

Annual Health and Safety Performance Report 2023 - 2024

Report of the Corporate Health and Safety Manager

Recommended:

That the Annual Health and Safety Report 2023 – 2024 be approved.

SUMMARY:

Test Valley Borough Council's Corporate Health and Safety Policy requires an annual report on health and safety performance and planning.

This report summarises health and safety management activities over a twelve-month period, April 2023 to March 2024, covering significant issues council-wide and demonstrates the Council's commitment, openness and transparency to report on its activities.

The information within the report details corporate activities and achievements over the last year, and highlights priorities and areas to focus on for the year ahead.

The objectives of this report are to demonstrate Test Valley Borough Council's commitment to:

- Being transparent on the Council's performance on health and safety, by publishing health and safety performance data.
- Detailing Council's health and safety performance, accidents, incidents, training and arrangements for managing risks.
- Highlighting how we monitor and measure health and safety performance, with a view to highlighting areas where the Council performs well, and areas for improvement.
- Our responsibility for ensuring a safe and healthy environment for service users, members of the public, employees and contractors.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Council is required to fulfil its statutory obligations under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and supplementary regulations.
- 1.2 In the guidance 'Leading Health and Safety at Work', the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) state that a formal review of health and safety performance is an essential principle and that the production and subsequent publication of an annual report shows a commitment to transparency and accountability.
- 1.3 The Council's continued ability to manage health and safety in a responsible and proportionate manner reduces the likelihood of any reactive interventions by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

- 1.4 The report does not go into detail on the building compliance issues of the council assets, as the compliance function for managing the risks within the property stock, e.g. asbestos, legionella, is managed and reported on by the Property and Asset Management Service.

2 Background

- 2.1 Test Valley Borough Council's Corporate Health and Safety Policy requires an annual report on health and safety performance to be presented to senior management for comment. The report is then passed to elected members for approval before being made public.

3 Risk Profile

There have been no significant changes to the health and safety risk profile of the Council buildings or activities over the last 12 months. Currently there are 555 members of staff at the council (508 full time equivalents). The main council offices in Andover and Romsey remain unchanged and there have not been any significant operational changes to the two Environmental Service depots.

The waste service changes required by the Environment Act 2021, will start to be brought in over the next 18 months. This will include the collection of food waste, directly from households, using new specialist vehicles. The waste service changes will be reflected in future reports.

Health and safety is part of the wider organisation's approach to sensible risk management and requires a focus on the risks of injury and ill health which could potentially arise during the occupational activities staff undertake to deliver the Council's wide-ranging services. Some of the occupational health and safety risks to be controlled include:

- Lone working
- Violence and aggression from third parties
- Transport and road risks
- Working with machinery and equipment
- Manual handling
- Use of display screen equipment (DSE), for those staff who are at a desk for most of their day
- Slips, trips and falls
- Work related ill health, including work-related stress
- Contractor management, with a focus on property maintenance contractors
- Environmental factors: ensuring staff are protected from the elements, e.g. sun safe principles.

The foundation of robust health and safety management is a risk assessment of the roles, locations and activities staff undertake (chemical use, manual handling, etc), and to review that current control measures are appropriate and are being maintained. Managers are requested to review the local risk assessments and standard operating procedures annually.

The Council continues to develop and implement appropriate strategies and controls to identify and record foreseeable risks and reduce them to as low a level as is reasonably practicable. These controls are subject to periodic review, and appropriate remedial measures or adjustments are made as is necessary.

4 Health and Safety Management

As with other areas of compliance, there are benefits from reviewing an organisation's management procedures and associated arrangements against the industry best practice and minimum legislative standards.

The contracting period for the Council's supplier of workwear and PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) was due for renewal in early 2024/25, and therefore the tendering process began during this reporting period, including trials of new and improved wet-weather clothing.

4.1 Audits and Inspections:

Monthly formal health and safety inspections are undertaken at the two Council depots to ensure standards are being maintained, and to flag areas for improvement in these dynamic environments.

During 2023/24, Andover's Customer Services Unit completed an inspection which required a number of hazards to be rectified by the IT Service in liaison with PAM. This included ensuring the cabling from computers around the desks was fit for purpose and safe, e.g. trip hazards removed.

