

## **The Highland Council**

### **Finance, Housing and Resources Committee – 26 February 2014**

Agenda Item	<b>26</b>
Report No	<b>FHR/48/14</b>

### **Corporate Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy (2014)**

#### **Report by Depute Chief Executive**

#### **Summary**

There is a legal requirement for employers with 5 or more employees to have in place a health and safety policy and that policy is reviewed regularly. The current Corporate Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy has been updated to reference the Council's new Chief Executive, reflect the revised structure, provides more information on a positive safety culture, introduces the role of Service Health and Safety Co-ordinator and updates links to information in the health and safety management system.

#### **1. Background**

- 1.1 The Highland Council is legally required to have in place a health and safety policy which outlines responsibilities and arrangements for managing health and safety in the workplace. The current policy was introduced in 2011 but required to be updated to reflect the changes in the Council structure.
- 1.2 A high standard of health and safety performance is one of the Council's primary objectives and is recognised as an integral part of service delivery. The policy outlines how this standard can be achieved, with everyone in the Council having a role in achieving this.
- 1.3 Health and safety responsibilities and behaviours for all staff are outlined in the policy – these are underpinned by health and safety training and development opportunities.
- 1.4 This is the primary policy for health, safety and wellbeing for The Highland Council and includes links to other documents in the health and safety management system which contains guidance on managing and controlling the main hazards the Council is exposed to.

#### **2. Summary of main changes**

- 2.1 The main change requires the updating of references to Service titles and job titles: 4.1, 4.6 and 5.4
- 2.2 More information on a positive safety culture, and the role of managers in creating this, has been introduced in sections 4.1 and 4.6.
- 2.3 Each Service should nominate a current Head of Service to act as Health and Safety Co-ordinator – this currently happens within some Services. The Co-ordinator will co-ordinate health, safety and wellbeing issues within the Service; chair the Service Health and Safety group and champion health, safety and wellbeing issues within the Service.

- 2.4 Hyperlinks to policy and guidance documents approved and issued since 2011 have been included.

### **3. Promotion of new policy**

- 3.1 The policy will be promoted to staff via Corporate and Service newsletters; the front page of the Intranet; Service and Area health and safety workgroups; Trade Union Health and safety liaison meetings; relevant training workshops; the induction process and health and safety adviser visits.

### **4. Implications**

- 4.1 The policy will help meet health and safety legislative requirements and assist in managing occupational health and safety risks.
- 4.2 There are no other Resource, Equalities or Climate Change/Carbon Clever implications.

### **5. Recommendation**

It is recommended that:

- I. The revised Corporate Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy is approved

Designation: Depute Chief Executive

Date: 13/02/14

Author: Gena Falconer

Background Papers:

## General Statement of Health, Safety and Wellbeing

Version 2, 2014

### 1. Policy statement - health, safety and wellbeing

1.1 It is the policy of The Highland Council to take all reasonably practicable steps to ensure the health and safety at work of all its employees and others who may be affected by its undertakings. In addition, it is committed to ensuring that all reasonable measures are in place to maintain and enhance staff wellbeing so that staff can lead productive and healthy working lives.

1.2 The Council accepts the aims and provisions of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 (as amended) and also aims to comply with all other health and safety statutory obligations. A high standard of health and safety performance is one of the Council's primary objectives and is recognised as an integral part of service delivery.

1.3 This standard will be achieved by:

- a) Creating and maintaining a positive health and safety culture which secures the commitment and participation of employees;
- b) Meeting its responsibilities to employees, to other people and the environment in a way which recognises that legal requirements are the minimum standard;
- c) Adopting a planned and systematic approach to implementation of this policy, to ensure:
  - i) The provision and maintenance of plant and systems of work that are, so far as is reasonably practicable, safe and without risks to health;
  - ii) Arrangements for ensuring, so far as is reasonably practicable, safety and absence of risks to health in connection with the use, handling, storage and transport of articles and substances;
  - iii) The provision of such information, instruction,

