

# Redacted



## REDACTED INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

**Health & Safety (Corporate) 2023/24**

**AW/01/2023**

**APRIL 2024**

<b>Auditor</b>	Senior Consultant (Mazars LLP)
<b>Reviewer</b>	Assistant Manager (Mazars LLP)
	Manager (Mazars LLP)
	Partner (Mazars LLP)

### Distribution list

<b>Job Title</b>
Head of Corporate Health and Safety
Director of HR, Customer Services and Public Affairs

## Executive Summary

<b>Audit Objective</b>	The overall objective of the audit was to review the effectiveness of controls over the Council's compliance with Health and Safety (H&S) regulations, employment law and statutory reporting obligations.
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Assurance Level		Findings by Priority Rating		
<b>Reasonable Assurance</b>	There is generally a sound system of control in place but there are weaknesses which put some of the service or system objectives at risk. Management attention is required.	<b>Priority 1</b>	<b>Priority 2</b>	<b>Priority 3</b>
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Key Findings
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Council has a Corporate Health &amp; Safety (H&amp;S) Policy in place that provides an overview of the scope and breadth of H&amp;S arrangements across the Council. Once considered by the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) this was signed and approved via email by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Council in June 2023.</li> <li>2. The Corporate H&amp;S Policy provides a breakdown of the roles and responsibilities within H&amp;S at the Council. The H&amp;S Policy is available to staff on the Council intranet, in a dedicated H&amp;S section. Additionally, included in this section are other key policies and guidance. There is also a suite of mandatory H&amp;S training for all staff as well as for particular roles at the Council such as housing and medical staff.</li> <li>3. The Council display signage in line with H&amp;S requirements such as fire exit signs, fire evacuation notices, physical and mental health first aider lists, as well as their locations, working at height, and manual handling posters. We were provided with photographs from the Council's Civic Centre in Bromley evidence the existence of these measures.</li> <li>4. A review of the risk assessment tracking spreadsheet maintained by the H&amp;S Team demonstrated that they are monitoring services to ensure that they are undertaking their duties. At the time of our fieldwork we noted a spreadsheet was shared with Council Directors in the week commencing (W/c) 06/11/2023 to inform them of any gaps in their areas and ensure these are addressed.</li> <li>5. The Council requires staff to undertake a suite of mandatory training courses related to H&amp;S. We reviewed examples of content for two of the mandatory training courses (Fire prevention and safety and Health and Safety inductions) and noted that the Council are actively tracking completion and both courses had been completed by all relevant staff at the time of our fieldwork.</li> <li>6. There are a number of corporate bodies at the Council that oversee H&amp;S, including the Corporate H&amp;S Committee which is chaired by the Director of HR, Customer Services, and Public Affairs. The H&amp;S Committee meets every two months and has a dedicated Terms of Reference (ToR); however, this has not been reviewed since January 2020.</li> </ol>

7. In addition to the H&S Committee, the following groups also form part of the corporate health and safety governance framework at the Council:
- The Environment and Public Protection H&S Committee; meets quarterly;
  - The Housing, Planning, & Regeneration Safety Meeting; meets quarterly;
  - Corporate Risk Management Group; meets three times a year;
  - Chief Executive's Department H&S Committee; meets every six months; and
  - Audit and Risk Committee; meets three times a year.
8. We reviewed the meeting minutes for the groups above and confirmed that between October 2022 and October 2023, in all cases, meetings were going ahead as scheduled.
9. The Council has started producing a bi-annual H&S Report which is presented to the Corporate H&S Committee. The report includes summaries of incidents broken down into categories, and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) reportable incidents, near misses, and total days lost due to incidents. The first report was published and completed in August 2023. Through review of meeting minutes we confirmed this was discussed by the Corporate H&S Committee in their October 2023 meeting.
10. Reports on the number of accidents and near miss statistics are produced periodically by the Council and include columns for each department, the number of accidents, the number of near misses, and the lessons learned for each of these two categories. It was confirmed that these statistics are also presented to the Corporate H&S Committee.
11. The Head of Corporate H&S distributes monthly H&S emails to managers at the Council that summarise issues or events relating to H&S from the previous month. We reviewed copies of these emails for June, July, and August 2023. The Council has deployed an employee feedback scheme called 'Ideas Aloud', which allows staff to provide feedback on the Council's services, including H&S matters.
12. The Council has emergency response plans, including procedures for evacuations and fire drills; for example, bomb threats, suspicious persons, and suspicious packages. Fire evacuation procedures are displayed physically near fire exits and on message boards at the Council's headquarters and fire drills are planned and recorded to identify any weaknesses. We obtained a fire drill log for listing the Council's corporate properties and selected the latest drill from the Bromley Civic Centre dated 30 August 2023. We confirmed that the drill took place to schedule across the building by reviewing reports detailing the performance of evacuations. These reports were analysed and discussed by the Corporate H&S Committee in their October 2023 meeting.
- We have identified the following areas for management attention:
13. **Policies and Procedures** (Priority 2) – The policy and procedural guidance structure is not consistent across the suite of 28 H&S policies at the Council. Some are not version controlled at all and have not been reviewed in several years. **Recommendation 1**
14. **Recording and investigation of accidents and near misses** (Priority 2) – The Accident - Incident Reporting Procedure states that all incidents should be reported to the Corporate H&S Team within five working days of occurrence. However, during our testing we noted that only two of the ten samples were reported to the Corporate H&S Team within this timeframe. **Recommendation 2**