Pesticide Enforcement Officers from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) visited both Council depots in November 2023, to audit the health and safety management measures in place for chemical handling (pesticides/herbicides) and storage. No contraventions were identified during the audit. A request was received from the lead officer asking for increased 'No Smoking' signage around the chemical storage area.

No other external or third-party audits have been undertaken in 2023/24.

For the year ahead there will be greater focus on the Safety Representatives within each service facilitating workplace inspections and identifying any remedial actions.

4.2 Annual Health and Safety Questionnaire Findings:

The annual health and safety questionnaire was sent to Heads of Service, and all were returned. The returned questionnaires give a point in time overview of how health and safety risks are being managed across the individual service areas. Common topics which need to be monitored are the completion or review of staff display screen equipment self-assessments according to policy timeframes and the review of documentation in line with the Driving at Work Policy. This topic will need to be an action for the year ahead and may require training for service line managers to ensure compliance.

5 **Corporate Health and Safety Training**

Health and safety training needs are reviewed annually as part of the Personal Development Discussions that managers have with their staff. Services will also review the annual requirements for specialist health and safety training dependant on job role.

The Learning Zone e-learning modules completed by staff over the last 12-month period are detailed below (Table 1), two health and safety modules are mandatory for office-based staff: *Display Screen Equipment*; and *An Introduction to Workplace Health and Safety*.

The corresponding information for the year ahead can be used as a comparison in the next year's report.

Table 1. E-learning health and safety modules completed in 2023/24.

H&S E-learning Module	Numbers completed in 2023/24
Display Screen Equipment	221
Working Safely: an introduction to Workplace Health and Safety	77
Asbestos Awareness	21
Avoiding slips and trips	11
Driving Safely for Work	9
Fire Marshall training	27
Introduction to COSHH	4
Introduction to personal safety while working	16
Introduction to risk assessment	10
Manual Handling	15
Safety for Lone Workers	16
Working safely with ladders	9

5.1 **Other Health and Safety Training**

Risk Assessor refresher training was undertaken in March for ten employees, to refresh the service risk assessor's knowledge. Further courses are scheduled for 2024/25, and delegate numbers will be included in the next report.

First Aid at Work refresher training was completed by two corporate first aiders, one new corporate first aider was trained and a further 20 employees underwent the 1-day Emergency First Aid course to meet service needs, primarily in PAM and C&L. Work is being undertaken to assess the First Aid requirements for the Chantry Centre and Beech Hurst and will be covered in the next annual report.

DSE assessor training was provided for ten staff.

Conflict Management training was completed via HR for twenty-eight staff, following feedback from the Service Safety Reps.

The Environmental Service and PAM Service arrange and carry out their own specific health and safety training as required for their staff's specialist roles, e.g. CDM Awareness, Vehicle lifts, CITB, hi-ab training, etc.

6 **Accident/Incident Data**

For the period 2023/24, there were a total of 53 incidents. Of this total, four accidents were reportable to the Health and Safety Executive under the RIDDOR regulations. There were no HSE visits or interventions related to these reported accidents. There were nine verbal abuse or intimidating behaviour incidents and eight reports of a near miss.

Comparisons can be made for the last 4 years in the table 2 below:

Table 2. Overview of accidents and incidents

Type of incident	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Total number of non-reportable accidents	27	27	45	32
Total number of accidents reported to the HSE (RIDDOR)	3	3	3	4
Total number of verbal abuse / threats / violent incidents	6	9	15	9
Total number of near miss incidents	4	4	7	8

- 6.1 The total number of accidents has decreased significantly compared to 2022/23 and is similar, in total, to previous years. One reason for this decrease is due to the number of incidents reported by members of the public (sports and leisure injuries) at the Ganger Farm Sports Park, which is likely to be from a better understanding of which incidents are required to be recorded.
- 6.2 Verbal abuse / threats / violence numbers has fallen from 2022/23. Anecdotal feedback to the Corporate Health and Safety Manager suggests some incidents are going unreported – improvements are required to have a robust reporting culture. There is a need to ensure all front facing staff and those undertaking visits as part of their duties, e.g. receptionists, housing officers, environmental health practitioners, planners etc. are aware of the expectations on them to report incidents and not to put them down as *being part of the job*. The need to ensure the potentially Violent Marker List is publicised and used across all services is noted.

Four of the aggressive incidents involved perpetrators over the telephone.

