary. This will also ensure that the Council meets at least the same standards expected of others and preferably has a higher standard. In revising the Corporate Health and Safety Policy the Council can be assured of taking every step possible to ensure the standards relating to health and safety remain high.

Consultation

5. The Leader, recognised non-teaching trade unions and members of the Corporate Health and Safety Committee have been consulted regarding the revision of the policy.

Alternative Options

6. There is a legal requirement under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act to prepare a health and safety policy and draw any revision of it to the attention of employees. Therefore, no alternative options have been considered.

Implications of Recommended Option

7. **Resources:**
 - a) **Financial Implications** – The Strategic Director, Corporate Resources confirms that implementing the revised Health and Safety Policy will be accommodated from within existing resources. Improvements in health and safety performance will reduce the number of successful claims for compensation for injury/ ill health, contribute to a reduction in sickness absence, and reduce the risk of fines resulting from prosecution.

- b) **Human Resources Implications** – The policy will help to ensure that the Council is a safe and healthy place to work.
 - c) **Property Implications** – There are no property implications arising from the recommendations within this report.
7. **Risk Management Implications** - The changes in the Council’s Corporate Health and Safety Policy statement as recommended in the report are relatively minor and are not considered to introduce any new risk.
 8. **Equality and Diversity Implications** – There are no equality and diversity implications.
 9. **Crime and Disorder Implications** – There are no crime and disorder implications.
 10. **Health Implications** - The policy will help to minimise or address work related health issues.
 11. **Sustainability Implications** - There are no sustainability implications.
 12. **Human Rights Implications** – There are no direct implications, although the proposal will support employees’ existing rights to a safe and healthy working environment.
 13. **Area and Ward Implications** - There are no area or ward implications.
 14. **Background Information**
‘HS (G) 65 Managing for Health and Safety’ and ‘Helping Great Britain Work Well – a New Health and Safety System Strategy’ published by the Health and Safety Executive.
‘Leading Health and Safety at Work’ published by the Institute of Directors and the Health and Safety Commission.
‘Think about Health and Safety – What Elected Members Need to Know’ published by the Institute of Occupational Safety and Health.