

**MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CORPORATE HEALTH AND SAFETY STRATEGY**

**1. Corporate Health and Safety – the vision**

The Council's vision for Corporate Health and Safety is that

**It has sensible health and safety at the heart of its business and that it is integral to the culture and decision making processes of all aspects of the organisation.**

Strong leadership is critical to champion the importance of a common-sense approach to health and safety in the workplace.

The Leadership of the council is achieved both at a political level through Members and at a managerial level through the Chief Executive and Corporate Leadership Team (CLT). Both these groups have been involved in the development and approval of the Corporate Health and Safety Strategy and have agreed that the vision is core to the Council's operating principles.

The Council has a Health and Safety Committee to disseminate this leadership throughout the organisation and the Committee is chaired and led by a member of the CLT and member responsibility rests with the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee, which demonstrates real commitment at the highest level. The terms of reference and the work of the Health and Safety Committee is published and promoted to all members of staff and other agencies responsible for the delivery of Council services. Where other agencies or organisations are contracted by the Council the occupational health and safety risks must be properly and satisfactorily addressed and the required standards clearly expressed.

**2. Scope of the Strategy**

The scope of the Corporate Health and Safety Strategy includes staff and councillors of the Council and extends to the people that deliver services on behalf of the Council and those affected by the services. The strategy aims to ensure that those people, who work for the Council, receive or deliver services for the Council, know that their health and safety is important.

Local authorities have a statutory duty to operate in partnership with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to deliver its responsibilities and ensure that duty-holders manage their workplaces with due regard to the health and safety of their workforce and those affected by their work activities. To achieve this, local authorities provide advice and guidance on what the law requires, conduct inspections and investigations, and take enforcement action where appropriate.

The scope of this strategy does not reach to this wider public duty which is set out in the policies within the Environmental Health team.

## **2. Corporate Vision and Context**

The Council's vision for Maidstone Borough is set out in the Strategic Plan:

**That our residents live in decent homes; enjoy good health and a pleasant environment; with a successful economy that is supported by reliable transport networks.**

The Health and Safety Strategy is one of a number of strategies that are essential to the realisation of the organisation's vision.

The corporate vision and the related themes set out the context in which the organisation operates. As a district council the organisation will work with a multitude of others from the public, private and voluntary sectors to deliver services to the people and businesses within the geographical boundaries of the borough of Maidstone. The specific range of services may change from time to time but they are mostly outward facing and necessitate the people that are directly or indirectly employed by the council to interface with members of the public anywhere within the borough or with our partners. This environment presents particular challenges for the organisation that the Health and Safety Strategy and its related policies and procedures aim to address.

The council is required to work within the national Local Government context which will determine some of the operating principles and parameters for the organisation.

## **3. Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Vision and context**

The Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) mission is:

## **'To prevent death, injury and ill health in Great Britain's workplaces'**

In 2016 the HSE set out a new health and safety system strategy 'Helping Great Britain work well' which has six priority themes:

- Acting together: Promoting broader ownership of health and safety in Great Britain;
- Tackling ill health: Highlighting and tackling the costs of work-related ill health;
- Managing risk well: Simplifying risk management and helping business to grow;
- Supporting small employers: Giving SME's simple advice so they know what they have to do;
- Keeping pace with change: Anticipating and tackling new health and safety challenges;
- Sharing our success: Promoting the benefits of Great Britain's world-class health and safety system.

The council recognises the importance of the guidance from the HSE and has developed its own health and safety strategy to align with the four themes from the national strategy that fit with its own business.

To deliver our own strategy the council has adopted the following four key themes:

- Acting together
- Tackling ill health
- Managing risk well
- Keeping pace with change

The development of each theme contributes to the strategy and plays its part in the description of the successful achievement of the council's vision.

## **4. Strategic Themes**

### **Acting Together**

The council's framework of health and safety policies clearly identify the roles and responsibilities of all and emphasise that securing the health and safety of the workforce and councillors relies on everyone working together. Strong leadership is critical to ensuring

both that this message is delivered effectively and that it is followed through at all levels of the organisation.

With increased levels of partnership working we will also strive to work across organisational boundaries to promote a consistent approach to health and safety.

The Council has a strong culture of performance management; this entails the development of service plans to clearly set out the objectives and actions for each team which will deliver the council's strategic aims and these are then devolved to individuals whose responsibilities are clearly expressed in job descriptions, appraisal objectives and targets. The appraisal processes include development planning to ensure that the individual has the training and competence to undertake the responsibilities for their role in a safe way.

At a corporate level there is provision for both generic and specific health and safety training to ensure organisational competence to reinforce the health and safety culture and deliver the required standards. The health and safety training plan is prepared by the Council's Health and Safety Officer, reviewed by the Health and Safety Committee and CLT as part of the overall programme of training and development for the authority.. The Council is an Investor in People employer which recognises this structured and thorough approach.

### **Tackling ill health**

The Council's 'Workforce Strategy' complements the Corporate Health and Safety Strategy and all the actions to ensure a healthy and productive work force. The council takes a proactive approach towards stress management, health and well-being and sickness management. The main aim is to prevent ill health in the first instance.

The Council regularly monitors the health and well-being of the work force through employee surveys and provides access to support through an Employee Assistance Programme and Occupational Health support. The Council recognises the need to take a proactive approach to anticipating workplace factors that could cause ill health e.g. in managing increased work pressures as a result of new projects, absence of colleagues or secondments.

## **Managing risk well**

The implementation of the strategy is achieved through the Health and Safety at Work Policy. This sets out the duties and responsibilities of the people both within and outside the organisation. This is supplemented by a range of other specific policies and procedures aiming to establish safe and healthy working practices as part of our culture.

The Action Plan that supports the Health and Safety at Work Policy is regularly reviewed and up-dated to ensure we are constantly moving towards the vision and that as the environment, legislation and best practice change the Council up-dates what is expected of its staff and partner organisations.

The Council has arrangements to ensure that there are efficient, effective and proportionate mechanisms for monitoring all health and safety related activity and incidents. The information is reviewed at the appropriate level to inform decisions regarding preventative measures that will minimise future risks. This feedback loop ensures that 'near misses' are not overlooked but seen as opportunities for learning.

The Council ensures that there are regular risk assessments to consider the possible health and safety issues for all its activities and puts measures in place to eliminate or minimise the associated risks. Where risks cannot be eliminated safe operating procedures are established and the affected individuals trained in those procedures. The Council also uses an effective process of auditing to ensure that an objective view is taken of processes and systems and to check that safe operating practice is delivered in reality.

## **Keeping pace with change**

The Council has a good record for its approach to Health and Safety but it can never stand still. The environment and expectations are constantly changing and it is critical that the organisation is forward looking to anticipate these changes. We do this through professional networks and by keeping Health and Safety as an integral part of the business.

Best practice from other organisations will be reviewed for applicability in the Council's work practices and health and safety champions identified and encouraged in all areas.

## **5. Conclusion**

The health and safety of people that work for the council and deliver or receive services from us are of paramount importance. The Health and Safety Strategy sets out our over-arching statement of intent; the Council sets an annual action plan, monitored by the Health and Safety Committee, to ensure continuous improvement and to deliver the key themes of the strategy.