Gateshead Council

REPORT TO CABINET
19 March 2024

TITLE OF REPORT: **Health and Safety Strategy**

REPORT OF: **Mike Barker, Strategic Director, Corporate Services and Governance**

Purpose of the Report

1.   To seek approval from Cabinet and Council for the Health & Safety Strategy.

Background

2.   The Council has a Health & Safety Policy which sets out our general approach to health and safety. It states the aims and commitment of senior leaders for health and safety management and outlines roles and responsibilities.

3.   The Council is a diverse organisation, and it is recognised that health and safety culture varies across different services.

4.   To improve overall health and safety standards, there is a need to assess the health and safety culture and implement a strategy for how this can be improved. Good safety culture can improve safety performance which in turn prevents injury, reduces costs, and improves reputation.

5.   The Council does not currently have a documented Health & Safety Strategy which links the goals of our Health & Safety Policy to our corporate action plan.

6.   Consultation took place last year with the council's workforce on creating a health and safety vision statement. The aim of the vision statement is to describe what we want the health and safety culture within the council to ultimately look like. A strategy is required which sets out how we intend to achieve our vision.

Proposal

7.   A five-year strategy has been developed setting out our areas of focus, direction, and ambitions. It sets out what we want to achieve and our vision for Gateshead Council's health and safety culture, based on the following six themes:
   - **Commitment and leadership** - We will ensure there is clear visible commitment and support from leaders for making sure people stay safe at work.
   - **Engagement and Participation** – We'll create an environment where it is easy for people to have open discussions about health and safety and to not be afraid to speak up when they see opportunities for improvements.
   - **Communication** - We'll make sure there are effective means for communicating health and safety information and news.

- **Learning and competence** - We'll ensure our people are suitably competent to carry out their roles. We will provide learning that impacts positively on people's motivation, H&S knowledge, behaviour, and perceptions.
- **Monitoring and reporting** – We'll ensure that health and safety performance is measured and reported on, in a way that targets areas for improvement.
- **Accountability** - We'll establish and maintain an environment in which people take responsibility not only for their own safety, but the safety of the team.

8. The strategy will be used to design an action plan of change, our plan to make a difference that will drive forward work across the Council helping to continuously enable good health and safety practices. It will form the basis for priorities and sets out the roadmap for improving the health and safety culture, which is the ambition of the Workforce Strategy approved by the Council in March 2022.

9. The strategy has been shared with various stakeholders for their consideration and amended in line with suggestions that enhanced the strategy.

Recommendations

10. Cabinet is asked to recommend Council to approve the Health and Safety Strategy as set out in appendix 2 to the report.

   For the following reason:

   To support the Council to achieve its aim for improving standards and culture of health and safety across the workforce.

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Policy Context

1. To develop an overarching strategy for the Council to meet its obligations linked to health and safety. The proposed strategy supports delivery of the Workforce Strategy, which in turn enables Thrive and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Consultation

2. A number of individuals and groups were consulted in the development of the strategy including the Leader, SMG Services & Performance, the Corporate Health & safety Committee, Trade Union Colleagues, and others.

Alternative Options

3. There are no alternative options.

Implications of Recommended Option

4. **Resources:**

   a) **Financial Implications –** The Strategic Director, Resources and Digital confirms there are no current financial implications. Resources may be required linked to activity required to deliver the strategy and when understood the request for finances will be made at that time.

   b) **Human Resources Implications –** None

   c) **Property Implications -** None

5. **Risk Management Implication -** None

6. **Equality and Diversity Implications -** None

7. **Crime and Disorder Implications –** None

8. **Health Implications -** None

9. **Climate Emergency and Sustainability Implications -** None

10. **Human Rights Implications -** None

11. **Ward Implications -** None

   Background Information

   - Thrive
   - Health and Wellbeing Strategy
   - Workforce Strategy
   - Council Health & Safety Strategy