15. **Corporate H&S Committee Terms of Reference** (Priority 3) – We reviewed the Corporate H&S Committee ToR. The document was revised in January 2018 and last reviewed in January 2020 according to the document footer, so it appears to have a review cycle every two years. **Recommendation 3**  
Management has agreed to actions for all findings raised in this report. **Please see Appendix A.**  
*Definitions of assurance opinions and priority ratings are in **Appendix B.***  
*The scope of the internal audit is set out in **Appendix C.***

## Appendix A - Management Action Plan

### 1. Periodic Review of Policies and Procedures

#### Finding

The Council has a Corporate H&S Policy in place and a suite of 27 specific policies that feed into it. We reviewed all 28 policies including the Corporate H&S Policy, to test whether they had been periodically updated in line with a defined review timescale. We noted the following issues:

- The 'Accident - Incident Reporting Procedure' that we received is dated June 2013 and there is no version control to suggest a more recent iteration;
- The 'Lone Working Policy, Procedure, and Guidance' is version controlled, but this iteration is dated April 2019;
- The 'Stress Policy' is dated June 2021, but it is not version controlled so we cannot ascertain the review cycle;
- The 'New and Expectant Mothers Policy and Procedure' has a version control and is dated April 2021, but it does not indicate what version this iteration is (left blank) and it does not indicate the review frequency with a date of future review;
- The 'Substance Misuse Policy' is dated April 2014 and there is no version control to suggest a more recent iteration;
- The 'Mental Health & Well-Being Policy' has a version control, but it does not indicate the review frequency with a date of future review. It is dated November 2019;
- The 'Mental Health First Aiders Policy' has a version control, but it does not indicate the review frequency with a date of future review. It is dated November 2019; and
- The 'Legionella Management Policy' has a version control, but it does not indicate the review frequency with a date of future review. It is dated April 2021.

The Council also indicated a number of the policies were currently under review, however, we noted some potential issues:

- The 'Risk Assessment Guidance' is dated September 2023, but there is no version control so we could not ascertain the review frequency or the date of next review;
- The 'Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Guidance' is not dated and not version controlled so we could not ascertain the date of the previous or the next review;
- The 'Driving and Mobile Phones Policy' is dated April 2014 and is no version control to suggest a more recent iteration;
- The 'Electrical Safety Policy' is dated April 2010, and there is no version control to suggest a more recent iteration;
- The 'Vaccination Policy' is dated April 2014, and there is no version control to suggest a more recent iteration. Considering the Covid-19 Pandemic that hit in 2020, this is potentially risky oversight;
- The 'Working at Height Policy' is dated April 2014, and there is no version control to suggest a more recent iteration;
- The 'Office Health and Safety Inspection Guidelines' is dated April 2010, and there is no version control to suggest a more recent iteration and;
- The 'Dealing with Work-Related Violence Policy and Procedure' is dated October 2023 and has a version control; however it does not include the frequency of review; the document was previously reviewed in April 2019.

The policy and procedural guidance structure is not consistent across the suite of H&S policies at the Council. Some are not version controlled at all and have not been reviewed in several years, whilst others are version controlled fully, with the date of review, the date of the next review, who reviewed it, and a summary of the changes made. A good example of this is the Fire Safety Policy which has a full page dedicated to Document Control and Distribution.

**Risk**

The H&S Policy Framework is not fit for purpose and appropriately endorsed to ensure tone from the top. Staff therefore do not take appropriate measures to safeguard their health and safety, and that of the Council's external visitors.

**Recommendation**

The Council should develop a consistent approach to reviewing and approving key H&S policies and procedures so that all documentation is subject to periodic review. This should include a version control that contains the following:

- The frequency of review;
- The date of previous review;
- The officer that reviewed the policy/guidance; and
- The date of the next scheduled review.

