Health, Safety and Well-being Strategy

Aberdeenshire COUNCIL

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Serving Aberdeenshire from mountain to sea – the very best of Scotland

The best area

Helping to create and sustain the best quality of life for all through . . .

- happy, healthy and confident people
- safe, friendly and lively communities
- an enterprising and adaptable economy
- our special environment and diverse culture

The best council

Aiming to provide excellent services for all by . . .

- involving, responding and enabling
- finding new and more efficient ways of doing things
- providing elected leadership for our area
- working with our partners in the North East and beyond
- always looking to the future

Foreword

by Colin Mackenzie

The Council's greatest asset is our workforce.

Improvements to the health of Aberdeenshire's 14800 employees can beneficially impact not only their well-being and quality of life but also on that of their families, as well as the whole community and society in general.

We recognise the valuable contribution everyone can make and know we are in a unique position to educate, motivate and support our employees in understanding the importance of looking after their health, safety and well-being.

Employee involvement is key, and they will be supported to ensure they have an understanding of the health and safety risks associated with their area of work. Often best placed to spot issues and bring about real improvements our employees can influence the culture of an organisation through their own actions.

We recognise that there are risks involved in everything we do as a Council and that we have a duty to manage these risks in a safe, structured, practical and sensible manner. In doing so, the Council will better achieve its objectives and enhance the quality of the services it provides.

We are therefore committed to adopting best practice for the identification, evaluation and cost effective control of risks to ensure that they are eliminated or reduced to an acceptable level.

We are continuing to improve in every area of our work and looking after our employee health, safety and well-being is a number one priority for the Council, but to make a difference we need you to make the difference.

Colin Mackenzie

Chief Executive

Our vision for the workforce

For our employees to have a safe, healthy environment to work in, where they enjoy a good work-life balance and look after their general health and fitness. A culture where everyone feels involved in making changes for the better by taking a sensible approach to risk, which will in turn assist in the provision of excellent services.

To deliver this vision we need to:

- Commit to continual improvement and develop through both innovation and a willingness to change and adapt
- Have effective leadership
- See commitment and co-operation at all levels
- Continue working in partnership with our internal and external colleagues to make improvements and develop workable policies
- Promote greater employee involvement and engagement
- Recognise the valuable contribution our Trade Unions make to the health, safety and well-being of our workforce
- Improve communication links that support everything we do
- Manage the health and safety risk effectively, enabling delivery of quality customer focused services in support of the Council's vision and strategic objectives

Key Elements and Themes

Our strategy for health, safety and well-being has four key elements within two main themes, all of which have many important links between them:

Health & Safety

1. Continuing to build the positive health & safety culture
2. Reducing work-related injury and ill-health

Well-being

3. Contributing to the future health and well-being of employees
4. Improving attendance (by reducing sickness absence levels)

1) Continuing to build the positive health & safety culture – a culture of continuous improvement

To be truly effective, health and safety has to be an everyday process and integral part of workplace culture. The behaviours and actions within an organisation influence the culture through attitudes and perceptions. Promoting safe behaviour at work is a critical part of the management of health and safety, as behaviour turns systems and procedures into reality.

This strategy will help us to:

- Demonstrate commitment to effective health & safety management and the benefits this has
- Communicate and involve the workforce in a common understanding of risk and control measures, ensuring a sensible approach to risk assessment
- Promote a 'don't walk by / see it – sort it' culture (don't expect someone else will take care of it)

2) Reducing work-related injury and ill-health – a safe working environment (allowing employees to return home from work as fit and well as when they arrived)

Effective health and safety management is a collective responsibility where everyone in the workforce must play their part. Our aim is to prevent all work-related injuries and ill-health.

This strategy will ensure we:

- Identify the health and safety risks and put measures in place to control these, meeting current legislation
- Record and investigate accidents/incidents (which include near miss and violent), learning from these by communicating relevant findings and taking appropriate action (encouraging employees to look at new ways of tackling old problems)
- Use feedback from the H&S audits/inspections to make appropriate changes to the work environment, which can support safe behaviour and reduce accidents
- Through the risk assessment process, reduce the likelihood of an incident, thus avoiding injury/ill-health, the potential for prosecution or claim for compensation

3) Contributing to the future health and well-being of employees – a Council 'fit' for the future

Investing in employee health and well-being is key, helping employees enjoy healthier, happier and well balanced working lives.

This strategy will help us:

- Successfully achieve the Healthy Working Lives Awards (including Mental Health Commendation), by being proactive and promoting preventative measures to assist employee well-being
- Provide information creating opportunities for employees to engage in a healthy lifestyle
- Encourage employee participation with creative ideas for health-related activities
- Continue to improve on the success of the Occupational Health provision and Employee Assistance programme