- training and supervision is necessary to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety at work of employees;
- iv) So far as is reasonably practicable, as regards any place of work under the Councils control, the maintenance of it in a condition that is safe and without risks to health, and the provision and maintenance of means of access to and egress from it that are safe and without such risks;
  - v) The provision and maintenance of a working environment for employees that is, so far as is reasonably practicable, safe and without risks to health, and adequate as regards facilities and arrangements for their welfare at work;
- d) Identifying and assessing the risks associated with all activities of the Council, with the aim of eliminating or controlling these risks, so far as is reasonably practicable. In this respect, particular attention will be paid to the protection of young persons and to new or expectant mothers;
  - e) Allocating resources to meet the requirements of this policy;
  - f) Establishing a health and safety management system, in accordance with the Health and Safety Executive's guidance 'Successful Health and Safety Management Systems' (HSG65), including planning for health and safety, the setting of realistic short and long term objectives, deciding priorities and establishing adequate performance standards
  - g) Monitoring and reviewing performance on a regular basis to ensure that high standards are maintained
  - h) Fostering positive working relationships with employee representatives, encouraging full consultation on health and safety matters at all levels and requiring health and safety to be a standing item on all relevant management and staff meeting agendas
  - i) Maintaining arrangements for co-ordination and co-operation with other employees where Council employees or clients share premises, facilities or activities with persons working in other organisations
  - j) Ensuring the demands of work activities do not exceed the capability of employees to carry out the work without risk to themselves.

#### 1.4

As a major employer, the Council will seek to influence the health and safety performance of its contractors through the appointment and subsequent service delivery process. Health and safety issues will be taken into account during the procurement of all services, vehicles, plant, equipment and supplies.

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|-----|---|
| 1.5 | The Council assumes responsibility for ensuring so far as is reasonably practicable that working conditions at all workplaces are free from avoidable risks to the health, safety and wellbeing of employees.   |
| 1.6 | The Council is committed to the provision of access to competent occupational health services, providing health surveillance and to the promotion of physical and mental good health and wellbeing.   |
| 1.7 | A copy of this policy statement will be issued to all employees at its adoption and to all new staff at their induction. Managers should retain signed records to show that the policy has been received. An up to date copy of this policy will be available on the Council's Intranet |
|     | <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div>Steve Baron<br/>Chief Executive</div> <div>Date</div> </div>  |

## 2. **Health, Safety and Wellbeing – Organisational Responsibilities**

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| 2.1 | <p><b>Chief Executive</b></p> <p>The Chief Executive is responsible, so far as is reasonably practicable, for ensuring the health and safety at work of all Council employees. He is accountable to The Highland Council for ensuring compliance with The Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 and all other subordinate legislation. This will be achieved by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Detailing the organisation in the Council through which this policy will be implemented,</li> <li>b) Ensuring that adequate resources are made available to enable this policy to be implemented,</li> <li>c) Ensuring that health and safety is an integral part of the overall management culture and developing a positive attitude to health, safety and wellbeing among employees by visibly demonstrating commitment to achieving a high standard of performance with regard to health, safety and wellbeing,</li> <li>d) Ensuring that health and safety is a regular agenda item at senior management meetings,</li> <li>e) Appointing a competent person to assist the Council to apply the provisions of health and safety legislation,</li> <li>f) Ensuring that health, safety and wellbeing objectives are defined annually and that success in meeting these objectives are formally measured and reported,</li> <li>g) Ensuring that Elected Members are kept informed of health</li> </ul> |
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and safety issues as appropriate,

Whilst the Chief Executive retains responsibility for the matters set out above, practical responsibility is delegated to Service Directors and line managers in respect of the areas under their control.

2.2

Service Directors are responsible, so far as is reasonably practicable, for:

- a) The implementation and monitoring of this policy within their own service, and ensuring good communication with employees at all levels
- b) Ensuring that sufficient resources are available to ensure compliance with all health and safety requirements
- c) Developing and maintaining a health, safety and wellbeing policy which is specific to the tasks and responsibilities of their service. This must detail the service health and safety management system, which will include arrangements for assessing, planning, organising, monitoring and reviewing the measures required to eliminate, reduce or control local risks.
- d) Establishing arrangements for health and safety consultation within their service
- e) Bringing to the attention of line management that health and safety responsibility is shared and that they will be accountable for the health and safety of employees, or others who may be affected by the work of the Service
- f) Submitting a service annual health and safety report to the appropriate Council Committee (see 3.3.2).

2.3

[Director of Corporate Development](#) has been nominated as the member of the Council's Senior Management team with specific responsibility for health and safety issues including the production of an annual report detailing the Council's health and safety performance.

2.4

Director of [Development and Infrastructure](#) is responsible for establishing a Corporate Safety Management System to monitor and ensure that property related statutory inspections are carried out in respect of all Council occupied premises.

2.5

[Corporate Leadership Support](#) is responsible for ensuring the implementation, and subsequent monitoring of corporate and service health, safety and wellbeing policies within the Council's Administrative areas. In particular, they should:

- a) Ensure that health and safety remains a regular item on management team meeting agendas
- b) Ensuring that health and safety issues in multi-service occupied buildings are adequately addressed and co-ordinated
- c) Establish Area health and safety groups to ensure effective consultation and communication with all staff in their operational areas.