The Council should also consider a policy and guidance review tracker that lists all H&S documentation that includes the frequency of review and the date the of the previous review to help ensure that policies and guidance are subject to periodic review.

**Rating**

Priority 2

**Management Response and Accountable Manager**

The team have created a tracker for policies review/revision, which can be provided if useful. We regularly review our policies, though we appreciate this was not visually recorded on all of them, therefore we are in the process of updating all our policies so that the version control is recorded on them in a consistent way. This should be completed by the Corporate Health and Safety Team, which is led by the Head of Corporate Health and Safety, by the end of the month.

Head of Corporate Health and Safety

**Agreed timescale**

30 April 2024

## 2. Recording and Investigation of Accidents and Near Misses

### Finding

According to the 'Accident - Incident Reporting Procedure', accidents and near misses are recorded on forms that are available on the staff intranet page; the AR3 Form and the RIDDOR Form. The Procedure states that accidents and incidents need to be reported to the Corporate H&S team within five working days so that they can be reported on and followed up on if necessary. AR3 Forms have three sections; Section A which covers personal details of the injured or threatened person, Section B which covers the details of the incident, and Section C is management details, which covers whether an investigation was undertaken, what actions will be taken to stop re-occurrence, and whether it was a serious injury.

We selected a sample of ten accidents/near misses from a list of their reference numbers with a population of 259 dated between December 2022 and September 2023 to test whether a form had been completed, had been investigated and that documentation was retained. We noted the following:

- All ten samples had a completed AR3 form in place;
- Only two of the ten samples were reported to the Corporate H&S Team within five working days. The average number of days taken to report incidents from our samples was 15.5 days; and
- Sections A, B, and C were completed by the same officer for six of the AR3 Forms.

The Council has started reporting on corporate H&S bi-annually, with the first iteration being finalised in August 2023 and discussed by the Corporate H&S Committee in October 2023. The H&S Report includes a section dedicated to the '*Average number of days to report an incident*' and the findings reflect the findings we found in our testing; that the five day reporting window is not being met. The number of days taken to report incidents is also discussed at other Corporate H&S Committee meetings, however, the minutes do not detail whether the Council views this as an issue and how response times could be improved. The Head of Corporate H&S advised that currently KPIs and targets have not been established for this metric and improvements plans to better the number of accidents/near misses that are reported to this timescale have also not been discussed.

### Risk

Where accidents and near misses are not reported to the Health & Safety Team in a timely manner, there is a risk that legislative timeframes are not met and issues remain unresolved.

Where accident and near miss forms are both completed and signed off by the same officer there is a risk that a lack of segregation of duties could affect the veracity of the incident, leading to inadequate reporting and investigation.

<p><b><u>Recommendation</u></b></p> <p>The Council should remind all corporate staff of the requirement to submit accident and near miss forms within five working days to help ensure that reporting timeframes are met and incidents can be investigated in a timely fashion. The Council should continue to track the average number of days to report an incident, but also establish performance targets to track against so that underperformance can be identified. The Council should follow-up with those departments that are submitting forms outside of the agreed timeframes to determine root causes of delays and determine if additional action is needed.</p> <p>The Council should also stress to staff the need to complete AR3 and RIDDOR forms whilst demonstrating segregation of duties between staff completing the different sections.</p>	<p><b><u>Rating</u></b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Priority 2</b></p>
<p><b><u>Management Response and Accountable Manager</u></b></p> <p>We have been running reports on timeframe taken to report incidents and this has been discussed at Corporate Health and Safety Committee Meetings so services can pick issues up and address them. An email will be going out to managers this month to remind them of the need to report incidents in a timely manner – this email will be sent by Corporate Health and Safety. In this email, a reminder about ensuring different parts of the form are completed by the appropriate persons will be included.</p> <p>Head of Corporate Health and Safety</p>	<p><b><u>Agreed timescale</u></b></p> <p>30 April 2024</p>



### 3. Corporate Health & Safety Committee Terms of Reference

**Finding**

The Council's Corporate H&S Committee has a ToR which sets out the roles and responsibilities of the Committee including the frequency of meetings. However, it was noted that the document was revised in January 2018 and last reviewed in January 2020 according to the document footer, so it appears to have a review cycle every two years. Through a comparison of peer organisations, committee ToR are either reviewed annually or bi-annually.

**Risk**

Where a ToR is not reviewed periodically, there is a risk that it is outdated and does not reflect current practice.