It should be noted that some of our most vulnerable customers may also present with the most complex and challenging behaviour that results in verbal abuse, threats and violent incidents. Where criminal offences occur, officers will report to the police and provide witness statements. There has been one occasion where a customer has been prosecuted and issued with a fine to be paid to the victim (council staff).

- 6.3 For the four reportable incidents that were notifiable to the HSE were all due to 'an accident that resulted in an employee being absent from work for more than 7 days', because of a minor injury. There were no HSE visits or interventions related to these reported accidents.

Table 3. Overview of incidents by Services

Service	Non-Reportable		RIDDOR Reportable		Aggressive / Violent		Near Misses	
	2022/23	2023/24	2022/23	2023/24	2022/23	2023/24	2022/23	2023/24
Chief Executives (incl. HR)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Community & Leisure*	7	3	0	0	1	0	1	3
Environmental	30	23	3	2	3	1	4	5
Finance & Revenues (incl. CSU**)	0	0	0	0	6	5	0	0
Housing & Env. Health	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0
IT	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Legal & Democratic	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Planning & Building	2	2	0	0	3	0	1	0
Planning Policy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Property & Asset Management***	5	2	0	1	2	1	1	0
Strategy & Innovation	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0

* Includes incidents to the public at TVBC owned leisure facilities and at The Lights.

** Includes incidents to the public whilst in the reception areas.

*** Includes incidents to the public at TVBC owned properties e.g. the Guildhall and tenants within TVBC run buildings e.g. Beech Hurst.

- 6.4 The Environmental Service recorded the highest number of accidents, 23, but this was a decrease year-on-year of almost 25%.

As would be expected, there were more accidents within this service due to the size of the workforce and the hazards and risks associated with the work that is undertaken: waste collection, grounds maintenance, street cleaning, and vehicle repairs.

- 6.5 Four of the non-reportable accidents involved contractors, volunteers, or members of the public.

7 Financial Resources

The annual corporate health and safety budget is used to fund activities such as staff training in health and safety matters and to enable the Council's Corporate Health and Safety Manager to be trained and kept abreast of developments in health and safety law and safety management practice. The expenditure of this budget for the last 4 years is given in the table below.

Table 4. Expenditure on Health and Safety

Corporate H&S Expenditure	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
First aider training and equipment	£1836	£2932	£2713	£1989
Equipment (other)	£2790	£739	£129	£196
Other safety related training	-	£2243	£1516	£281
Total	£4626	£5914	£4358	£2466

8 Wellbeing and Mental Health Overview

The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee has a sub-group (the Wellbeing Group), whose purpose is to promote and support the health and wellbeing of the Council's workforce. The group run a range of different employee wellbeing initiatives, through a co-ordinated programme of events. Below is a list of the events and campaigns which have taken place during 2023/24. Actions over the previous year include:

- A range of online and face-to-face learning opportunities targeted at employees and managers, including;
 - Neurodiversity and Disability Awareness workshops
 - Financial wellbeing webinar
 - Menopause awareness for managers.
- A new Mental Health First Aider (MHFA) has been trained and a number of existing MHFAs have attended refresher training, to enable the team to provide immediate mental health support to staff in the workplace.
- A number of drop-in sessions have been held with a local counsellor and MHFA in Portway and Bourne House depots.
- MHFAs / HR attended the Environmental Service's 'Service Days' to promote the Wellbeing offer to all operational staff, including the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), Employee Support Service and wellbeing web pages.
- A local counsellor gave a talk on happiness and wellbeing and HR led a discussion about positive action staff can take to improve and maintain good wellbeing at the Property and Asset Management service meeting.