2.6

## Heads of Service/Area Managers/Team Managers/Head Teachers

2.6.1

**Heads of Service**, are responsible for:

- a) Ensuring that sufficient numbers of trained risk assessors are available in the Service
- b) Ensuring that appropriate, valid risk assessments are available, and regularly reviewed, for activities conducted by the service
- c) Ensuring proper control, including monitoring, of contractor activities
- d) Nominating a responsible person in each premises for dealing with health and safety property matters. Where premises are shared, the relevant Heads of Service should ensure that one RPO is appointed and that pertinent information is shared. RPO training is available from [Employee Development](#).

2.6.2

**Heads of Service, Team Managers, Area Managers and Head Teachers** are responsible for:

- a) Implementing this policy in their area of responsibility
- b) Ensuring compliance with all legal requirements and relevant Council health, safety and wellbeing documents
- c) Ensuring that new employees receive a health and safety induction which must include an awareness of all precautions and procedures applicable to the job activity, and any emergency procedures
- d) Ensuring that any health and safety responsibilities delegated to staff are advised of the pertinent findings of risk assessments and any changes to work practices
- e) Ensuring that all staff are, and remain, competent to carry out any activities as part of their duties and responsibilities, and
- f) Motivating and empowering employees to work in a safe and healthy manner in order to encourage a positive attitude to health, safety and wellbeing in the workplace
- g) Updating the Corporate health and safety manual.

2.7

**Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager** is responsible for:

- a) Directing and assisting the Chief Executive, members of the Senior Management Team and other managers on health, safety and wellbeing matters;
- b) Acting as the Council's competent person in health and safety as required by legislation;
- c) Providing up to date information and advice on changes in legislation;
- d) Ensuring that health and safety performance is monitored;
- e) Development of a health, safety and wellbeing strategy;
- f) Ensuring, through a process of monitoring, inspection and auditing, that health and safety policies and guidance are being consistently applied across the Council;
- g) Manage the occupational health service;

## **h) Monitoring compliance with this policy**

2.8

### **Employees**

Each employee is responsible for their own acts or omissions and the effect that these may have upon the safety of themselves or anyone else. Whilst the Council accepts the main responsibility for the implementation of this policy, individuals are legally obliged to co-operate to ensure a healthy and safe working environment.

In addition all employees must:

- a) Avoid taking unnecessary risks;
- b) Set a good example to others, especially young or inexperienced workers;
- c) Work in accordance with any health and safety instruction or training that has been given;
- d) Bring to the attention of a responsible person any health and safety issues they may have; and
- e) Familiarise themselves with this Policy and any local arrangements.

The normal reporting line for health and safety matters is via line management. However, given that staff may work at a number of sites and that their line manager may be in another area, there is a need to ensure that health and safety matters can be, and are, referred to the appropriate Head of Service.

2.9

### **Safety Representatives**

Through its health and safety partnership agreement with the recognised Trade Unions, the Council encourages the development of an effective network of trained safety representatives.

The appointment of safety representatives is the prerogative of accredited trade unions in accordance with the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977(as amended) and the Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations1996.

The Council will ensure that recognised safety representatives are consulted and provided with reasonable facilities and time off to fulfil their duties.

In keeping with this policy, the Chief Executive regards the promotion of health and safety measures as an objective shared by management and employees at all levels and seeks to achieve this by consultation with all staff. This will be carried out corporately through the normal consultation channels – the Joint Consultative Committee, the Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers and the Central Safety Committee - and locally by each local health and safety groups.



Trade union safety representatives will be encouraged to undertake the full range of their statutory duties in accordance with the terms of the established Safety Representatives Charter

2.10

#### **Elected Members**

All Elected Members should be aware of and accept their individual and collective responsibilities in the care of health and safety of themselves and others

The Council will appoint an Elected Member as Health and Safety Champion with the specific remit of promoting health and safety in line with this policy.

Elected Members will take strategic responsibility for setting the health and safety direction and policy for the Council and will ensure effective strategic health and safety governance

2.11

#### **Resources Committee**

The Resources Committee is the vehicle responsible for formulating health and safety policy, monitoring its implementation and ensuring that sufficient resources are allocated to ensure that the Council meets its statutory health and safety obligations.

2.13

#### **Central Safety Committee**

The Central Safety Committee has been established as a subcommittee of the FR Committee. It will ensure that formal consultation on health, safety and wellbeing issues takes place and provides a vehicle for joint participation in health and safety matters to enable Elected Members, management and employees to exchange views and to reach a better understanding on all matters and procedures related to health and safety. The Central Safety Committee will appoint a Chair and Vice Chair from the Elected Members and Trade Union representatives who are members of the Committee.

3.

