CABINET
TUESDAY, 24 NOVEMBER 2026

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: Health and Safety Policy

REPORT OF: Director - Enterprise

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Executive Member - Enterprise

COUNCIL PRIORITY: Accessible Services.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report seeks Cabinet approval of an updated Health and Safety Policy. The update responds to a recommendation in the Shared Internal Audit Service (SIAS) audit report that the Policy should reflect the revised arrangements between the Council and Hertfordshire County Council's Health and Safety Team. The proposed Policy clarifies the Council's health and safety governance, responsibilities and access to competent advice under those revised arrangements.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That Cabinet approves the updated Health and Safety Policy.

2.2 That Cabinet authorises the Director - Enterprise, in consultation with the Executive Member for Enterprise, to make minor amendments to the Policy that do not materially alter its purpose or effect.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Approval will address the SIAS audit recommendation and ensure the Council's corporate Health and Safety Policy accurately reflects the revised arrangements with Hertfordshire County Council's Health and Safety Team.

3.2 An up-to-date Policy will provide clear governance, responsibilities and arrangements for managing health and safety across the Council.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1 The alternative option is to retain the existing Health and Safety Policy without amendment. This option is not recommended because the Policy would not reflect the revised arrangements with Hertfordshire County Council's Health and Safety Team and the SIAS audit recommendation would remain outstanding.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

5.1 There is no statutory duty to undertake public consultation on this internal governance policy. The updated Policy and this report have been considered by the Chief Executive, Director - Enterprise, Legal Services and the Executive Member for Enterprise. Their comments have been taken into account in finalising the documents for Cabinet.

6. FORWARD PLAN

6.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key Executive decision and has therefore not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

7. BACKGROUND

7.1 The Council is required to maintain suitable arrangements for managing health and safety and to communicate those arrangements through an appropriate corporate policy.

7.2 The SIAS audit report recommended that the Health and Safety Policy be updated to reflect the revised arrangements between the Council and Hertfordshire County Council's Health and Safety Team. This report brings the updated Policy to Cabinet for approval and enables that recommendation to be addressed.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 The updated Health and Safety Policy sets the Council's overarching commitment to protecting employees and others who may be affected by its activities. It establishes the governance framework through which health and safety risks are identified, assessed, controlled, monitored and reviewed.

8.2 The existing and proposed Health and Safety Polices are attached as appendices 1 and 2 respectively. The key updates are: -

- Introduces a dedicated section explaining the Service Level Agreement with Hertfordshire County Council, clarifying HCC's advisory role whilst confirming that North Herts Council retains overall legal responsibility for health and safety.

- Restructured from a traditional policy document into a clearer governance framework with dedicated sections on risk management, incidents, fire safety, training, consultation and monitoring.

- Introduces clearer accountability. Responsibilities have also been streamlined and updated.

- Introduces specific requirements for risk assessments, incident reporting, near-miss reporting, corrective actions, escalation procedures, fire drills and training compliance, providing greater auditability and assurance.

- Establishes formal monitoring arrangements, performance reporting, Health & Safety Tracker reviews, operational meetings with HCC and defined policy review triggers, which were either absent or less defined in the current policy.

8.3 The Policy defines the responsibilities of elected Members, senior management, managers and employees and supports consistent health and safety management across the Council. Service-specific procedures, risk assessments and operational controls will continue to sit beneath the corporate Policy.

8.4 Following approval, the updated Policy will be communicated to employees and relevant stakeholders, published through the Council's established internal channels and incorporated into management arrangements, guidance and training as appropriate.

8.5 Implementation and effectiveness will be monitored through the Council's existing health and safety governance and assurance arrangements. The Policy will be reviewed periodically and where there is a material change in legislation, guidance, organisational arrangements or a variation in the service provided by Hertfordshire County Council's Health and Safety Team..

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Approval of this policy is an Executive function and must therefore be discharged by Cabinet.

9.2 Section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 places a duty on the Council, so far as is reasonably practicable, to ensure the health, safety and welfare at work of its employees. Where the Council employs five or more employees, section 2(3) requires a written statement of general policy, together with the organisation and arrangements for carrying it out, and for that statement and any revision to be brought to employees' notice. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 also require suitable arrangements for the effective planning, organisation, control, monitoring and review of preventive and protective measures.

9.3 Approval of the Policy does not transfer the Council's statutory duties to Hertfordshire County Council. The revised arrangements provide access to competent advice and support, while responsibility for compliance and implementation remains with the Council as employer and service provider.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no additional revenue implications arising directly from approval of the updated Policy. Implementation will be managed within existing service budgets and officer resources.

10.2 There are no capital implications arising from this report.

10.3 Any future expenditure arising from service-level actions, training, risk controls or remedial works identified through the Council's health and safety arrangements will be considered through the normal budget, procurement and approval processes.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

11.1 Good risk management supports and enhances the decision-making process, increasing the likelihood of the Council meeting its objectives and enabling it to respond quickly and effectively to change. When taking decisions, risks and opportunities must be considered.

11.2 The principal risk arising from this report is that, if the updated Health and Safety Policy is not approved and implemented, the Council's documented governance arrangements will not reflect the revised arrangements with Hertfordshire County Council's Health and Safety Team and the SIAS audit recommendation will remain outstanding. This may result in unclear responsibilities, inconsistent application of health and safety controls and reduced assurance that statutory duties are being effectively managed.

11.3 Failure to approve and implement an up-to-date Policy would leave the Council's documented arrangements inconsistent with the revised support arrangements and the SIAS recommendation outstanding. This could weaken accountability, create uncertainty over responsibilities and increase the risk of inconsistent health and safety management, non-compliance, injury, service disruption, enforcement action and reputational damage. Approval, communication, implementation, monitoring and periodic review of the updated Policy are the principal mitigations.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

12.1 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

12.2 The Policy applies across the Council and supports a consistent approach to protecting employees and others, including consideration of individual needs and reasonable adjustments where required. An Equality Assessment has been completed at Appendix 3 and no adverse equality impacts have been identified from approval of the updated governance arrangements. Equality considerations will continue to be addressed through service-level risk assessments, procedures and implementation activity.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

13.1. The Social Value Act and “go local” requirements do not apply to this report.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

14.1 There are no known environmental impacts or requirements arising directly from approval of the updated Health and Safety Policy.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

15.1 The updated Policy clarifies the health and safety responsibilities of senior management, managers and employees and the arrangements for obtaining competent advice. It does not propose changes to staffing structures or terms and conditions. Following approval, the Policy will be communicated to employees and supported by appropriate guidance, training and local management arrangements.

16. APPENDICES

16.1 Appendix 1 - Existing Health and Safety Policy.
16.2 Appendix 2 - Proposed Health and Safety Policy.
16.3 Appendix 3 – Completed Equality Assessment.
16.4 Appendix 4 – Shared Internal Audit Service (SIAS) Audit Report

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

18.1 None.