

This report is public.	
AARC Annual Health and Safety Report 2023-24	
Committee	Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee
Date of Committee	19 March 2025
Portfolio Holder presenting the report	Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services, Councillor Chris Brant
Date Portfolio Holder agreed report	5 March 2025
Report of	Assistant Director of Human Resources

Purpose of report

To provide the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee with the Council's Health and Safety performance over the 2023-24 year and its plan for the current year.

1. Recommendations

The Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee resolves:

- 1.1 To review the content of the report
- 1.2 To provide feedback if any further detail or additional information is required in future reports which will be submitted quarterly.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report is a statement of Cherwell District Council's health and safety performance to the end of the financial year 2023/2024. It demonstrates that Cherwell District Council shows strong commitment to the health and safety of its workforce and to others who may be affected by its activities.
- 2.2 The Council employs approximately 350 employees (full and part-time) which includes our Environmental Services teams which are our highest risk area due to the nature of the work undertaken.
- 2.3 There have been no regulatory interventions or enforcement action taken against the council during this reporting period.
- 2.4 The Corporate health and safety team continue to provide professional health and safety support and guidance to the council fulfilling the role of health and safety competent assistance as required by statutory health and safety legislation.
- 2.5 The number of reported accidents/incidents in council services have increased over the past 12 months possibly due to improved reporting measures being implemented. Work is ongoing to identify causes and look at actions required where necessary.

- 2.6 The Corporate Health and Safety team continue to work on the actions from the 2022 Health and Safety audit and further details can be found in this report.
- 2.7 Ruth Wooldridge has been in post since December 2022 and has overseen the development and progression of the health and safety function over the past 16 months.
- 2.8 Staff are continuing to work in an agile way with a mix of office and home working. Staff are required to undertake a DSE (Display Screen Equipment) Assessment for home as well as the office which should be undertaken annually, where they work in both locations.
- 2.9 The H&S Team will continue to report monthly to CLT and attend DLTs where possible across all areas of the business.

Implications & Impact Assessments

Implications	Commentary			
Finance	There are no financial implications directly associated with this report. Kelly Wheeler Finance Business Partner 27 February 2025			
Legal	<p>The report sets out in detail the Council’s various legislative obligations and discusses the steps which the Council is taking to satisfy these.</p> <p>The recommendations for this report are to review the content and provide feedback if further detail or additional information is required. As such there are no direct legal implications arising as a result of this report.</p> <p>Signed off by Denzil Turbervill Head of Legal Services 28 February 2025</p>			
Risk Management	<p>There are no risk implications arising directly from this report. All service plans include a section to manage their Health and Safety risks, additionally, overall H&S risk is managed and monitor through the Leadership Risk Register.</p> <p>Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 28 February 2025.</p>			
Impact Assessments	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equality Impact				n/a
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?				n/a
B Will the proposed decision have an				n/a

impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?				
Climate & Environmental Impact				n/a
ICT & Digital Impact				n/a
Data Impact				n/a
Procurement & subsidy				n/a
Council Priorities	n/a			
Human Resources	n/a			
Property	n/a			
Consultation & Engagement	n/a			

Supporting Information

3. Background

- 3.1 The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 places a legal duty on the Council as an employer to take all reasonable steps to protect the health, safety and welfare of its employees at work and other persons affected by their activities.
- 3.2 The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for health and safety within the Council and leads in setting corporate policy and direction. Corporate Directors and Assistant Directors support the Chief Executive; however, they are also responsible for ensuring that robust health and safety management systems exist in their respective directorates.
- 3.3 To manage occupational health and safety risks, the Council has documented management arrangements, including a Corporate Health and Safety Policy and a range of supporting corporate arrangements. The Council has appointed a Health, Safety Manager and a Health and Safety Supervisor to provide competent advice, guidance, support and assistance to the workforce on all health and safety related matters, fulfilling their employer responsibilities under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations.
- 3.4 As a minimum, the Council has put in place processes and procedures required to meet the legal requirements, including:

- A written Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy which was reviewed in March 2023 and will be reviewed over the next 12 months following the appointment of Gordon Stewart.
- Managers assessing the risks to employees, contractors, customers, partners, and any other people who could be affected by their activities. Risk assessments must be “suitable and sufficient” and record significant risks.
- Arrangements for the effective planning, organisation, control, monitoring, and review of the preventive and protective measures that come from risk assessment. The Corporate arrangements expand on the health and safety arrangements outlined in the council’s health and safety policies and provide the framework for the council’s health and safety management system.