### **General Arrangements**

3.1

This document is the over arching policy for health and safety management within the Council. It will be supplemented by other guidance and procedures on specific issues such as risk assessment, accident reporting, manual handling etc. which will be available on the Council's Intranet and in the Council's health and safety manual.

3.2

The following requirements must be incorporated into Service health and safety arrangements as necessary. They should be expanded or altered to meet the specific requirements of the Service concerned and developed with the support of the health and safety team.

- 3.3 Specific reference to health and safety arrangements for new employees will be made during the induction process.
- 3.4 A copy of this policy will be given to every employee (see 1.7).

## 4 **Safety Culture**

- 4.1 A positive safety culture helps to ensure not only a low accident/incident rate but improves employee engagement and co-operation. The following elements will contribute to the Council's safety culture.
- 4.2 **Communication**  
The Council recognise that employees have an important contribution to make to the overall organisational health and safety culture. The Council will ensure that health and safety is an integral part of its management system and seeks to develop a positive attitude to health and safety among employees by:
- Visibly demonstrating a clear commitment to improving health and safety performance;
  - Promoting co-operation and consultation across Services;
  - Ensuring the communication of necessary information throughout the Council; and
  - Securing the competence of employees by including health and safety within the recruitment process and systematically identifying health and safety training needs.
- 4.3 **Health and Safety Advice**  
The health and safety team will actively monitor the implementation of this policy and provide advice on action necessary to ensure the health and safety of Council employees and anyone who may be affected by the Council's undertakings.
- 4.4 **Health and Safety Training**  
Health and safety training is an important factor in the reduction of accidents and prevention of ill health. Services will actively support training by providing the necessary resources and organisation to carry out such training. All new employees will receive a Service health and safety induction.
- Where health and safety training needs are identified by Services, suitable training can be arranged through the Employee Development team

4.5

### **Safety Representatives**

Safety representatives appointed by recognised Trade Unions are entitled to inspect work places every three months and if necessary more frequently. These inspections will be accompanied by an appropriate management representative.

Safety representatives appointed by recognised Trade Unions will be allowed to inspect any statutory document which the Service is required to maintain and will also be given, on request, information necessary to carry out their functions as defined under the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977 and representatives of employee safety in accordance with the Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations 1996.

Safety representatives should attend relevant health and safety groups

Services will consult the relevant safety representatives in accordance with the current Council policy.

4.6

### **Leadership**

A positive safety culture must be led by management. Managers can work towards this by:

- a) Demonstrating their own positive health and safety behaviours
- b) Encouraging employees to raise concerns/discuss health and safety issues
- c) Making regular visits to workplaces under their control
- d) Addressing behaviours that create unacceptable risks.

4.7

### **Raising Health and Safety Concerns**

Should an employee require to raise a health and safety concern, the procedure detailed below should be followed in line with local procedures:

**STAGE 1.** Raise concern with Supervisor. If not resolved:

**STAGE 2.** Raise concern with Manager. If not resolved:

**STAGE 3.** Raise the concern with Safety Representative. If not resolved:

**STAGE 4.** Safety Representative can raise concerns at the relevant health and safety management groups. If the matter is not resolved after three meetings:

**STAGE 5.** Matter is referred to the Central Safety Committee.

At any stage during this process, the employee may ask their union's safety representative to act on their behalf. The employee/safety representative can contact the health and safety team for further guidance at any stage.

4.8

#### [Liaison with the Health and Safety Executive \(HSE\)](#)

The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager will be the main point of contact between the Council and the HSE. Where the HSE makes direct contact with the Council the agreed [Management Protocol](#) should be followed.

5

## **Planning and Implementation**

5.1

### [Corporate Health and Safety Plan](#)

The Chief Executive will ensure, through the Head of People and Performance that a corporate health and safety plan is in place which will achieve and support effective health and safety management systems across the Council.

Services will also prepare a health and safety plan outlining specific Service health and safety objectives with realistic timescales for their accomplishment. These objectives will be developed in consultation with the health and safety team and recognised trade unions

All health and safety plans must be regularly monitored by the Services' senior management teams at Health and Safety Planning groups (see 5.3). Updated health and safety plans must form part of the Services' annual health and safety report

5.2

### [Health and Safety Annual Reports](#)

Services will prepare annual health and safety reports that evaluate their health and safety performance. Such reports should include information on the following issues:

- a. Profile of the Service and its main functions and activities;
- b. Management of health and safety within the Service. This should include a report detailing the progress of the health and safety plan objectives from the previous year;
- c. Occupational health and safety risk management, planning and progress;
- d. Information on accident and incidents, including trends and lessons learnt;
- e. Health and safety training;
- f. Service health and safety objectives for the coming year.

