

SUBJECT:	ANNUAL HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT 2025/26
MEETING:	GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE
DATE:	29th September 2026
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	WHOLE AUTHORITY

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To present the Council's Annual Health and Safety 2025/26 Report (Appendix 1) to the Governance and Audit Committee and afford members the opportunity to i) provide feedback on health and safety performance and progress during the year and ii) endorse priorities for 2026/27.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Governance and Audit Committee considers the Annual Health and Safety Report and provides feedback to inform future reports.
- 2.2 That the Committee endorses the health and safety priorities identified for 2026/27 which will strengthen the Council's health and safety management framework.

3. KEY ISSUES

Background

- 3.1 The Council has a statutory duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act etc. 1974 to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of its employees, service users, contractors and members of the public affected by its activities.
- 3.2 Failure to manage health and safety effectively exposes the Council to legal, financial, and reputational risks.
- 3.3 This report reflects the Council's commitment to strengthening its health and safety culture and improving transparency and accountability in this critical area.
- 3.4 The report covers a wide range of health and safety topics including accident and incident data, sickness absence trends, occupational health, training, regulatory oversight, and assurance mechanisms. It also outlines the Council's alignment with national health and safety priorities and sets clear priorities for 2026/27.

Key Messages

- 3.5 **Management of Asbestos:** The Council is taking action to improve the way it manages asbestos risks in its property portfolio. This includes the introduction of a new asbestos officer post, more rigorous training for staff involved in managing asbestos and continued roll out of asbestos awareness training to all staff whose work has the potential to bring them into contact with asbestos containing materials.
- 3.6 **Occupational Health:** The Council has extended its Health Surveillance programme to include waste operatives involved in glass recycling activities and night workers are now offered annual health assessments. These proactive measures support the early identification of potential health issues and help safeguard long-term employee wellbeing.
- 3.7 **Depot Safety Improvements:** Continued investment in health and safety improvements across depot sites has delivered higher safety standards, including enhanced segregation of vehicles and pedestrians. These measures have significantly reduced the risk of workplace transport incidents.
- 3.8 **Strategic priorities for 2025/26:** Clear priorities have been identified for 2026/27, including:
- Implement a corporate lone worker solution to better protect employees working alone or in potentially vulnerable situations.
 - Expand the availability of health and safety e-learning and digital learning resources across the organisation.
 - Strengthen the Council's health and safety assurance framework through the introduction of a risk-based programme of inspections and audits by the Corporate health and Safety team.
 - Establish a Health and Safety Compliance Oversight Group to provide greater scrutiny of health and safety compliance and performance across the organisation.
 - Continue to strengthen arrangements for managing asbestos in Council properties.
 - Improve understanding of work-related ill health, with particular focus on psychological wellbeing, work-related stress and musculoskeletal disorders.
 - Enhance support arrangements for employees affected by work-related violence and aggression and continue to improve reporting and investigation processes.
4. **QUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):**
- 4.1 Effective management of health and safety has positive impacts across all well-being goals and protected groups. It strengthens the Council's ability to safeguard staff and communities, prevent harm and promote equality, well-being and long- term sustainability.
- 4.2 An Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed and is available at Appendix 2.

5. EVALUATION CRITERIA

- 5.1 The effectiveness of the Council's health and safety management arrangements can be assessed against the following criteria:
- **Statutory Compliance:** Evidence of compliance with relevant legislation and official guidance
 - **Risk Management:** Effectiveness of risk identification, control measures, and assurance processes
 - **Incident Performance:** Trends in reported accidents and near misses, work related sickness and occupational health data
 - **Training and Competence:** Completion rates and impact of health and safety training programmes
 - **Continuous Improvement:** Progress against Corporate Health and Safety Action Plans
 - **Leadership and Culture:** Evidence of senior management commitment, communication and engagement

6. REASONS:

- 6.1 The Annual Health and Safety Report 2025/26 provides a comprehensive overview of the Council's current position and future direction. It demonstrates a clear commitment to continuous improvement and acknowledges the need to further develop the Corporate Health and Safety function to meet organisational and regulatory expectations.
- 6.2 The report has been subject to a thorough review by the Council's Strategic Leadership team and the recommendations endorsed.

7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Any actions requiring expenditure will be met from existing service budgets or through separate business cases.

8. CONSULTEES:

Strategic Leadership Team
Cabinet Member Resources
Head of HR
Head of Internal Audit
Principal Insurance and Risk Management Officer
Directorate Health & Safety Leads
Corporate Training Team

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

10. AUTHOR: Kate Thompson, Corporate Health and Safety Manager

11. CONTACT DETAILS:

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