ABSTRACT

This report gives an overview of the council’s health and safety activities and performance during 2010/11.

1 RECOMMENDATION

The Committee note the terms of this report.

2 INTRODUCTION

This report provides a corporate overview of health and safety within the Council. In addition to giving a summary of health and safety performance during the year, the report explains the approach to health and safety management within the council, the council’s health and safety priorities and how these are addressed.

Each department reports on its specific health and safety issues within its annual report.

Although there is no legal requirement to publish an annual report on health and safety activities, the Health and Safety Commission believes that it is good practice to do so and has given some guidance on what should be included. This report’s content takes cognisance of that guidance.

3 HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

General Statement of Policy

The council’s commitment and approach to health and safety management is set out in its general statement of health and safety policy. The council is required by law to produce such a statement, to ensure that it is regularly reviewed and revised as necessary, and that a copy is given to each employee.

This general statement of policy is complemented by individual departmental health and safety policies and procedures. Heads of departments are required to continuously review these to ensure that they adequately reflect and address the specific risks involved in the particular work activities of their department.

Responsibilities

The law requires that each organisation employs, or can call upon, a ‘competent person’ upon whom it can rely for health and safety advice. This person must be ‘suitably qualified and experienced’. The competent person within the council is the Safety Manager and he and his team provide expert advice to the council and its managers on statutory and good practice obligations. The safety team makes extensive use of the council’s intranet to provide policy and guidance documents and oversees health and safety training, which is delivered both in-house and by the use of external trainers.

The Chief Executive, supported by heads of department has overall responsibility for health and safety which is a standing item on the Chief Officers Management Team agenda. That meeting receives a regular report on significant developments, including a digest of cases involving councils and the implications of these, from the Safety Manager.
The individual health and safety responsibilities of every employee are set out in the general statement of policy and in departmental policies.

Training

The accurate identification of training needs and delivery of appropriate training is another key to successful health and safety management and the Human Resources teams have provided such training on a continuous basis. However to ensure that needs are being comprehensively identified and met, over the part eighteen months the safety and employee development teams have been working with departments to develop a matrix of safety training requirements mapped against job responsibilities. This work has been completed and has identified a considerable volume of training need which will now be delivered through a phased programme.

Consultation

As the council’s annual health and safety policy acknowledges, the participation of employees on both a formal and informal basis is vital to successful health and safety management.

The informal aspect of this participation takes place daily through discussion involving, employees, employees’ safety representatives and managers about all aspects of safe working practices, identification of training needs, risk assessments etc. The council also has a network of formal consultative bodies. There are formal safety and consultative committees in each of the Education, Social Work and Health, Neighbourhood Services and Infrastructure Services departments. In other departments and within the sub divisions of the aforementioned departments there are also health and safety liaison groups or similar bodies to discuss health and safety issues. A member of the safety team acts as an adviser to these committees and groups.

Health and Safety Targets

The council’s overall and ongoing corporate goal is to protect the health, safety and wellbeing of its employees and all other parties affected by its activities as far as is reasonably practicable. It does not set specific corporate health and safety targets but each department sets itself appropriate objectives. These are reported within individual departmental annual reports.

Benchmarking

The council does however try to continuously improve its safety performance and promote and follow best practice. To help achieve this it is a member of a long-standing local authority health and safety benchmarking group. The group consists of ten local authorities and is made up of senior health and safety practitioners. The benchmarking activities include conducting regular peer reviews and sharing statistical information.

4 SIGNIFICANT RISKS

Health and safety management throughout the council is based on the identification of safety hazards, the assessment of the risks these pose and the adoption of measures to eliminate or minimise these risks.

The following summarises the most significant health and safety risks to council employees and describes briefly the measures in place to address these risks.

Musculoskeletal Injuries

Staff carrying out repetitive tasks or working with compromised postures are exposed to the risk of musculoskeletal injury. This can be particularly prevalent in display screen equipment (DSE) use and in cash handling operations.

The council’s safety team delivers training for managers in assessing and addressing the risks associated with this work and to DSE operators in steps to avoid its dangers.
Manual Handling

Lifting and handling of people and objects is always one of the most frequent causes of accidents.

The council tries to address the risks of manual handling by limiting the need to undertake lifting tasks by the increasing use of mechanical handling equipment. It also delivers substantial training in manual handling.

This hazard is particularly prevalent within the Social Work and Health Department within which there is an extensive ongoing training programme delivered by its own manual and people handling trainers.

Slips, Trips and Falls

This is another major accident cause. In addition to continuous risk assessment, the safety team carries out ongoing testing of floor coverings to identify and replace potentially hazardous surfaces.

