Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee

Date	29 September 2021
Report title	Health and Safety Annual Update
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Report has been considered by	Not Applicable

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

ARAC is recommended to:

Note the annual update on Health and Safety contained within this report.

1. Purpose

1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of principal activities relating to the promotion and management of health and safety and outcomes during the past year, and outline the strategic direction for occupational health and safety within the wide-ranging remit of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA).

2. Background

2.1. The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has significantly altered the landscape in which we all operate and the *Health and Safety Strategy 2020-23* has been tailored to address the health and safety challenges and opportunities presented by the 'new normal'.

2.2. As we adapt our ways of working, it is recognised that the way we manage health and safety must continue to evolve. With an immediate shift from fixed workplaces and our previous operational norms, there must be renewed focus on health and wellbeing support, whilst also ensuring that high standards of occupational safety continue to be maintained.

2.3. We must seek to engender a sustainable organisational culture, aligned to the *'Your Safety, Our Priority'* ethos, where all employees actively participate in, and support the advancement of, our shared aims and objectives in relation to health and safety.

2.4. It is essential that we continue to build in a planned, systematic way to ensure health and safety is further integrated into all WMCA operational activities, ensuring proportionality in health and safety management, and enabling improvement through efficient and effective delivery.

3. Health and Safety – Key Achievements

3.1. Whilst a significant proportion of Health and Safety team resource during the last year has been focussed on supporting the organisational response and recovery to the COVID-19 pandemic, the team have endeavoured to utilise every opportunity to implement enhancements to health and safety arrangements and management systems, ensuring standards of safety and compliance are being maintained consistently across the organisation.

3.2. The below table provides an overview of the key achievements and activities:

Key Achievements and Activities 2020-21	
✓	**WMCA Health and Safety Strategy 2020-2023** Developed new three year strategy which seeks to continue the integration of positive occupational health and safety management practices and ensure that all parties play their part to support a proactive, robust health and safety management system which meets legal obligations and reduces risk to those affected by our activities.
✓	**Review of organisational Health and Safety Governance Structure** Providing a robust platform and effective management structure for the delivery of health and safety aspirations and objectives. Ensuring no ambiguity exists relevant to accountability, responsibility, assurance and delivery of health and safety. This has included an in-depth review of the arrangement in place for West Midlands Metro (including operations and programme delivery) during July – August 2021.

✓	**Review and update of Health and Safety Policy** Policy statement of intent, organisation & responsibilities, and arrangements for implementation have been reviewed and updated to ensure they reflect the updated arrangements for the management, governance and reporting of health and safety within the organisation. Sign-off by Laura Shoaf, Interim Chief Executive in July 2021.
✓	**Migration to ISO 45001:2018 Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems Standard** Successful migration to the ISO 45001 confirming compliance with the requirements of the new standard. An internationally accepted method of assessing and auditing occupational health and safety management systems.
✓	**Ongoing Health and Safety Committee Structure** The Health and Safety Strategic Committee and Safety, Health and Environment Committee have continued to provide forums to facilitate the appropriate level of challenge, allow effective escalation of issues where required, provide a further means for consultation and communication, and support delivery of strategic direction on any proposed or implemented changes.
✓	**Improved Health and Safety Reporting** Revised structure of Board report, which seeks to better identify the issues relevant to the various areas of the organisation. Presented on a monthly basis to Transport Operations Board, TfWM Board, Corporate Management Team and WMCA Strategic Leadership Team.
✓	**Display Screen Equipment – Enhanced Arrangements** Enhancements to the existing processes introduced, including migration of the self-assessment tool to the WMCA Support Portal in February 2021. In line with the release of the new assessment process, all staff were asked to complete the new mandatory DSE eLearning on Learning Pool, with over 95% compliance with completion recorded.
✓	**Health and Safety E-Learning** Health and Safety Team working in collaboration with the Organisational Development & Engagement Team migrated health and safety e-learning from the existing platform to the Learning Pool platform utilised by the wider organisation. This provides cost savings to the organisation, a holistic view of compliance with mandatory training, and a better end user experience for colleagues.
✓	**Audit and Inspection Schedule** Maintained high levels of safety compliance of organisational assets via undertaking proactive scheduled health and safety audits and inspections, ensuring the ongoing safety of staff, customers and stakeholders.
✓	**COVID-19 Response and Recovery** The Health and Safety Team has supported the organisational response to the COVID-19 pandemic, providing input to the COVID-19 Tactical Group, 16 Summer Lane Recovery Working Group, Operations Recovery Working Group and producing relevant updates posted to the COVID-19 H&S Staff Resources intranet section and included within Manager's Briefings. An annexe (SMS-C19) to the organisational Safety Management System (SMS) was created to directly address changes as a result of COVID-19 response and recovery. Risk Assessments have been produced to cover organisational premises (16 Summer Lane, Bus Stations x 12, Travel Information Centres x 2), those who work remotely to all of these premises (i.e. Customer Intelligence Team), as well as individual risk assessments to identify personal risk factors in relation to COVID-19. These have been subject to regular review to ensure they remain suitable, sufficient and in line with current requirements.