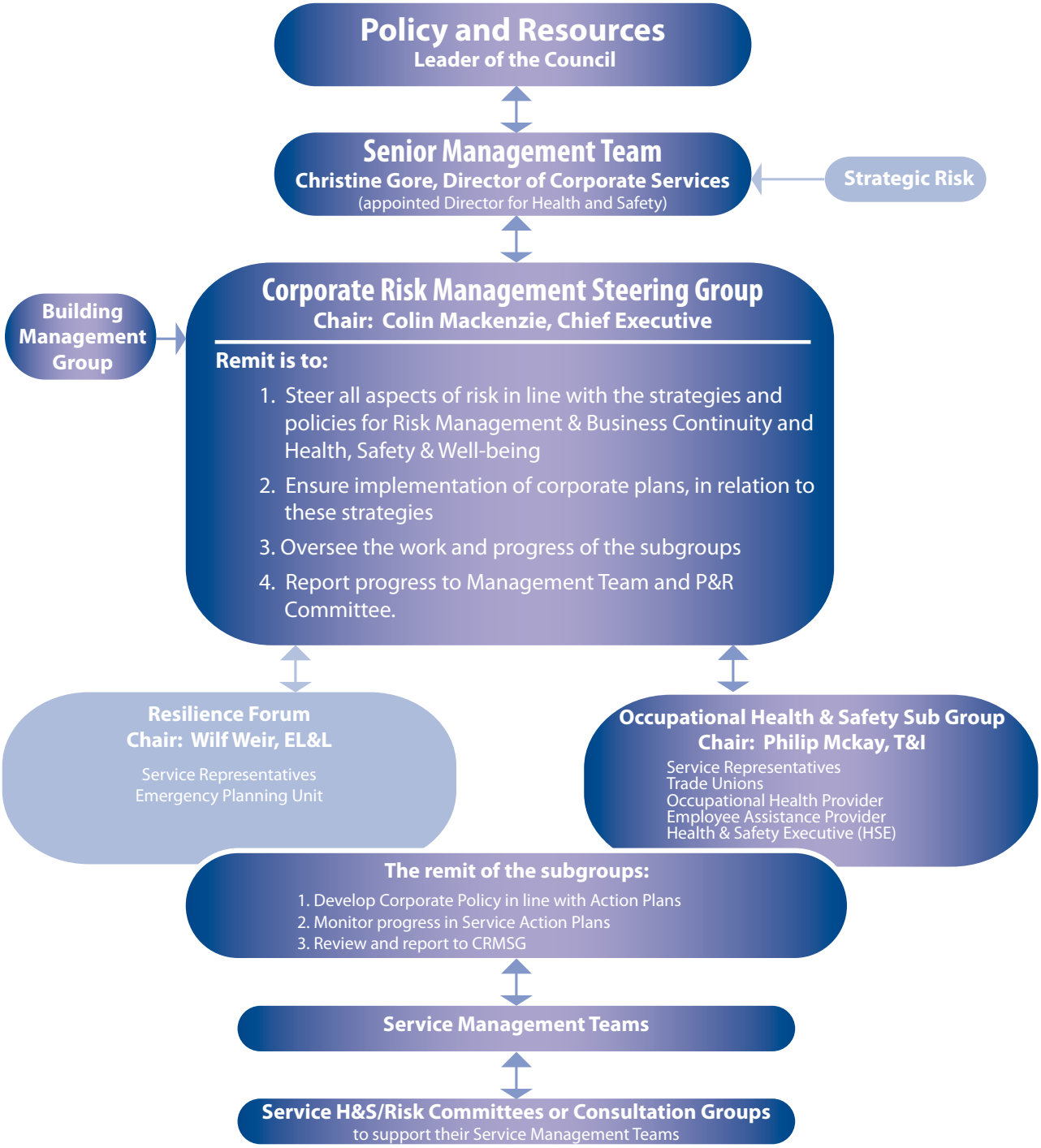
4) Improving attendance (by reducing sickness absence levels) – work is good for us and early intervention is vital

A healthy, fit and motivated workforce is essential to ensuring the organisation can deliver its services. Looking after our employee's health and well-being is a key element to reducing sickness absence and early intervention is vital.

There are benefits to the Council through improved attendance, less cover required, increased productivity, improved service delivery, fewer instances of work related ill-health / accidents and injuries and therefore fewer claims / prosecutions. These equate to a reduction in costs in the short and longer term, a reputation as a good employer to work for, resulting in higher retention and lower turnover of staff.

This strategy will assist in:

- Identifying and supporting specific areas where sickness absence levels are high or unusual patterns
- Supporting employees who have health problems to remain at work or return to work earlier
- Reducing sickness absence and the associated costs


Policy and Resources
Leader of the Council
Senior Management Team
Christine Gore, Director of Corporate Services
(appointed Director for Health and Safety)
Strategic Risk
Building Management Group
Corporate Risk Management Steering Group
Chair: Colin Mackenzie, Chief Executive
Remit is to:
1. Steer all aspects of risk in line with the strategies and policies for Risk Management & Business Continuity and Health, Safety & Well-being
2. Ensure implementation of corporate plans, in relation to these strategies
3. Oversee the work and progress of the subgroups
4. Report progress to Management Team and P&R Committee.
Resilience Forum
Chair: Wilf Weir, EL&L
Service Representatives
Emergency Planning Unit
Occupational Health & Safety Sub Group
Chair: Philip Mckay, T&I
Service Representatives
Trade Unions
Occupational Health Provider
Employee Assistance Provider
Health & Safety Executive (HSE)
The remit of the subgroups:
1. Develop Corporate Policy in line with Action Plans
2. Monitor progress in Service Action Plans
3. Review and report to CRMSG
Service Management Teams
Service H&S/Risk Committees or Consultation Groups
to support their Service Management Teams

Monitoring and Reviewing our Health, Safety and Well-being Strategy

The strategy will be monitored and reviewed at particular milestones or where any major change occurs which would require revision to particular actions.

Monitoring the effectiveness of the strategy will be carried out through the following:

- Performance Indicators (on sickness absence, accidents/incidents)
- Benchmarking
- HSE targets
- Healthy Working Lives Award Scheme
- Mental Health Commendation Award
- P&R Committee
- Auditors – internal and external
- Employee Surveys

The Head of HR&OD, in consultation with the Corporate Risk Management Steering Group, will review the strategy every three years and monitor its implementation annually.

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