4. Details

4.1 Risk Management

All employees working at home have been asked to complete a DSE/homeworking risk assessment and, where needs have been identified, have been provided with appropriate equipment to allow them to work safely. Any such additional equipment has to be paid for out of the service budget.

Each service area is responsible for ensuring that all activities that their team undertake is appropriately risk assessed, and suitable control measures are put in place. The Corporate Health and safety team are available to assist and advise where necessary.

The team has also worked with colleagues in the Performance team to ensure that all services have “Risk Registers” in place which address all the risks that are posed including health and safety. This had previously been highlighted as a deficiency. The H&S Team have reviewed and continue to review the corporate arrangements to ensure they are in line with current best practice. This is an ongoing piece of work to ensure that we as an employer continue to remain compliant.

4.2 Legislation Changes

No changes of legislation have been made in the last year that affect our services. However, we are aware of Martyn’s Law the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill which will be going through parliament some time over the next few months which will need to be looked at.

The Bill sets out that the procedures and measures that must be put in place by organisations for their premises or event to protect against terrorism, this should be determined by what is reasonably practicable for their individual circumstances. Organisations should take into account the nature of the premises or event, their activities, and resources when determining what to take forwards, in recognition that a one size approach will not work for all.

Martyn’s Law has been designed to make compliance simple. Dedicated guidance and support will be provided for duty holders to ensure that those in scope have the required information on what to do and how best to do it. The guidance will be easy to follow, needing no particular expertise.

The Bill establishes a tiered approach, premises in the standard tier will be required to have in place appropriate and reasonably practicable public protection procedures to reduce the risk of physical harm in the event of an attack. Some actions could be as simple as locking doors, closing shutters and identifying a safe route to cover.

The requirements for standard tier premises are focused on simple, low-cost activities to enact procedures and the Bill does not require those responsible for premises in this tier to physically alter their premises or purchase equipment. The aim of public protection procedures is to improve staff preparedness and responses.

Those responsible for larger 'enhanced tier' premises and qualifying events will be required to have in place, so far as is reasonably practicable, additional public protection measures. These measures are those that could be expected to reduce the vulnerability of the premises or event to acts of terrorism. For example, those responsible for enhanced duty premises will be required to have measures relating to the monitoring of the premises or event and its immediate vicinity. They will also be required to document their compliance with certain requirements of the Bill and provide this to the regulator.

For all premises and events, requirements relating to procedures and measures are subject to the concept of 'reasonably practicable'. Those responsible for many premises and events will be familiar with this exercise of judgement through their duties under health and safety legislation. Making reasonably practicable considerations will allow those responsible for premises and events to take into account the nature of their activities, operating environment, and available resources when fulfilling their obligations under the legislation, ensuring a proportionate approach that is specific to the premises or event specific.

Dedicated guidance and support will be provided for duty holders to ensure that those in scope have the required information on what to do and how best to do it. The guidance will be easy to follow, needing no particular expertise.

Once we have more information on what will be required the team will be working with the Facilities Management team to ensure that appropriate measures are put in place.

4.3 HSE Intervention

There have been no HSE interventions during 2023/24.

4.4 Policy & Procedure Update

The H&S Team maintains a large number of corporate arrangements which can all be found in an accessible format on the council's intranet. Following on from the Audit in the summer of 2022, all Corporate Arrangements and the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy have been reviewed though some will be subject to further review going forward and we are aware of some new one's that need to be written.

4.5 Health and Safety Communications

The following H&S Communications have been released during 2023-2024 via Chief Executive weekly updates, scrolling news on our intranet, and all staff briefings.

