

Personnel Committee

11 July 2024



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	Health and Safety Policy
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Report author	Kathryn Cook, Assistant Director HR&OD
Lead Councillor	Councillor Emberson, Lead Councillor for Corporate Services and Resources
Corporate priority	Our Foundations
Recommendations	1. That That Personnel Committee approves the revised RBC Health and Safety Policy

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. RBC's current Health and Safety (H&S) Policy has been in place since 2023 and is required to be regularly reviewed. Amendments have been made to the existing policy to ensure that it is comprehensive and up to date.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1. RBC is required to have a formal H&S policy in place which outlines the way in which it manages all aspects of health and safety including the structures and processes in place for managing H&S risks to its staff, customers/clients and other members of the public.

3. The Proposal

- 3.1. The proposed H&S policy is attached at Appendix 1. Key changes include:
 - 3.1.1. A clearer delineation between the responsibilities of the Council as a corporate body, the management structures and those for individuals.
 - 3.1.2. The H&S Committees have been renamed as H&S Boards and their roles have been clarified (to ensure that they are not seen as a substitute to the normal line management responsibilities)
 - 3.1.3. Additional text has been provided to show that the Council has H&S responsibilities for all schools, services, contractors, staff and non-staff under its control.
 - 3.1.4. Further clarity has been provided in relation to elected members' role in health and safety.
 - 3.1.5. The Corporate H&S Team's assurance functions have been strengthened to improve governance arrangements and to show a clearer separation from operational compliance responsibilities.
 - 3.1.6. An additional reference has been made to the new critical incident document policy – see separate paper for Personnel Committee consideration.

3.1.7. The various sections have been reordered to better group together linked subject areas (the organisation, arrangements and responsibilities elements) and text has been refined across all areas of responsibility.

3.1.8. The Organogram at the end of the document has been amended to reflect all of the above.

4. Contribution to Strategic Aims

4.1. As an employer RBC is required to operate to the highest standards of health and safety practice. This policy sets out how we do this, how we ensure that we manage risk and reduce the likelihood of harm. It explicitly sets out the various roles and responsibilities for Boards, line managers and individuals as well as the processes, standards and reporting mechanisms in place to ensure the policy is adhered to.

5. Environmental and Climate Implications

5.1. Not applicable

6. Community Engagement

6.1. Not applicable

7. Equality Implications

7.1. Not applicable

8. Other Relevant Considerations

8.1 Globally, health and safety risk has been identified as a top priority, ahead of cyber-attacks, data loss and regulatory breaches, according to a survey by Clyde & Co. They say “It is unclear what the precise reason is for this rise in concern but, certainly in the UK, 2023 saw highly-publicised fines levied on major corporations (e.g. Network Rail, Morrisons, Serco and Transport for London),” the report said, “alongside a noticeable uptick in enforcement notices issued by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and reports of the HSE’s impressive 94 per cent conviction rate of individuals”. This external scrutiny underscores the importance of having a robust and comprehensive health and safety policy for RBC.

9. Legal Implications

9.1 Failure to have an up to date H&S policy may lead to the council facing civil or criminal litigation.

10. Financial Implications

10.1. None

11. Timetable for Implementation

11.1. Following agreement, the revised Health and Safety Policy will be implemented immediately.

12. Background Papers

12.1. There are none.

Appendices – delete if there are none

1. Draft Health and Safety Policy