Hand/Arm Vibration Syndrome and Hearing Impairment

These conditions present the potential for progressive damage to the health of any employee required to use machinery on a frequent basis. The risk is mainly to employees within the Neighbourhood Services Department, eg those using grass cutting equipment. The council has made protection of employees undertaking these operations a priority. It undertakes a continuous programme of employee health surveillance, regular testing of plant and equipment and has adopted a policy prioritising the purchase of low vibration tools and equipment.

Violence and Aggression/Lone Working

The council exists to provide services to the public. On rare occasions this will involve dealing with difficult and possibly confrontational situations and therefore risking exposure to violent behaviour. Thankfully there has been a very low incidence of violence towards council employees whether they work within office settings or alone in the community. However there is a constant need for vigilance and appropriate action to maintain this position. The council has a specific policy on dealing with violence and aggression at work. One of the main planks of the policy is a well developed procedure for recording and acting upon reports of incidences of violence or aggression.

The policy requires that individual departments undertake risk assessments and introduce procedures/systems proportionate to the risk identified. For lone workers these systems vary from the use of simple log books to the adoption of mobile phone and GIS technology.

5 HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUES AND PERFORMANCE 2010/11

General Statement of Health and Safety Policy

The Council’s general statement of health and safety policy was reviewed, revised and issued to all staff in April 2011, to reflect the change in Chief Executive.

Occupational Health Database

This database holds information on jobs which have significant occupational health risks associated with them. These risks have been reviewed, revised and agreed with service managers and the council’s occupational health provider. The list is continuously reviewed and revised to take account of changing circumstances. During the year the need for the introduction of lung function testing for certain jobs was identified and has been introduced.

DSE/Workplace Assessments

DSE/workplace assessments have been carried out on request, with an increasing number of requests being received as more people become aware of this service. Recommendations following on from these audits have included alterations to workspace layout and height, advice on alternative chairs and instruction in the correct adjustment of such chairs before use, advice on ergonomic IT equipment (eg, split keyboards, vertical mouses, etc. The safety team now
holds a small stock of such items which are available for demonstration and loan purposes and can give general recommendations regarding space, air quality and temperature.

**Accident Rates**

A key performance indicator of health and safety performance is the number of accidents which must be reported to the Health and Safety Executive which occur during a year. A reportable accident is one which results in a major injury (e.g., broken limb) or an absence from work of three or more days. For comparison purposes, this number is often translated into an Accident Incident Rate (AIR). This is calculated by multiplying the number of accidents by 100,000 and dividing by the number of employees in the organisation.

The council’s AIR for 2010/11 was 688. This compares with the most recent average available from its benchmarking group of 799.

The following table shows the council’s performance over the last five years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>06/07</th>
<th>07/08</th>
<th>08/09</th>
<th>09/10</th>
<th>10/11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fatalities</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Injuries</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ 3 Days Accidents</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of Employees</td>
<td>5581</td>
<td>5680</td>
<td>5769</td>
<td>5676</td>
<td>5526</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accident Incident Rate</td>
<td>770</td>
<td>580</td>
<td>745</td>
<td>687</td>
<td>688</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The committee will note that the council experienced no fatalities during this period.

**Dangerous Occurrences/Reportable Diseases**

The council is required to report dangerous occurrences and reportable diseases to the Health and Safety Executive under the RIDDOR Regulations. During the year there were no such occurrences.

The following table shows the council’s performance over the last five years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>06/07</th>
<th>07/08</th>
<th>08/09</th>
<th>09/10</th>
<th>10/11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dangerous Occurrences</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reportable Diseases</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Health and Safety Executive Enforcement Action**

A further indicator of health and safety performance is the extent to which the Health and Safety Executive have felt it necessary to take enforcement action against an organisation.

The Health and Safety Executive took no enforcement action, i.e., improvement notices, prohibition notices, or prosecutions against the council during 2010/11.
Training

The following table shows the range of training delivered during 2010/11 and the number of employees who undertook this training.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training Topic</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managing Safely Strategic</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing Safely Operational</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk Assessment (General)</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manual Handling</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manual Handling Assessors/Instructor</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Display Screen Equipment (Managers)</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DSE Operators</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire Safety</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction Site Safety</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrical Safety</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Aid (3 day)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Aid Refresher</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with the terms of this report.

7 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

There are no human rights implications associated with this report.

8 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

The issues contained in this report fall within an approved category that has been confirmed as exempt from an equalities perspective.

9 CONSULTATION

The Director of Corporate Services, Head of Finance and Head of Law and Administration have been consulted on the terms of this report.

RICHARD STIFF
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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NOTE  No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above Report.