- Lone workers and the Peoplesafe App
- Health & Wellbeing Day promotion
- DSE Assessments for home and office working following the release of the new form.
- Reminder of the need to report accidents, incidents etc at work.
- A contribution in all Managers briefings on the latest news and updates on health and safety

The team continue to report monthly to CLT and to the ELT and DLT meetings as requested by Management following the health and safety audit in 2022.

4.6 The Lone Worker App

Peoplesafe, the lone worker app, has been available for staff who complete lone working to use for a number of years. Currently approx. 110 employees have access to the app. Access to and usage of the app costs approximately £5 per month per person whether they use it or not. This is paid for out of the central health and safety budget and is not charged back to service areas.

We have during March 2024 been migrated to a new portal within Peoplesafe which will make it easier for us to add, remove and update records.

4.7 Health and Safety Training

Most of the H&S training is provided through the i-HASCO online training portal. This portal provides an array of training packages not just for health and safety. Each member of staff is allocated a standard package of courses to complete depending on their role and additional courses can be added as and when required.

However, Environmental Services staff are unable to access these training courses, so they continue to receive face to face training as required from their own Training Supervisor with the support of the Corporate Health and Safety team as necessary.

Following an update to iHASCO and ITrent Managers can now access the system and see if staff in their team have completed the training for themselves. Table 2 shows the percentage of people who have completed the mandatory modules in iHASCO as of 1 September 2023. This does not include operational staff. They are given more specialist training particularly in manual handling, accident reporting and health and safety at work. We are working with managers to ensure that staff complete the training within a reasonable timeframe, but this continues to be a challenge for staff to complete.

Course	% Completed	Course	No Completed
Accident Reporting	70.50%	H&S Essentials	65.51%
DSE	57.28%	Lone working	72.97%
First Aid & RIDDOR	59.06%	Manual Handling	71.40%
Fire Awareness	70.27%	Risk Assessment	56.3%

Table 2: Completion Rates on 6 April 2024 of iHASCO Mandatory Training

First Aid and Training

The Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981 require employers to provide adequate and appropriate equipment, facilities and personnel to ensure their employees receive immediate attention if they are injured or taken ill at work.

As part of this requirement, the Council provides two levels of first aid trained staff in its buildings.

Employees have been identified and trained across the organisation in emergency first aid and first aid at work by an external training provider sourced by our Learning and Development Manager.

Environmental Services LGV Drivers also have an element of first aid training as part of their CPC training to maintain their LGV licence.

The number of first aiders and their locations are regularly reviewed to ensure that there are sufficient numbers of first aiders available. The numbers have been assessed through a First Aid Risk Assessment for each of the premises. For example, Bodicote House is identified as low risk but the Depots, due to the nature of the work is identified as higher risk.

All first aid staff have been defib trained. We have defibs readily available at Bodicote House and the depots. Maintenance and upkeep of the equipment is managed by the facilities management team.

Table 3: Numbers of First Aid Trained Staff

Location	First Aider Qualified	Emergency First Aid at Work Qualified
Bodicote House	4	7
Thorpe Lane Depot	3	3
Highfield Depot	3	0

Fire Safety and Fire Warden Training

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 requires employers to have a strategy to evacuate all occupants within a building. As part of the Council's fire safety arrangements nominated staff are trained either as Fire Wardens or in the use of fire extinguishers. They perform essentially two roles, ongoing assessment of fire hazards and risks during their normal daily work tasks, and in the event of an evacuation conduct a sweep of their allocated fire zone to ensure all persons have safely evacuated.

All Council occupied buildings undergo a six-monthly no-notice fire evacuation drill to test response and procedures.

Fire Wardens have been identified for all of our buildings and have been provided with suitable E-Learning training. Their main purpose is to ensure that if there is an incident all members of staff and visitors can be safely evacuated from the premises in question. The numbers have been assessed through looking at the layout and distribution of staff across each site and their availability. This is under constant review by the team and certainly following any fire evacuations.

In addition, at Bodicote House due to its size we have 5 "Fire Brigade Liaison Officers (FBLO)" who will coordinate an incident on site and liaise with the emergency services where appropriate.