4. Health and Safety Strategy 2020-2023 / Annual Delivery Plan 2021-2022

4.1. The *Health and Safety Strategy 2020-2023* and associated *Annual Delivery Plan*, will seek to continue the integration of positive occupational health and safety management practices into all aspects of the organisations activities and undertakings.

4.2. A key challenge for this Strategy is how to continue to embed three fundamental strategic aims (i.e. culture, coherence, compliance) into the fabric of the organisation which is moving away from fixed places of work.

4.3. The overarching aim of this Strategy is to provide strategic direction to encourage all departments to fully integrate health and safety into their operational norms and practices, ensuring the organisation becomes an increasingly safer and healthier place to work.

4.4. In order to achieve the organisation's vision for occupational health and safety, the strategy has been divided into five distinct strategic priorities – i) Leadership and Commitment, ii) Management and Control of Risk, iii) Communication and Engagement, iv) Training and Competence, v) Performance Management.

4.5. The below table provides an overview of the objectives set out in the *Annual Delivery Plan for 2021-2022*.

Summary of Health and Safety Annual Delivery Plan for 2021-22
Leadership and Commitment
▪ **Health and Safety Strategy 20-23 & Annual Delivery Plan 21-22** - *Ensure strategic H&S aims and key deliverables are communicated and embedded throughout the organisation* ▪ **WMCA Health and Safety Policy -** *Review and update of WMCA Health and Safety Policy* ▪ **Renewed Leadership Commitment -** *Renewed commitment of leadership in relation to accountability and the management of health and safety, demonstrating that leadership 'lead & promote a culture'* ▪ **Expansion of Leadership Audit and Inspection Programme** - *Visible felt leadership through direct engagement in audit, inspection and safety tour / briefing activities*
Management and Control of Risk
▪ **COVID-19 Risk Management** - *Reduce COVID-19 related risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level. Ensure risks are assessed in systematic manner and control measures implemented* ▪ **External Accreditation of SMS (ISO 45001:2018 Standard)** - *Continued accreditation to ISO 45001 standard and expansion of scope* ▪ **Comprehensive Gap Analysis** - *Gap analysis of organisational activities and undertakings to ensure all are adequately captured within SMS, risk assessed and appropriate control measures identified and implemented* ▪ **Programme Delivery Health and Safety Assurance** - *Develop enhancements to the assurance mechanisms in place for TfWM and WMCA programme delivery* ▪ **Audit and Inspection Programme** - *Deliver Health and Safety Audit and Inspection Programme associated to organisational premises, assets and undertakings*

Communication and Engagement

- **Health and Safety Communications Plan** - *Deliver H&S Communications Plan to promote H&S and encourage employee engagement*
- **Review Existing Communication & Engagement Processes** - *Review existing processes for the delivery of consultation and participation of staff*
- **Alignment of "Health and Safety" and "Wellbeing" Strategies -** *Maximise benefit to the organisation, engaging in partnership working to address health, safety and wellbeing matters*
- **Further Develop Links with External Partners / Stakeholders** - *Strengthen links and develop effective network with other H&S professionals to allow for active engagement, sharing of best practice, and benchmarking with other organisations*

Training and Competence

- **Health and Safety Induction** - *Review and update of H&S induction to ensure it is suitable and sufficient for our new ways of working*
- **Health and Safety Training Matrix** - *Develop a training matrix for all roles to ensure a defined structure exists for the provision of health and safety training and required competence can be demonstrated*
- **Health and Safety E-Learning** - *Further utilise Learning Pool e-learning platform to deliver H&S training to enhance staff competence and ensure compliance*

