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**NFNPA/RAPC 299/16**

**NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

**RESOURCES, AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE MEETING – 6 JUNE 2016**

**ANNUAL HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT - 2015/16**

**Report by:** Steve Avery, Executive Director, Strategy and Planning

**1 Introduction**

- 1.1 The Authority aims to minimise the incidence of workplace risks and promote staff wellbeing by providing and maintaining a safe and healthy working environment. The Authority sees Health and Safety as being part of everyday good management and adopted a Health and Safety Policy in 2007, which was subsequently updated in August 2010 and again by this Committee on 8 September 2014.
- 1.2 Members have responsibility for monitoring the Health and Safety Policy and so the purpose of this report is to update Members on how the Authority has discharged its Health and Safety duties over the last year.

**2 Roles and Responsibilities**

- 2.1 Responsibility for discharging the Authority's duty to safeguard health and safety rests with the Chief Executive, those responsibilities being delegated to the Executive Leadership team and Managers for the implementation of policy and practice and for ensuring that all employees are aware of their responsibilities, both for themselves and others. Operational ownership for Health and Safety has been assigned to the Executive Director, Strategy and Planning.
- 2.2 The table below sets out the relevant areas of responsibility within the organisation.

<b>Officer/Group</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
CEO (Alison Barnes)	Overall responsibility for ensuring Health and Safety policy and legal requirements are adhered to at all times.
Lead Member (David Harrison)	Ensures Member input into matters of Health and Safety.
Executive Director (Steve Avery)	Operational ownership for Health and Safety across the Authority.
Health and Safety Representatives and line managers	Responsible for representing the individual teams and undertaking specific tasks, e.g. reporting areas of concern and ensuring health and safety procedures are followed.
Health and Safety Forum	Ensure Health and Safety best practice is acted upon across the organisation and issues discussed and remedied. The Forum meets twice a year and includes the Lead Member and officers as set out above.
Health and Safety Quarterly meetings	Responsible for addressing 'day to day' health and safety issues and attended by the Executive Director, Manager of Corporate Services and the Business Support Officer with specialist advice being provided by the Health and Safety Co-ordinator (NFDC).
All staff	Responsible for their own Health and Safety whilst at work or on work duties.

### **3 Health and Safety Activity undertaken during 2015/2016**

3.1 Health and Safety (H&S) has remained at the heart of the Authority's approach to working and the following activities have been undertaken over the last year:

- There have been two meetings of the H&S Forum (16 September 2015 and 9 March 2016). The Forum provides an opportunity to capture learning and best practice from around the organisation and to share health and safety news and views.
- In addition, the H&S Quarterly meetings have continued and allow staff to address all health and safety issues as they arise as well as those raised at the Forum meetings.
- The intranet site - the Warbler and the corporate drive of the electronic records system are updated to help staff access all relevant H&S policies and advice.

3.2 Ensuring that staff are able to work in a secure and safe office environment is an important aspect of the Authority's H&S work. During the last year:

- The NPA fire wardens continued to carry out weekly hazard checks. One planned fire drill took place on 22 July 2015 which resulted in several minor improvements to the evacuation procedures.
- In response to concerns by some staff regarding the heat generated by pipes linked to the building's heating system, NFDC are fitting lagging to relevant pipes to reduce discomfort in these areas. We have also worked with NFDC to address issues that some staff have had with noisy pipes / radiators - although these improvements will need to be fully tested once the heating is turned on in the winter.
- Strategic health and safety advice which is key to ensuring that the Authority complies with its statutory and best practice requirements, has now been incorporated into the HR Service Level Agreement with NFDC.
- Officers are working with the Health and Safety Co-ordinator at NFDC in finalising a CD which will be used by staff to complete Display Screen Equipment (DSE) self-assessments. Any issues identified for further investigation through this process will be undertaken by the DSE Assessor and remedial action discussed with the relevant staff member and their line manager.