5.3

### Health and Safety Planning Groups

Each Director and nominated Head of Service are required to establish a Service health and safety planning group to assist in the formulation and implementation of their health and safety policy and plan. Planning for health and safety is suitable for inclusion as a standing agenda item within the remit of the Directorate senior management team meetings.

The planning group should identify and prioritise actions, and agree key performance indicators including achievable targets for implementation of the various elements of the health and safety plan. The group should also monitor implementation of the health and safety plan.

The operational planning group is not an alternative or substitute for local liaison meetings, safety groups or health and safety committees involving employee representation.

5.4

### Service Health and Safety Co-ordinator

Each Service will appoint a Head of Service to act as Health and Safety Co-ordinator for the Service. The Co-ordinator will co-ordinate health, safety and wellbeing issues within the Service; chair the Service Health and Safety group and champion health, safety and wellbeing issues within the Service.

5.4

### Risk Identification

The Council recognises that Services are required to implement an effective risk control strategy to minimise employees' exposure to significant risks. Services must identify all significant local risks and ensure that these, and their associated controls, are communicated to staff.

For further information on risk assessments contact the health and safety team.

5.5

### Accident and Incident Analysis

Every accident and incident will be investigated by the injured person's supervisor or line manager. The completed report should be submitted to the Manager in the first instance. All accident forms completed must contain recommendations to prevent a recurrence.

Accidents and incidents resulting in :

- Major injury/dangerous occurrence
- Lost time accidents of 7 days or more
- Work related ill health and disease

will be analysed by Services' management, the health, safety and wellbeing team, and health and safety groups with a view to determining and where possible, eliminating the causes, of such events.

5.6

### Proactive monitoring

At least six monthly workplace safety inspections, inline with the Monitoring Protocol, shall be undertaken within all Services as part of their health and safety plan. This should be undertaken in conjunction with TU Health and Safety Representatives where possible,

In addition, occupational health and safety advisers will undertake compliance monitoring and physical verification exercises on a regular basis.

6.

## **Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy Statements**

6.1

Below are descriptions of the Highland Council's main health and safety policies. These policies require the full co-operation of Service management and staff at every level. Specific procedures, guidance and information will be developed to assist managers applying these policies appropriately.

6.2

### Asbestos

The Highland Council recognises the health risks associated with breathing in air contaminated with asbestos dust/fibres. Arrangements will be made therefore to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that employees and others (clients, contractors, pupils and public) who use or work in Highland Council premises are not at risk from exposure to hazardous forms of asbestos. Exposure will be minimised through the use of proper control measures and work methods supported by training of employees as detailed in the Guidance on Managing Asbestos document.

Asbestos surveys will be completed in all public buildings and Asbestos Management Plans (AMP) prepared. RPOs will be expected to manage and update the AMP as required.

No work shall commence on asbestos material or materials thought to contain asbestos until it is sampled and an assessment of the potential exposure of employees and others, as a result of that work, is undertaken. A suitable plan of work shall be made before the work commences

6.3

### Consultation

The arrangements for consultation with employees on health and safety matters are:

#### **a) Central Safety Committee**

As a sub-committee of the Councils Resources Committee's Joint Consultation Group (JCG), the Central Safety Committee provides a forum for formal consultation with the recognised Trade Unions on health and safety issues.

**b) Area Health and Safety Groups**

Health and Safety groups have been established in the Council's main administrative centres. These groups ensure that consultation with all staff (Union and non-Union) takes place at a local level in the Areas.

**c) Service Health and Safety Groups**

Each Service is required to establish a consultation group to ensure that Service specific health and safety issues are discussed with staff involved in all aspects of Service delivery.

**d) Management and Staff Meetings**

Health and safety should be included as a regular item on the agenda of all Management and Staff meetings. This will ensure that staff at all levels are given the opportunity to raise health and safety concerns and participate in the overall consultation process.

6.4

[Control of Substances Hazardous to Health](#)

Directors shall have arrangements in place to ensure that no work is carried out which is liable to expose any employees or others to any product, chemical or substance hazardous to health unless a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks created by that activity and of the steps needed to reduce the risks has been made.

Exposure to hazardous products, chemicals or substances will either be prevented or, where this is not reasonably practicable, adequately controlled. Measures introduced to control exposure will be maintained, examined and tested to ensure their continued effectiveness. Personal protective equipment will be provided only as a last resort as a means of controlling exposure to substances. Information, instruction and training will be given to employees exposed to substances hazardous to health.