Performance Management

- **Internal Review of Safety Management System** - *Review and enhance existing processes for internal audit of SMS against ISO 45001:2018*
- **Context of the Organisation** - *Review and document all internal and external issues relevant to the organisations Safety Management System, understanding the needs and expectations of all interested parties*
- **Health and Safety Dashboard Enhancement** - *Review and enhance existing health and safety reporting dashboards to ensure they provide optimal information to recipients in a clear and concise format*
- **SMS Compliance Reviews** - *Introduce Safety Management System Compliance Reviews for each directorate / business area*
- **WMCA H&S Governance and Report Arrangements** - *Periodic review and update of WMCA health and safety governance and reporting arrangements to ensure they remain appropriate to the organisation's undertakings*

4.6. Progress against this plan will be reported periodically to the *Health and Safety Strategic Committee; Safety, Health and Environment Committee* and any other relevant Board or Committee.

4.7. As reported to ARAC in June 2021, the Health and Safety Team has been directly involved in the workstream established to develop and introduce new Ways of Working within the organisation, which is being launched under the name #WoW21.

4.8. The Health and Safety Team will seek to identify any new or emerging risks introduced by these changes, which will then be subject to the appropriate mitigation measures to eliminate or reduce the risk, so far as is reasonably practicable.

5.   Wellbeing – Key Achievements and Future Areas of Focus

5.1. The Equalities, Diversity and Wellbeing Team has developed a Wellbeing Strategy, which is underpinned by six pillars covering: mental wellness; work/life balance; musculoskeletal; keeping connected; healthy lifestyles and cultural and behavioural change.

5.2. Mental health and wellbeing have been identified as key priorities, with multiple initiatives delivered to support colleagues in this area. These include an Employee Assistance Programme, Mental Health First Aiders, and Mental Health Awareness training for managers, as well as resilience training for employees.

5.3. To complement this, tools to support individuals and management capability, such as *Wellbeing When Working from Home Guidance* and Stress and Resilience Toolkit have been developed. Wellbeing has also been embedded within key processes, including Management Fundamentals, 1-2-1s and the Individual Performance Management process.

5.4. To promote wellbeing, a number of campaigns have been delivered, including those focussed on work-life balance and musculoskeletal health. Sessions have also been delivered on posture alignment therapy, yoga and pilates to empower employees to look after their wellbeing and musculoskeletal health.

5.5. A *Reasonable Adjustments Policy* has been developed, with line managers encouraged to consider any reasonable adjustment needs for staff as part of the hybrid working model e.g. what can help support individual staff positive mental health and wellbeing in terms of their working patterns and their working environment.

5.6. The Thrive at Work survey and staff engagement has helped highlight key areas of focus which are outlined below. A number of these have a direct and/or indirect impact on wellbeing.

Summary of Wellbeing Future Areas of Focus for 2021-22
Support positive mental health for staff and work towards destigmatising mental health
- Deliver Bitesize Learning sessions on stress risk assessments.   - Support initiatives that help destigmatise mental health – e.g., continuation of "this is me" staff campaign   - Support the continued delivery of resilience training   - Promote key mindfulness techniques   - Continue to promote the existence of internal wellbeing support (e.g., MH buddies, EAP)   - Promote the importance of embedding wellbeing within 1-2-1s including by re-promoting resources
Improve management competencies
Liaise with OD team regarding management development on key identified areas (e.g. having difficult conversations, building rapport with staff, planning work with people in mind, supporting work-life balance) and take steps to ensure key sessions are attended by all

Support a positive work-life balance

- Encourage regular breaks and support time away from screen through messaging and staff stories
- Promote the benefits of physical activity and active breaks during the workday
- Work with the #WoW21 team to develop a WMCA stance on meeting culture (including resources) and introduce messages and initiatives that are implemented corporately, role modelled at the top and help promote a positive work life balance (e.g.; no meetings at certain times, 25-minute meetings, meeting free day or time blocked in calendars for lunch etc.)
- Encourage managers to monitor staff annual leave take-up

Raise staff awareness on key wellbeing areas

- Deliver Bitesize Learning and develop resources (for staff and managers) on the following key wellbeing areas: nutrition, exercise, smoking, musculoskeletal, menopause, domestic abuse and sleep – incorporating these into our calendar of events
- Deliver menopause training
- Sign up to The Purple Pledge, train domestic abuse champions and deliver wider training
- Develop resources and organise sessions on prevalent lifestyle conditions (e.g. diabetes)