Table 5: Fire Wardens

Location	Fire Wardens	Fire Brigade Liaison Officer
Bodicote House	12	4
Thorpe Lane Depot	7	Not required
Highfield Depot	4	Not required

Evacuation Chair Operative Training

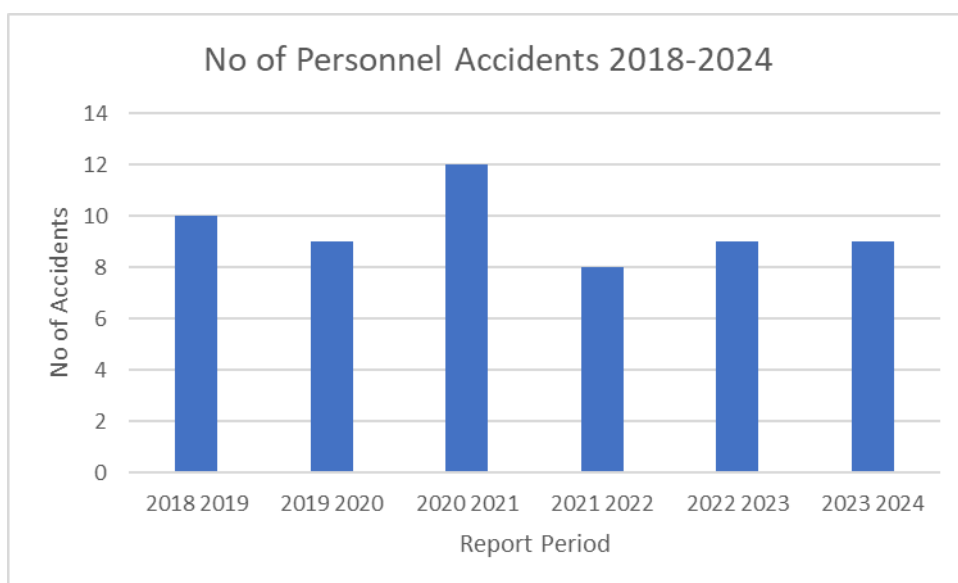
Bodicote House has three Evac-Chairs due to staff being spread over more than one level and the possible need to evacuate in the event of an emergency, loss of power etc persons who may be unable to use the stairs. Three members of staff are trained instructors in the safe operation of the evacuation chairs.

Most of the fire wardens have now been trained in the safe use of the equipment which is available in the main stairwells. It should be noted however that any person who may struggle to evacuate without using the lift in an emergency should have already been identified and a "Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan" written which provides instruction on how they should be evacuated out of a building. Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service are not there to undertake this activity on our behalf.

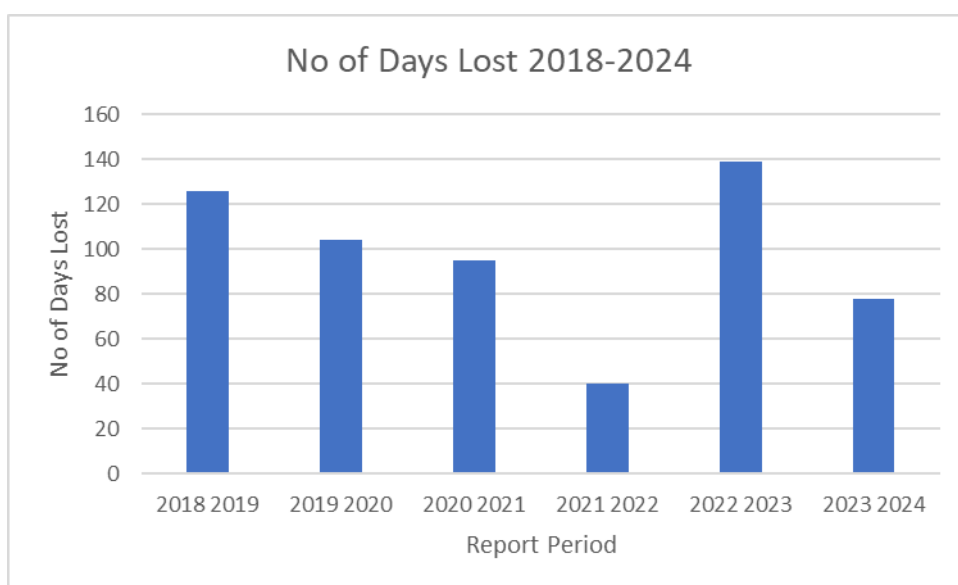
4.8 Safety Event Statistics

Due to the size of the organisation the number of accidents and incidents remains low in comparison with other councils. This could be for any number of reasons but if they are not reported they cannot be investigated. There has been an effort to raise the profile of health and safety within Environmental Services though due to

