

Report for: Corporate Committee, 30/07/2020

Title: Impact of Covid-19 on Health and Safety functions

Report authorised by : Christine Addison, Assistant Director for Capital Projects & Property

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Ward(s) affected: N/A

Report for Key/ Non Key Decision: Non key Decision

1. Describe the issue under consideration

This report provides an update to the Corporate Committee on the impact Covid-19 has had on health and safety functions.

2. Cabinet Member Introduction

N/A

3. Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the content of this report.

4. Reasons for decision

N/A

5. Alternative options considered

N/A

6. Background information

Building Management

The management of the Council's operational, commercial and schools estate remains a high priority, particularly during these unprecedented times. Since the insourcing of Facilities Management (FM) from 1st April, with soft FM being delivered by Environment & Neighbourhoods and Hard FM delivered by Homes for Haringey, the Corporate Landlord Team has been working effectively with service providers to ensure that the Council's corporate estate remains a safe and clean place to work for all staff, key workers, children and visitors.

A) Operational / Commercial buildings managed by the Council

Following the Government decision to impose 'Lockdown' on 23rd March, all the libraries, leisure centres and a number of other Council owned buildings were closed. In some cases these buildings were fully closed, while others were closed to the public but with some staff remaining on site. Reactive maintenance to all buildings continued throughout the lockdown period, with the maintenance team and contractors fully operational. Every building is checked at least once a week.

The Covid pandemic coincided with the transfer of FM services back to Council control, with repairs and maintenance now being carried out by Homes for Haringey. The new service is working to address backlog maintenance issues left by Amey, as well as continuing to address scheduled maintenance tasks.

For closed buildings, a weekly cleaning schedule is in place. The cleaning materials have been reviewed to ensure they are effective against Coronavirus. The in-house cleaning team is also able to instigate a "Deep Clean" in the event that it is required.

Security patrolling has been stepped up to ensure protection of buildings. Building Support Officers are working on a rota in the hub buildings that are open. For the hub buildings that are currently closed, a Building Support Officer has been allocated to carry out building checks and to report any defects.

Services are now planning how they will operate in a Covid-secure way, so that service provision can resume wherever possible, to meet the needs of residents. A lot of service provision will continue to be offered remotely, and in most cases this has been very successful, and is safest both for staff and service users. Where services need to re-open buildings to resume face-to-face provision or other on-site activities, corporate support is being provided to ensure this is done safely but also without undue delay. This includes:

- Building compliance and safety checks, especially in buildings that were closed, to be reinstated prior to reopening.
- Building risk assessments carried out, ensuring social distancing measures put in place appropriately to support the service delivery.
- Services' risk assessments are reviewed and individual risk assessments carried out for vulnerable persons, covering age, health vulnerabilities and other factors including ethnicity.
- Emergency procedures reviewed in line with the use of the building and the people inside.

Prior to a service reopening and resuming face to face operations, the approach is reviewed and approved by the Council's Covid Gold team, chaired by the chief executive.

B) Maintained Schools

The Council is responsible for 51 schools in the borough. Each school has a Site Manager, who is responsible for the day to day management of the school building.

All maintained schools, where the Council is responsible for health and safety as the employer, submitted their Covid-19 risk assessment to the Corporate H&S Team for review and comments, for their wider opening on 8th June. Most of the Children's Centres remain open.

Emergency arrangements

Because most staff are working from home, officers have reviewed fire evacuation arrangements to ensure that sufficient cover is in place for fire wardens to ensure that in the event of a fire alarm activation a safe evacuation could be ensured.

Health and Safety Team

The H&S Team activated its Business Continuity Plan and has performed its duties with officers working from home. The review of the Council H&S Management System which is being currently undertaken and the revision of schools Covid-19 risk assessment meant a peak in demand, and officers exerted flexibility well beyond their normal working hours.

It is foreseeable that services will require a higher degree of support from the H&S Team during the planning stage to stand down their Business Continuity Plans and early re-commencement of their services.

Planned face to face training and H&S audits have been cancelled. The Council is utilising fully their on-line training courses provider as an alternative provision and will continue with this offer for the foreseeable future. It is planned that H&S audits will recommence in September 2020.

The team has currently an extra resource (agency staff) and will continue to need their services at least until the end of the financial year, where the resource need will be reviewed.

7. Contribution to strategic outcomes

The measures outlined in this report support the 2018-2022 Corporate Health and Safety Strategy.

8. Statutory Officers comments (Chief Finance Officer (including procurement), Assistant Director of Corporate Governance, Equalities)

Finance

The report to provide an update on the impact Covid-19 has had on health and safety functions.

As part of Business continuity the Health and Safety team had to provide more support and have had an employ interim additional resource into the team at the cost of £65k which has been reported as part of Covid-costs for the current year as a pressure on the Budgets

Procurement

Strategic Procurement are in support this report which provides an update to the Corporate Committee on the impact Covid-19 has had on health and safety functions.

Legal [Michelle Williams, Principal Lawyer Litigation]

The Assistant Director of Corporate Governance has been consulted in the preparation of this report and comments as follows:

The measures outlined in this report enable the Council to meet its obligations under sections 2, 3 and 4 of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 to ensure the health and safety of its employees, service users, the public and other non employees.

In accordance with Part Three, Section B, Section 2, paragraph 1(b)(i) of the Council's constitution, the Corporate Committee's terms of reference include the discharge of functions relating to Health and Safety at Work otherwise than in the Council's capacity as employer. This report relates to the Council's employer and wider health and safety responsibilities and therefore falls within the terms of reference of the Corporate Committee.

Equality

The Council has a Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act (2010) to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share those protected characteristics and people who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share those characteristics and people who do not.

The three parts of the duty applies to the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion/faith, sex and sexual orientation. Marriage and civil partnership status applies to the first part of the duty.

As set out above, services' risk assessments are reviewed and individual risk assessments carried out for vulnerable persons, covering age, health vulnerabilities (which would include disabilities) and other factors including ethnicity are considered when making a decision about re-opening buildings to

resume face-to-face provision or other on-site activities. This recognises that these groups have been disproportionately impacted by Covid-19.

9. Use of Appendices

None included

10. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

N/A