3.3 Training undertaken and qualifications gained in the past year include:

- Two individuals undertook a 3-day First Aid at Work course to gain the qualification needed to become a certified first aider for the Authority. This brings the total of Authority first aiders to four. NFDC have six first aiders and an arrangement between the two authorities means all first aiders are shared and can respond to incidents across both parts of the Town Hall building.
- A bespoke Emergency First Aid at Work course was delivered to six staff within the Ranger team and wider Recreation Management and Learning team. This course was specific to outdoor working in the Forest environment.
- Staff received defibrillator awareness training at an All Staff Team Meeting on 2 February 2016 – this was a very useful and informative session and equipped staff to use the defib machine which has been installed by New Forest District Council at Lymington Town Hall for joint Council and NPA use. Further sessions on other relevant health and safety issues and risks are being planned for future staff meetings.

- Relevant NPA staff received refresher evac chair training in December /January. Evac chairs are used to assist in evacuating staff and members of the public with mobility difficulties during an emergency evacuation of the building.

### 3.4 Health and Safety - NPA hosted events

- Rangers led or jointly delivered over 100 events in 2015/16 reaching nearly 10,000 people. Risk assessments are written for every event we lead and risk assessments are regularly evaluated and updated as necessary for resources and equipment. Volunteers are briefed before each event on any hazards highlighted in the risk assessments.
- The NPA led approximately 20 walks last year excluding the walking festival. Each route was surveyed beforehand to assess suitability and highlight any health and safety hazards that needed addressing before the event. Risk assessments were written for each walk. On the day, an 'on the spot' risk assessment is undertaken and continues throughout the walk. Changes may occur to the proposed route or in extreme conditions walks postponed in the event of conditions considered dangerous to participants' safety such as high winds or changing ground conditions dependant on the location and landscape of the walk. A safety briefing is undertaken for all participants highlighting the hazards of the risk assessment prior to each walk.

## 4 Recorded Health and Safety incidents

### 4.1 During the last 12 months there were nine recorded incidents logged in the Accident Book which included:

- Three minor accidents that involved staff; one cut to a finger, one involved an empty file falling from a cupboard and one member of staff twisted their back when changing into their work footwear on slippery ground.
- There were two major accidents. One accident was the result of an automatic fire door closing on to a member of staff during a test fire alarm resulting in a head injury which was reported to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) under RIDDOR rules. The second accident involved a member of the public on a guided cycle ride by one of our sustainable ambassadors. The person concerned lost his footing after stopping his bicycle and fell awkwardly onto the ground. He sustained a fracture to the ankle and was taken to hospital in an ambulance. The accident was reported to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) under RIDDOR rules.
- There were two near misses. Action has taken place to prevent these causing any problems in the future.

- Two minor incidents occurred neither of which resulted in any injuries to staff.

## **5 Absenteeism**

5.1 Sickness absence for 2015/16 has increased slightly when compared to levels recorded in the last two years.

- The average length of sickness per FTE employee was 3.58 days compared to 3.11 days in 2014/15 and 3.37 days in 2013/14.
- Half of all sickness was attributed to cold/flu related symptoms including some staff who had more debilitating chest and viral infections. Staff that were absent from work for these reasons took an average of two to four days to return to work.
- There was an increase in stomach related absence in 2015/16; whilst the number of instances was relative to 2014/15, staff who were absent took on average an extra day to return to work.
- This year's absence levels were increased due to the work-related injury referred to in section 4.1.
- The average level of employee absence in the UK labour market is 8.1 days in the public sector and 5.1 days in the private sector which is distinctly higher than that of the Authority. The highest cause for sickness absence in the UK is attributed to minor illnesses such as colds, flus, stomach upsets, headaches and migraines.

## **6 General staff well being**

6.1 The Authority offers an Employee Assistance Programme which is a free service for all staff and includes the following:

- 24 hours, 7 days a week confidential Freephone helpline.
- Telephone and face-to-face counselling support.
- Advice and support on matters including work, emotional, personal, relationship, family, legal, financial and health related issues.
- A monthly well-being topic that is promoted to staff via the Warbler.

6.2 The Authority ran its annual staff event known as 'Discovery Days' last June which 80% of staff opted to participate in. The purpose of this event is for staff to spend half a day on a selected Discovery Day of their choice to discover more about the New Forest National Park whilst learning about an area of work that the Authority undertakes.

**7. Equality Impact Assessment**

7.1 Equality or diversity implications have been taken into account in compiling this report.

**8. Recommendation**

**It is recommended that Members note the annual Health and Safety report.**

**Papers:**

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