Ensure staff stay connected in a hybrid working model

- Consider social activities that bring teams and individuals together -aim to deliver one quarterly activity (with a CSR focus, where possible)
- Promote and feature teams within the organisation who take steps to stay connected (mini campaigns and a webinar focus)
- Reinforce with managers the message of staying connected and offer practical guidance
- Re-promote the employee volunteering policy encouraging teams to make use of it

Ensure hybrid working arrangements help support positive wellbeing outcomes

- Educate managers and senior managers to ensure individual needs and preferences are met, where possible, acknowledging that different solutions work for different people (e.g., primarily working from home or spending more time in the office)
- Monitor effectiveness of the WoW model once operational by engaging with staff and adjusting model to ensure it supports positive outcomes

Support positive musculoskeletal health

- Campaigns on musculoskeletal health, also encouraging staff to report musculoskeletal related issues at an early stage Develop a staff resource on musculoskeletal health (including ergonomic guidance) and a mini manager guide on managing musculoskeletal health
- Communicate videos with brief exercises that help promote positive musculoskeletal health
- Develop guidance on how to set up the home working office environment
- Deliver regular (quarterly) sessions encouraging positive musculoskeletal health
- Continue to provide adaptations and reasonable adjustments, where needed and review risk assessments on a regular basis

5.7. In addition to the above, the Health and Safety Team will continue to work closely with the Equalities, Wellbeing and Diversity Team, with a key objective to undertake an initial assessment of the benefits of working towards the new ISO 45003:2021 standard which covers psychological health and safety at work and the management of psychosocial risks.

6. Summary of Current Position

6.1. Whilst significant progress has been made to date, the effective implementation of the strategy and associated delivery plans will be essential to ensure the continued integration of positive occupational health and safety management practices into all aspects of the organisations activities and undertakings.

6.2. There are not currently any specific areas of concern or particular items for urgent improvement, however with the move to hybrid working, it will be critical that all departments fully integrate health and safety into their operational norms and practices, ensuring the organisation becomes an increasingly safer and healthier place to work.

6.3. It will be essential that any changes to the Safety Management System are clearly communicated and embedded in a timely manner. It is foreseen that existing forums (e.g. *Corporate Management Team, TfWM Board, Health and Safety Strategic Committee, SHE Committee, Joint Asset Board, Asset Delivery Group*, etc.) and communication methods (e.g. *Spotlight, Manager Briefing, Bitesize sessions, intranet,* etc.) can generally be utilised for this purpose.

6.4. To support this an ongoing programme of *SMS Compliance Reviews* will be introduced. These will focus on assessing the application and understanding of health and safety policies and procedures within each directorate / business area, ensuring the Safety Management System, is effectively embedded and consistently applied across the organisation.

6.5. It will be vital that suitable mechanisms for lessons learnt and benchmarking are in place, which seek to bring out the key learning, opportunities and next steps in relation to our new working practices.

6.6. The Health and Safety team will continually support the wide-range of activities for which the organisation has a remit and promote the benefits of proportionate health and safety management as a positive instrument to ensure statutory compliance and organisational success rather than a burden to progress.

6.7. To ensure sufficient resource exists to successfully support organisational needs going forward, an additional *Health and Safety Advisor* role has been created within the Health and Safety Team, with appointment to the role expected shortly.

7. Financial Implications

7.1. There are no specific financial implications arising from this report, however as the remit and responsibilities of the WMCA evolve additional resources and budgetary allocation may be required to ensure effective delivery of the aims and objective set out within the Health and Safety Policy and associated Strategy.

8. **Legal Implications**

8.1. Although there are no current legal implications, cognisance should be given to all applicable Health and Safety legislation that places duties upon the organisation.

9 **Equalities Implications**

9.1. There are no specific equalities implications arising from this report. However, it can be confirmed that any changes implemented in relation to new ways of working have been or will be subject to Equality Impact Assessment.

10. **Inclusive Growth Implications**

10.1. There are no inclusive growth implications arising from this report.

11. **Geographical Area of Report's Implications**

11.1. There are no geographical area implications arising from this report.

12. **Other Implications**

12.1. There are no other implications arising from this report.

13. **Schedule of Background Papers**

13.1. Not applicable