the nature of their work activities. As expected, most of the accidents are involving members of staff from Environmental Services due to the nature of their roles.



Graph 1: Number of Accidents involving staff by Year

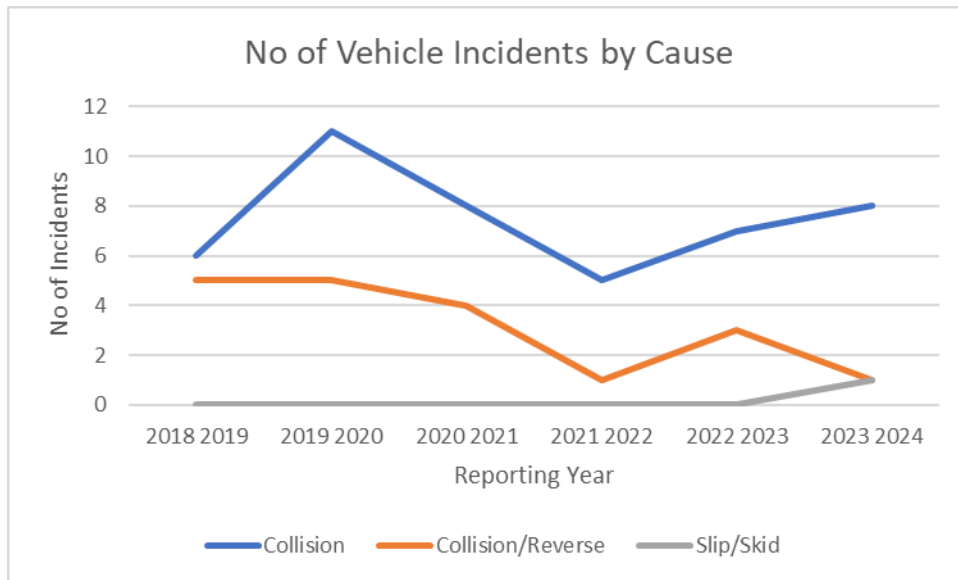


Graph 2: Numbers of Days lost following accidents at work by year.

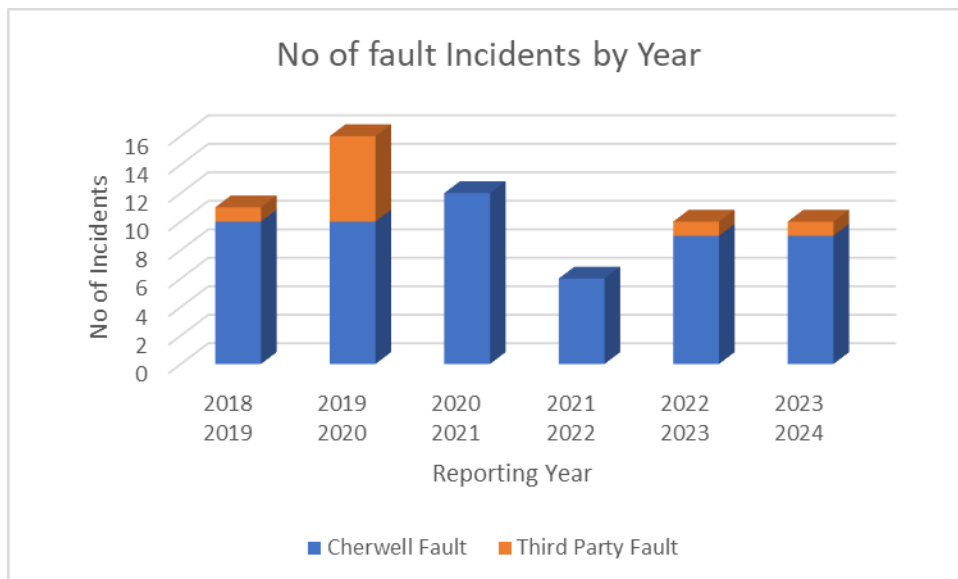
Vehicle Accidents

As can be seen in the graph below, there has been a downward trend in the number of vehicle accidents reported irrespective of who is at fault. The Pandemic has had an effect on these figures also so we shall see going forward if there is a trend in the other direction.