6.5

[Display Screen Equipment](#)

The Highland Council will take all reasonable steps to secure the health and safety of employees who work with display screen equipment (DSE) including computers, laptops and PDAs. In particular arrangements will be made to:

- a) Identify all "users" of DSE in accordance with the regulations and maintain records of the same.
- b) Make arrangements for the assessment of each workstation taking into account the DSE, the furniture, the working environment and the worker.
- c) Take appropriate control measures in respect of risks identified as a result of the assessment process.
- d) Examine work patterns and incorporate changes of task within the working day to prevent intensive periods of DSE use.
- e) Review software to ensure that it is suitable for the task and is not unnecessarily complicated.
- f) Ensure that eye and eyesight tests are available for users of DSE.
- g) Ensure the supply of any corrective appliances (glasses or contact lenses) where required specifically for use with DSE.
- h) Advise employees of the risks to health associated with DSE and



how these are to be avoided.

## 6.6

### Electricity at Work

The Electricity at Work Regulations requires the employer to assess the work activities which utilise electricity, or which may be affected by it, and to define all foreseeable associated risks. In order to reduce the risks associated with the use of electricity at work, the Council will ensure that:

- a) electrical installations and equipment are installed in accordance with the Institute of Electrical Engineers (IEE) Wiring Regulations.
- b) fixed installations are maintained in a safe condition by carrying out routine safety testing.
- c) portable and transportable equipment is inspected and tested frequently as required (the frequency will depend on the environment in which the equipment is used and the conditions of usage).
- d) safe systems of work for maintenance, inspection or testing are promoted and implemented.
- e) live working is forbidden unless it is absolutely necessary, and suitable arrangements have been made to prevent injury to the persons carrying out the work and anyone else who may be in the area.
- f) employees who carry out electrical work are competent to do so. suitable personal protective equipment is provided if required to include special tools, protective clothing and insulating screening and such equipment is maintained in good condition.
- g) safety information is exchanged with contractors ensuring that they are fully aware of (and prepared to abide by) the Council's health and safety arrangements.
- h) detailed records in relation to the above are maintained.

## 6.7

### Fire Safety

The Council will take all reasonably practicable steps to provide and maintain an environment that is safe from the effects of fire for all its employees, clients, and any other people who may be affected by its activities.

Managers must ensure that, as a minimum, the following arrangements are in place:

- a) The provision and maintenance of arrangements which allows persons to escape if a fire occurs.
- b) the provision and maintenance of plant and systems of work so that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the chances of a fire starting are kept as low as possible;
- c) suitable arrangements to allow, so far as is reasonably practicable, for fire safety measures connected with the use, handling, storage and transport of flammable articles and substances;
- d) the provision of such information, instruction, training and supervision as is necessary so that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the fire safety of its employees and other persons;



- e) provision of fire risk assessments and a means of addressing any identified recommendations;
- f) the allocation sufficient resources to meet the requirements of outcomes of the fire risk assessment;
- g) Maintaining arrangements for co-ordination and co-operation with other employers where Council employees or clients share premises, facilities or activities with persons working in other organisations;

The minimisation of property damage is important but not if it jeopardises the safety of staff or members of the public. **The safety of life must override all other considerations at all times.**

6.8

#### First Aid

The Council will ensure that adequate equipment and facilities are provided to enable first-aid to be rendered to its employees if they are injured or become ill at work.

Each workplace will be assessed in relation to its size and location, the nature of the work undertaken and the number of employees to determine the appropriate provision of first-aid facilities.

Services shall put in place arrangements to ensure the replacement of useable items in first-aid boxes.

6.9

#### Food safety

The Council is committed to the principles of Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) and Assured Safe Catering and will endeavour to identify potential hazards in all food handling operations. It will implement the controls and monitoring procedures at those points critical to food safety. Service management must ensure that they have in place arrangements for ensuring, so far as is reasonably practicable, safety and absence of risks to health in connection with the use, handling, storage and transport of articles and substances.

6.10

#### Gas Safety

All reasonable steps will be taken to secure the health and safety of employees, tenants, and others who use or operate gas appliances. In this respect the term gas refers to mains gas, liquefied natural gas and liquefied petroleum gases, i.e. propane and butane.

6.11

#### Health and Wellbeing at Work

The Council recognises the importance of employees being better able to perform effectively at work and enjoy an active life away from work when they are in good health. Preventing or reducing work related ill health ensures employees do not experience injury or harm and the Council complies with its legal requirements. Specific arrangements concerning work related ill health are dealt with in policy arrangements such as manual handling, display screen equipment, risk assessment, stress and occupational health.

