

Cabinet and Executive Report



Listening Learning Leading



Report of Head of IT, HR and Customer Services

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REPORT NO
42/10

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To: CABINET

DATE: 9 September 2010

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Health and Safety Policy

Recommendation(s)

That Executive agrees the health and safety policy (a copy of which is attached).

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to obtain Executive's approval of the updated shared health and safety policy.

Strategic Objectives

2. The implementation and development of effective health and safety management will contribute to the council's strategic objective to manage our business effectively.

Background

3. The delivery of public services will always involve a degree of potential risk. It is important, however, that the councils wherever possible eliminates such risks, or minimises them by being proactive in the management of risk. An effective health and safety management system is a method by which issues can be placed in an agreed framework to identify, analyse control and monitor risks.

4. Having a policy that sets a clear direction for the organisation to follow is one of the key elements of health and safety management. The health and safety policies of the Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire District Councils have now been harmonised into one policy for both councils.
5. The chief executive and management team have approved the attached health and safety policy and consultation has taken place with unison and all staff.
6. An effective health and safety management system will contribute towards
 - providing a high quality service
 - achievement of the Council's strategic and operational objectives
 - providing a safe and healthy working environment
 - protection of the council's assets
 - ensuring compliance with statutory requirements
 - minimising financial losses which arise from unplanned events
 - ensuring a systematic approach to the identification of risks and the allocation of resources to control them
 - supporting quality initiatives aimed at continuous improvement
7. Councillors are not responsible for managing health and safety services on a day-to-day basis, but must understand the strategic way in which they can affect health and safety management in their authority. Councillors will have both individual and collective governance responsibilities.
8. The cabinet (South) and executive (Vale) must ensure that the shared chief executive has in place an effective health and safety management system and that their decision making systems allow for health and safety implications to be given appropriate and proper consideration.
9. The chief executive has overall responsibility for health and safety and must have an effective management structure and arrangements in place to deliver the policy. The strategic directors and heads of service will be responsible for providing leadership and implementing the policy within their portfolio responsibilities.
10. Once the health and safety policy is approved an action plan will be developed to ensure the implementation of the policy. A major part of this will be the development of a comprehensive training programme to ensure that all staff are trained to perform their jobs effectively and safely, and discharge their responsibilities under the policy.
11. Once the policy has been implemented then it will be important to measure, audit and review performance.

Options

12. None.

Financial Implications

13. All staff to a greater or lesser degree have health and safety responsibilities and require suitable information and training to meet these. There are likely to be financial implications associated with the training of staff, in particular managers. A

training need analysis will be carried out so that methods of delivery and costs can be established. Costs will be met from within currently available budgets.

Legal Implications

14. The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 requires organisations with more than five employees to have an up to date health and safety policy.
15. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 impose further responsibilities on organisations to have in place effective arrangements for the management of health and safety.

Risks

16. Without an up to date health and safety policy and associated management system the councils could be at risk of an increase in accidents/ill health and/or property damage and the associated financial and legal implications.

Other Implications

Human Resource Implications

17. The head of HR, IT and customer services will ensure the development of a health and safety advisory service. This facilitates compliance with health and safety legislation by promoting safety risk management through senior management and service teams. In practical terms, this will involve:
 - co-ordinating and monitoring the effectiveness of safety arrangements within the councils
 - ensuring that arrangements exist for the development and review of appropriate policies, procedures and guidance on health, safety and welfare issues
 - ensuring that all appropriate staff training needs are identified, and that effective arrangements exist for the training delivery, and
 - ensuring arrangements are put in place to make sure that staff are competent to carry out the responsibilities and duties assigned to them
18. Formally, the management team, personnel committee and Unison will assess and approve this policy at least every three years, to determine its effectiveness and appropriateness. Councillors will be advised of any changes resulting from this via the Weekly Information Sheet (WIS) and Councillors information sheet.

Sustainability Implications

19. Where applicable, health and safety arrangements will take account of sustainability, for example, having policies available in electronic format and choosing health and safety solutions that also take account of energy efficiency.

Equality and Diversity Implications

20. Any health and safety arrangements must take into account any individual needs that may be applicable, e.g. disabilities, language difficulties, etc. These will be

addressed as part of detailed risk assessments. An equalities impact check has been carried out on the health and safety policy.

Communications

21. The chief executive and management team approved the health and safety policy and consultation has taken place with unison, staff, the personnel committee and cabinet/executive portfolio holders.
22. Once approved the general statement of intent will be included in the induction pack for new employees and displayed on the notice board in reception. The health and safety policy will be posted on both intranets. An article will go out in the weekly information sheet (WIS) (South) and councillors' information sheet (Vale). The contents of the health and safety policy are also included in our corporate training programme.

Conclusion

23. The updated health and safety policy will enable the councils to comply with its legal obligations.

Background Papers

24. N/A