There was an incident in March 2023 whereby one of our refuse vehicles had a small fire in the back, probably due to hot ash being placed in a bin before it had cooled down. Thankfully, the fire was extinguished before any damage was caused to the vehicle.



Graph 3: Number of Vehicle Accidents by Cause per Year



Graph 4: Number of at fault incidents per Year

4.8 RIDDOR Reports

There have been three RIDDOR reports over the past 12 months involving Environmental Services.

It is vital that reports are completed and filed as soon as possible after the event. This is so that we can keep accurate records and report to the authorities where necessary. This has been brought to the attention of staff and Management at staff briefings and all staff emails over the past few months.

It also helps in the event of an investigation being required so this can be completed while things are still fresh in people's minds.

Name	Submission of RIDDOR Date	Incident	Days lost due to sickness absence

Refuse Loader	11/07/2023	Soft tissue damage to the thumb whilst handling a green bin which got stuck on uneven ground.	14
Refuse Loader	31/07/2023	IP slipped whilst on the back of the box van sustaining bruising to the knee and back resulting in over 7 days off work.	34
Refuse Loader	19/02/2024	IP slipped whilst alighting an RCV causing muscle damage to the foot and over 7 days off work.	14

Table 3: RIDDOR Accidents 2023-2024

4.9 Occupational Health

The external Occupational Health provider has continued to meet the organisation's requirements for dealing with and promoting health at work issues. The core functions of Occupational Health are work-health assessment screening, sickness absence management and health promotion.

We work closely with the Occupational Health Advisor to provide a proactive health surveillance programme to required staff following the risk assessment process. This is based on a two-yearly programme of health surveillance checks, consisting of skin surveillance, hand-arm vibration, audiometry, vision screening and general life-style well-being checks. The services that are part of the health surveillance checks are as follows:

Team	Number of Staff Assessed	
	Completed	Due at a future date
Environmental Services (drivers)	16	33
Environmental Services (Loaders)	19	46
Street Cleansing & Street Scene	15	27
Vehicle Workshop	5	6

Table 4: Occupational Health Surveillance

4.10 Looking forward to 2024-2025

The Health and Safety team will continue to work through the remaining audit actions over the next few months. This will further support the business in ensuring that they remain compliant with current legislation and best practice.

The Corporate Health and Safety policy will be finalised and published on the webpages once signed off by the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council. Corporate Arrangements will continue to be reviewed as per the schedule.

Audits and Inspections will be completed as per our key performance indicators and reported as required.

The service will continue to support all areas of the business in maintaining compliance and keeping abreast of any new and upcoming legislation.

5. Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

5.1 The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.

Option 1: This report is provided for information only. There are no other options required as CDC must ensure compliance with Health and Safety Legislation

6 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

Members of the Committee to read the content of the report and recommend the content of future reports which will be presented to this Committee on a Quarterly basis.

The next report will be the Annual Report for the period 2024-25. All further reports will be quarterly progress reports and include updates on the Veritau audit actions.

Decision Information

Key Decision	n/a
Subject to Call in	n/a
If not, why not subject to call in	n/a
Ward(s) Affected	n/a

Document Information

Appendices	
Appendix 1	None
Background Papers	None
Reference Papers	None
Report Author	Ruth Wooldridge, Health and Safety Manager
Report Author contact details	Ruth.wooldridge@cherwell-dc.gov.uk
Corporate Director Approval (unless	Corporate Director for Resources, Stephen Hind approved 21 February 2025

Corporate Director or Statutory Officer report)	
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