- A series of wellbeing campaigns have been run, focusing on a range of topics, including mental health and suicide prevention, women / men's health, summer wellbeing and healthy eating. A range of cost-saving opportunities have also been promoted via our partnerships with other organisations, including Places Leisure, KAARP benefits and Lifestyle Card, to support employee financial wellbeing.
- Our larger campaigns for 2023/24 have included:
 - On Your Feet Britain (April) – An organised walk and desk yoga session were available to encourage people to take a break and get moving during the working day.
 - Know Your Numbers Week (May) – Employees were invited to take part in a full body composition test, conducted by SuperWellness, where they received a personalised report and lifestyle/ nutrition tips.
 - Mental Health Awareness Week (October) – Free 5-day passes were offered to employees (and continue to be available) to enable people to experience some taster sessions at local leisure centres. A number of employees have subsequently signed up for membership.
 - Self-Care Week (November) – A Lunch and Learn was held to provide ideas for self-care and a short, guided meditation session with a local counsellor.
 - Financial Wellbeing (December) – A range of alternative, cost effective Christmas gift ideas were promoted, and a crafting session held to make homemade gifts and cards.
 - January/ February fitness – A series of free exercise classes were held in Andover Leisure Centre every Tuesday and Thursday throughout January and February.
- 'Wellbeing Wednesday' e-newsletters have been issued monthly throughout the year, containing the latest wellbeing news and offerings, which have also been featured in the monthly Environmental Services newsletter.
- A Menopause 'Lunch and Learn' session was held with a local menopause coach, Claire Hattrick.
- A range of social events has taken place to promote social connectivity, such as quiz nights and a talent show.

9 Key Challenges for 2024/25

Focuses for the current year need to include the following topic areas:

- A review of Lone Working procedures across the Council is ongoing, assessing the current system provider and reviewing service requirements to ensure that needs are met, and devices are value for money and fit for purpose.
- Driving at Work Policy and annual checks: need to ensure that managers are aware of the requirements of the Policy and the duties they must undertake as part of annual driver checks.

- A review of First Aid provision at buildings housing council employees to ensure requirements are met according to legislation.
- Making health and safety more visible during staff inductions: Review of e-learning modules available and involvement in Council Induction Programme.
- With the proposed changes to the Intranet pages this will require the health and safety pages to be reviewed and how it links to the landing page which staff see.
- Raise the importance of reporting near misses and verbal abuse / aggression incidents and promote the availability of the Violent Marker List.
- Accident and incident e-forms: trialling of a new electronic accident and incident report form, to replace the current paper-based reporting process.
- Display Screen Equipment risk assessments: change from the current paper-based system for the self-assessment of staff workstations to an e-form version which will allow better management overview of the process and allow refresher reminders to be automated.

10 Corporate Objectives and Priorities

- 10.1 In presenting the health and safety performance report to the General Purposes Committee, the Council is fulfilling its statutory obligations under health and safety legislation and adhering to HSE best practice guidance. The report ensures that the Council is fulfilling its obligations to staff and stakeholders and strengthens its commitment to health and safety.

11 Consultations/Communications

- 11.1 The nature of this report does not require consultation to take place, however, it will be communicated to stakeholders and afford them the opportunity to give any comment.

12 Options

- 12.1 The examination of potential options is not applicable in this circumstance. The primary purpose of the report is to present information. The HSE will expect a leading organisation such as the Council to comply with its management guidance and would therefore publicise its performance.

13 Option Appraisal

- 13.1 The options are for the committee to approve the report or not. The report comprises a comprehensive analysis of the Council's Health and Safety activity from April 2023 to March 2024, prepared by expert officers. Approval of the report is therefore the recommended option.

14 Risk Management

- 14.1 This report is for information purposes, so the Council's Risk management process does not need to be applied.

15 Resource Implications

15.1 There are no additional resource implications.

16 Legal Implications

16.1 Failure to produce and publish an annual report would not necessarily expose the Council to action being taken by the HSE, but it would be viewed negatively should the HSE be looking into any other aspect of the Council business and operation.

17 Equality Issues

17.1 No equality, diversity or inclusion issues or issues relating to the Council's duties under the Equality Act 2010 have been identified in the preparation of this report.

18 Other Issues

18.1 Community Safety - None

18.2 Environmental Health Issues - None

18.3 Sustainability and Addressing a Changing Climate - None

18.4 Property Issues - None

18.5 Wards/Communities Affected - None

19 Conclusion

19.1 The approval of the Annual Health and Safety Report 2023-2024 will fulfil the council's obligation to health and safety legislation and will reinforce its commitment to following HSE best practice guidance.

Background Papers (Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D)

None

Confidentiality

It is considered that this report does not contain exempt information within the meaning of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and can be made public.

No of Annexes:	None	File Ref:	N/A
Officer:	Julia Scarrott	Ext:	8377
Report to:	General Purposes	Date:	18 November 2024