



<b>Report for:</b>	Cabinet
<b>Title of report:</b>	Health & Safety Update Report
<b>Date:</b>	21 May 2024
<b>Report on behalf of:</b>	Councillor Robin Bromham, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Operations
<b>Part:</b>	I
<b>If Part II, reason:</b>	N/A
<b>Appendices:</b>	Appendix 1: Corporate Health & Safety Policy
<b>Background papers:</b>	Corporate Health & Safety Policy 2024 – 2025 TIAA Assurance Review of Health and Safety 2023/24 Report (External)
<b>Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:</b>	CDM - Construction, Design and Management CLT – Corporate Leadership Team CHSR – Corporate Health & Safety & Resilience H&S – Health & Safety HSG – Health & Safety Guidance ICT - Information and communications technology PDR– Personal Development Record RA – Risk Assessment SLT – Strategic Leadership Team

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<b>Corporate Priorities</b>	A clean, safe, and enjoyable environment Ensuring efficient, effective, and modern service delivery Climate and ecological emergency
<b>Wards affected</b>	All
<b>Purpose of the report:</b>	To introduce the Council's new Corporate Health and Safety Policy for consideration by Cabinet.

	<p>The Policy sets out the Council's general approach to health and safety and explains how the Council will manage health and safety in the delivery of its services and operations. It provides clarity in the management arrangements along with roles and responsibilities.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s):</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That Cabinet considers, and formally approves, the Corporate Health &amp; Safety policy.</li> <li>2. That Cabinet notes progress made on the Council's H&amp;S action plan</li> </ol>
<p><b>Period for post policy/project review:</b></p>	<p>Annually.</p>

## 1. Introduction

Health & Safety Management is a Corporate Priority and appropriate and adequate Health and Safety arrangements for service delivery are a critical requirement, which supports the Council's strategic priority to ensure a clean, safe, and enjoyable environment.

## 2. Background:

This report provides an update on the current position with regards to the management of health and safety at Dacorum Borough Council. It summarises two work streams. The first is the Health and Safety Review, that was undertaken by an external Health & Safety professional, which provided a review of the Safety Management System against the Health & Safety Executive's [Managing for Safety \(HSG 65\)](#) & [Leading Health and Safety at Work \(INDG 417\)](#) approach.

The second work stream is an external audit that was commissioned by the internal audit team and undertaken by TIAA in August 2023. The audit provided a level of risk assurance in relation to health and safety, in line with best practice guidance.

The findings of the Health and Safety Review & TIAA Audit have both informed the H&S Policy and, where areas for improvement were identified, these have been incorporated into the Health and Safety Policy and supporting Action Plan.

## 3. Health and Safety review

During 2023, an independent review of health and safety practices took place, which recommended the implementation of changes to improve the Council's health and safety culture, management system and its assurance processes. The review was structured through seven identified objectives, which were as follows:

1. Identify and prioritise the Council's Health and Safety Risk Profile and audit the management and control of identified priority risks.
2. Review and comment on key documentation and processes.
3. Review and comment on health and safety (H&S) governance and accountability.
4. Propose changes to create a more preventative and transparent system.
5. Recommend a H&S training strategy.
6. Survey the Corporate Leadership Team's satisfaction with current H&S management and support arrangements to make recommendations for improvement.
7. Visit key Council workplaces associated with identified priority risks and sample H&S controls.

The review identified some areas for improvements, and these have now been incorporated into a Health and Safety Action Plan and areas have been prioritised under the following themes:

- Communication
- Governance
- Policy and Strategy
- Risk management.
- Training

Progress has been made in all areas of the action plan, including the review of documents and policies, and the introduction of a new Corporate H&S policy. The revised Corporate H&S Policy is attached in Appendix 1. Other progress includes a full review of risk and a reporting framework that will allow SLT and the Corporate Health and Safety Board to regularly monitor Corporate H&S.

A new Head of Health & Safety and Resilience has now been appointed, and new terms of reference and membership for the Health and Safety Board have been developed.

Other priority areas that were identified are Construction, Design and Management (CDM), contract management and high-risk activities. These areas are now being progressed with training needs identified in line with industry best practice.

Relevant Council teams are now providing data and qualitative reports on risk areas, which have been identified in the H&S risk profile as a high risk to the Council.

New documented health and safety management arrangements, and associated tools and checklists, were issued and these will support managers to meet their H&S responsibilities.

A digital H&S Platform has also been approved and will help to modernise and embed the work on the document review and facilitate access to documentation.

Delivery of training has already started and is having a positive impact on the delivery of safer and more effective services.

#### 4. **Summary findings of the Internal Audit Review of Health and Safety 2023/24 Report**

Previous audit reviews identified several initiatives regarding Health and Safety requirements as a work in progress. An internal audit in 2023 aimed to review the findings of the previous audits follow-up and examine and test the arrangements for Health and Safety that should be in place for 2023/24 onwards.

The audit found that the documented process aligns with the mitigating arrangements set out in the corporate risk register. After a discussion with auditors, officers provided evidence of documents and governance in place that supported a “**Reasonable Assurance**” rating.