Since both work activities and lifestyle factors can affect employee health, consideration must be given to promoting health related topics not arising from the work place or work activities. Lifestyle factors such as physical inactivity, smoking and poor diet can lead to major causes of ill health and be detrimental to work performance. Therefore, the Council accepts that to promote positive employee health is a benefit for employees and the Council. It is committed to developing an integrated approach to employee health, which includes:

- a) Provision of relevant information on a variety of health related topics
- b) Support and advice on how to improve health
- c) Identification of links between work activities, workplaces and employee health and where necessary implement suitable measures to reduce work related and non-work related health risks.

This will be achieved through shared knowledge and experience of relevant functions within Services and participation of employees and their Trade Union representatives. Where necessary assistance will be sought from external agencies or partnerships established to ensure current information and advice is available for employees.

6.11

#### [Incident Reporting and Investigation](#)

All accidents and incidents must be reported using the Council's accident report form.

Service Management has the responsibility to investigate all accidents, dangerous occurrences and near misses with the objective of identifying the cause and the appropriate steps needed to prevent a recurrence.

Major injuries, injuries resulting in absences of 3 or more days and notifiable dangerous occurrences must be reported to the Health and Safety Executive. The health and safety team should be notified at the same time.

In addition to management investigations, the health and safety team will investigate all reportable accidents to a level commensurate with their potential severity.

6.12

#### [Legionella](#)

The Council recognises the risk of infection from Legionella bacteria and will take all reasonable steps to implement an appropriate health and safety management system for water systems within Council premises to ensure that the necessary measures to prevent, or adequately control, the risk of exposure to Legionella bacteria are minimised. This management system will:

- a) Identify and assess sources of risk – including checking whether conditions are present which will encourage bacteria to multiply;

whether there is a means of creating and disseminating breathable droplets and if there are susceptible people who may be exposed to the contaminated aerosols.

- b) Prepare a scheme for preventing or controlling the risks.
- c) Appoint a responsible person to manage the scheme
- d) Implement, manage and monitor precautions.
- e) Keep records of the precautions.

6.13

#### Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment

The Council recognises that it has a duty to reduce the risks to employees and others from lifting operations. In order to assist the Council in discharging this duty, all Services must ensure that all lifting equipment provided for use at work is:

- a) Strong and stable enough for the particular use, and marked to indicate safe working loads;
- b) Positioned and installed in such a way as to minimise any risks;
- c) Used safely, i.e. the work is planned, organised and performed by competent people; and
- d) Subject to ongoing thorough examination, and where appropriate, inspection by competent people.

6.14

#### Lone working

The Council recognises that some staff are required to work by themselves in the community without close or direct supervision, sometimes in isolated work areas or out of office hours. Where the conditions of service delivery or its associated tasks require staff to work alone, both the individual staff member and Managers have a duty to assess and reduce the risks which lone working presents.

6.15

### Management of Contractors

The Council will monitor the activities of Contractors to minimise the risks presented to employees and to other persons on site or within Council buildings including members of the public.

The Highland Council in its employment of contractors recognises the need for an effective management control system to ensure the health and safety of all persons affected by contract works. In this respect the Council will make arrangements to:

- a) Select only contractors who can demonstrate that they have effective safety management systems in place and in particular those who:
  - i) Use only competent and adequately trained employees.
  - ii) Use only equipment, tools and materials that are maintained, stored and operated in a safe manner.
  - iii) Have health and safety responsibilities clearly defined and appropriate systems in place for communication on health and safety matters.
  - iv) Undertake adequate supervision and monitoring of their own health and safety performance.
- b) Produce specifications, exchange information with and acquire plans from contractors which deal with the health and safety issues as they develop at each phase of the work and which deal effectively with the risks involved.
- c) Maintain regular effective two-way communications which accommodate changes and unforeseen problems promptly.
- d) Monitor the health and safety performance of contractors
- e) Maintain lists of Approved Contractors taking into account the factors referred to above.

6.16

### Manual Handling

The Council recognises that manual handling is one of the most common causes of absence through injury in the workplace and must be avoided, so far as is reasonably practicable. Where it is not possible to eliminate manual handling, assessments will be undertaken to determine the level of risk. Suitable controls will be introduced to reduce the risk of injury, including the risk of repetitive strain injury, to the lowest extent practicable, including training, use of mechanical aids, automation, redesigning the system of work or even the workplace itself. In most cases, manual handling assessments will be incorporated into generic risk assessments: however, a specific manual handling assessment will be carried out when required

6.17

### Mental Health and Wellbeing

The Council is committed to developing a work environment and culture where employees can be open about their mental health without fear of stigma. Additionally, the Council aims to provide a supportive working environment to those experiencing or recovering from mental ill-health. It is recognised that mental ill health need not be a barrier to effective working and that a positive working

environment and appropriate support at work has a significant impact on reducing stress-related sickness absence and improving long-term outcomes for employees experiencing mental health problems.