<p><b><u>Recommendation</u></b></p> <p>The Council should ensure that the Corporate H&amp;S Committee ToR is periodically reviewed either annually or every two years so that it reflects current practice.</p>	<p><b><u>Rating</u></b></p> <p>Priority 3</p>
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<p><b><u>Management Response and Accountable Manager</u></b></p> <p>The TOR is going to the next Corporate Health and Safety Committee for review. This meeting was scheduled to take place on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> April</p> <p>Head of Corporate Health and Safety</p>	<p><b><u>Agreed timescale</u></b></p> <p>30 April 2024</p>
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## Appendix B - Assurance and Priority Ratings

### Assurance Levels

Assurance Level	Definition
<b>Substantial Assurance</b>	There is a sound system of control in place to achieve the service or system objectives. Risks are being managed effectively and any issues identified are minor in nature.
<b>Reasonable Assurance</b>	There is generally a sound system of control in place but there are weaknesses which put some of the service or system objectives at risk. Management attention is required.
<b>Limited Assurance</b>	There are significant control weaknesses which put the service or system objectives at risk. If unresolved these may result in error, abuse, loss or reputational damage and therefore require urgent management attention.
<b>No Assurance</b>	There are major weaknesses in the control environment. The service or system is exposed to the risk of significant error, abuse, loss or reputational damage. Immediate action must be taken by management to resolve the issues identified.

### Action Priority Ratings

Risk Rating	Definition
<b>Priority 1</b>	A high priority finding which indicates a fundamental weakness or failure in control which could lead to service or system objectives not being achieved. The Council is exposed to significant risk and management should address the recommendation urgently.
<b>Priority 2</b>	A medium priority finding which indicates a weakness in control that could lead to service or system objectives not being achieved. Timely management action is required to address the recommendation and mitigate the risk.
<b>Priority 3</b>	A low priority finding which has identified that the efficiency or effectiveness of the control environment could be improved. Management action is suggested to enhance existing controls.

## Appendix C – Audit Scope

### Audit Scope

We reviewed the adequacy and effectiveness of controls over the following risks:

- The Health and Safety Policy Framework is not fit for purpose and appropriately endorsed to ensure tone from the top. Staff therefore do not take appropriate measures to safeguard their health and safety, and that of the Council's external visitors.
- Staff and members are unaware of responsibilities and therefore do not comply with the Council's health and safety requirements, which puts individuals at risk.
- Poor oversight and scrutiny of health and safety arrangements, resulting in key issues not being addressed in a timely manner due to unwieldy structures or a lack of authority, for example.
- The Council is unaware of instances of non-compliance and/or does not address the root cause in a timely manner, which may result in repeated instances of non-compliance.

The internal audit scope included the following:

- **Compliance with Legislation, Regulations, Policies and Procedures**

Health and Safety Policy and underlying policies and guidance are proportionate and up to date

- **Roles and responsibilities**

Responsibilities are clear and understood by all types of staff and associates (including first aiders and other staff at the Council for example);

- **Risk Assessment and Management**

Staff are made aware of Health and Safety risks and activities to mitigate these (e.g. manual handling, Display Screen Equipment (DSE), slips and falls, fire procedures etc);

- **Health & Safety Training**

Staff have received sufficient training to carry out Health & Safety responsibilities;

- **Governance & Oversight**

Proportionate governance framework to oversee and scrutinise Health and Safety;

- **Recording and Investigation of Accidents**

Accidents and near misses are comprehensively and consistently recorded;

Accidents and near misses are investigated, and remedial actions made where necessary.

- **Health and Safety's Role in the Combined Assurance Framework as the Second Line of Defence**

The Council has clearly defined the roles and responsibilities of each assurance provider such as the health and safety department within the combined assurance framework.

In addition, the audit will perform sample testing to verify the effectiveness of controls implemented by the health and safety department. This will include reviewing the reports produced and interviewing health and safety staff. By performing these tests, an internal audit will assess the reliability and accuracy of the health and safety department's work.

- **Safety Culture and Communication**

The Council demonstrates commitment to promoting a positive safety culture and effective communication of health and safety information to employees. There are proper and effective communication channels, safety meetings, safety committees, and employee feedback mechanisms.

- **Emergency Preparedness**

The Council has emergency response plans, including procedures for evacuations, fire safety, first aid, and communication during emergencies. The Council conducts drills and exercises to test emergency preparedness and these are effective.

**SCOPE EXCLUSION**

The following area will not form part of the current audit:

- **Health & Safety checks**

Sample testing of key health & safety checks (e.g. Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) assessments, Fire Risk assessments, asbestos surveys, electrical checks, gas servicing, legionella testing etc.), for example sites.