A summary of the issues and remedial actions in place is summarised below:

- Availability of records for building safety compliance is currently being progressed to ensure all necessary information is received in a timely fashion. Completion of actions arising from compliance activities is now being documented and monitored. These actions will be tracked as part of the Corporate Health & Safety Action Plan.
- Local safety checks at premises are now being fully documented and actions closed off. This has been included as part of the Manager self-audits now in place and the review of the local inspection check sheet
- Risk assessments templates have been reviewed and CLT has been consulted on their content. Risk assessments are now being progressed as part of the outputs of the Managers' self-audit process.
- Issues with the quality of accident forms has now been addressed. The Corporate Health & Safety & Resilience team, (CHSR), will monitor, and review all submitted forms. Moving forward this will be addressed through the digital platform in Autumn 2024.

#### 5. **Health & Safety Policy**

It is industry best practice to review the health and policy annually. Equally, there is a statutory requirement to consult employees on health and safety matters. It was not clear if the previous policy had been consulted upon so this is an opportunity to formally record the consultation that has taken place.

In respect to the policy review, the following amendments were made:

- Introductory statement now links to the Council's values
- Responsibilities have been set out in accordance with the “Plan-Do-Check-Act” Health and Safety management framework we follow.
- Responsibilities in relation to building and grounds management has been revised to give greater clarity – and a table has been added to the appendix showing who is responsible.
- Specific responsibilities for the Assistant Director (People), Strategic Director (Housing and Property Services) and CHSR have been added.

- Requirement for an Annual Report

In addition to the policy review and, to ensure an effective Health & Safety Strategy is maintained, a Health & Safety Action Plan is being developed to both identify and monitor progress of all identified areas of improvement. These actions will be risk rated to ensure they are prioritised accordingly. Opportunities for delivering best practice will also be adopted where possible.

## **6. Options and alternatives considered.**

No options, other than to consider approval of the report have been considered. If there was no Corporate Health & Safety Policy then Council will not be compliant with its statutory duties, as it employs more than five employees.

## **7. Consultation**

The revised Health and Safety Policy was prepared in consultation with the Council's Corporate Leadership Team, Unison and the Health and Safety Board, SLT and Portfolio Holders. The outcome of the audit report was also discussed at Audit committee.

## **8. Financial and value for money implications:**

Complying with the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and relevant regulations supports the Council Health & Safety Strategy and ensures statutory compliance. Adequate resources are to be provided to support this. This will reduce accidents and risk profiles and will make the Council's work place a safer and healthier environment for all.

## **9. Legal Implications**

Failure to have an effective Health and Safety Policy in place with a robust health and safety management system could result in a failure to ensure statutory compliance that could result in a potential prosecution. A robust health and safety management ensures legal compliance.

## **10. Risk implications:**

Failure to have an effective Health and Safety Policy in place with a robust health and safety management system could result a failure to ensure statutory compliance or a failure in a safe system of work that results in an injury or fatality to staff or residents. This review and the measures considered and implemented mitigate these risks to an acceptable level that can be continuously monitored and evaluated as part of the Council's monitoring systems.

## **11. Equalities, Community Impact and Human Rights:**

There are no negative impacts to any specific protected characteristics or part of the community.

There are no Human Rights Implications arising from this report. It is a generic policy so applies to all groups equally.

## **12. Sustainability implications (including climate change, health and wellbeing, community safety)**

There will be no negative impact to Sustainability. This review will support community safety by ensuring safe systems of work are developed and delivered by all parts of the organisation.

## **13. Council infrastructure (including Health and Safety, HR/OD, assets and other resources)**

Regular reviews of the Health & Safety Policy will ensure it remains effective to ensure both statutory compliance and reduce the risk of an injury

## **14. Statutory Comments**

**Monitoring Officer:**

A robust Health and Safety Policy and governance structure is essential to ensure that the Council operates its services safely, in accordance with the law. The proposed Policy should help to ensure that the Council complies with relevant legislation and guidance, minimise risk to staff and reduce the chances of legal claims against the Council.

**S151:**

No further comments to add to the report.

**15. Conclusions:**

Both reviews have identified some good practice and improvements that are needed in relation to the Council's Health & Safety Management systems and processes. This has resulted in the review of the Health and Safety Policy, a comprehensive action plan and a risk matrix that will be monitored through SLT, Health and Safety Board and individual Directorates.

The Corporate Health and Safety Policy has also been updated to reflect the changes required.

Since the reviews took place, and during the Autumn period, a significant amount of work has been undertaken to ensure the required systems are in place and that they are well documented. Improvements will continue to be implemented through the development and delivery of the Health and Safety Action Plan, which covers all areas of health and safety management.

Key risks and key areas of improvements will be monitored through dashboards and developed with CLT and reported through to SLT on a regular basis.

It is imperative to maintain this momentum to ensure the management system remains effective to ensure a safe and healthy environment is provided by Dacorum Borough Council in all its operations.