6.18

#### Noise

The Council will put in place measures to protect employees from the risks of Noise Induced Hearing loss (NIHL) and tinnitus, which can be caused by exposure to excessive noise. These measures will include:

- a) Assessing the risks from noise exposure
- b) Taking measures to reduce noise exposure where a risk assessment shows that this is necessary
- c) Ensuring the level of noise generated is taken into account when a new piece of equipment is purchased or hired
- d) Providing hearing protection where necessary if risks can not be adequately reduced by other means.
- e) Providing training and information for employees on the risks from noise and the measures in place to reduce these
- f) Providing health surveillance where the risk assessment shows that this is appropriate.

6.19

#### Occupational Health

The Council recognises the importance of Occupational Health for the health, safety and welfare of its employees. A comprehensive occupational health service is an integral part of the Council's policy to provide assistance to employees with health problems at an early stage and in responding to service delivery problems due to absence.

6.20

#### Radon

The Highland Council recognises that where radon occurs in high concentrations (i.e. above 400 Bq/m<sup>3</sup> in a workplace and 200 Bq/m<sup>3</sup> in homes) it can present a foreseeable health risk. Exposure to high concentrations of radon over a period of time may increase the risk of developing lung cancer.

6.19

#### Risk Assessment

The Council acknowledges the importance of risk assessment in terms of its overall management of health and safety. Arrangements will therefore be made to ensure that risk assessments are carried out throughout the range of the Council's work activities and premises. In particular, the risk assessment process will:

- a) Identify hazards
- b) Determine who might be harmed and how, for example employees, clients, pupils and contractors etc.
- c) Determine the likelihood of harm occurring
- d) Identify appropriate measures necessary to control or eliminate the risk
- e) Record findings
- f) Arrange for monitoring and review

6.20

### Safe Driving at Work

The Council recognises the need to protect employees and others from the hazards associated with work related driving, and as such the objectives of this policy are to ensure that:

- a) The principles of risk assessment are applied to work related driving
- b) The recognised hierarchy of control measures is considered with particular reference to eliminating the need for work related driving wherever possible
- c) Where work related driving cannot be avoided then appropriate controls are introduced to reduce risk to an acceptable level
- d) When assessing risks, factors such as driver competency, vehicle suitability and journey planning and scheduling are all considered.
- e) Procedures are in place for checking licence and insurance documentation

6.21

### Smoking at Work

The Managing Smoking at Work policy seeks to guarantee to employees the right to work in air free from tobacco smoke. Every employee should be made aware of the hazards associated with smoking and passive smoking. It is a major cause of disease and premature death.

There is a complete ban on smoking in all wholly or substantially enclosed Council premises, including the use of e-cigarettes. This ban also extends to Council owned vehicles and to vehicles used for carrying passengers on Council business.

6.22

### Stress Management

The Council recognises that, whilst a degree of pressure can be a positive force at work, excessive pressure can have a negative effect on health and on performance.

To manage stress effectively, managers will promote and maintain systems of management and behaviour at work consistent with the principles and of the various strategies outlined in the stress management policy.

6.23

### Vibration

Hand arm vibration syndrome (HAVS) and Whole Body Vibration (WBV) describe how the vibrations from powered hand operated equipment or vehicles can affect the individual. HAVS is a disease that can be caused by the use of vibrating tools. All cases of HAVS must be reported to the HSE.

The Council will put in place a range of measures to protect employees from the effects of vibrating equipment, including:

- a) Assessing the risks from vibration exposure
- b) Taking steps to reduce vibration exposure
- c) Taking into account vibration risks when purchasing or hiring equipment

- d) Providing training and information for employees on the risks from vibration and the measures in place to reduce these
- e) Providing health surveillance where the risk assessment shows that this is appropriate.

6.24

### Violence

In order to ensure so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of employees exposed to the risk of violence at work, the Council will:

- a) Ensure that risks of violence are identified, assessed, reported and controlled as necessary.
- b) Establish a comprehensive recording system for acts of violence occurring throughout its range of Services.
- c) Provide support for employees who are the victims of violence.
- d) Provide training for employees to enable them to avoid and/or deal with actual and potential violence.
- e) Work in partnership with other agencies to develop strategies to reduce the incidence of violence at work.
- f) Consult Trade Unions and employees on violence issues and establish a process for sharing information on violence risks.
- g) Ensure sufficient resources are available for the provision of appropriate control measures
- h) Ensure that the arrangements for dealing with violence at work are reviewed at suitable intervals.

7.

## **Monitoring and review**

7.1

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Health, Safety and Wellbeing manager.