



## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**MUNICIPAL YEAR 2019/20**

### **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**12th November 2019**

#### **'FIRE RISK ASSESSMENTS' A REVIEW OF PROCEDURES FOR COUNCIL OWNED/OCCUPIED BUILDINGS.**

#### **REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES**

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#### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present Members with an update on the Council's Fire Safety Risk Assessment process, as requested at the Overview and Scrutiny meeting in December last year.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Consider the content of this report and determine whether the information regarding progress made to date is adequate.

#### **3. BACKGROUND**

Overview and Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting on [13<sup>th</sup> December 2018](#), considered a report, reviewing the actions taken since April 2018 to improve the Council's procedures and processes for managing the risk from fire.

Following discussion with officers, Members agreed:

- To acknowledge the Council's arrangements for fire safety risk assessments; and

- That an E-Learning module is made available on the Council's Source for all responsible site managers to undertake and complete.

#### **4. UPDATE**

4.1 Following the resolution of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Council's health and safety team considered the options for providing an E-Learning module on the RCT Source. There were 2 possible solutions:

1. Purchase an 'off the shelf' course that could be uploaded onto the RCT Source; or
2. Develop our own 'in-house' course and upload onto the RCT Source.

There were advantages and disadvantages with both options. Option 1 would be capable of providing a quick outcome, in that, a course could be made available within a short timescale, but this option would clearly involve a cost to either purchase the course outright, or, for a license agreement. The health and safety team reviewed a number of 'off the shelf' courses and whilst they were informative and helpful, they were generic in nature and not specific to our internal arrangements and procedures and would not therefore, in themselves, achieve the Committee's aims, that is, 'to ensure site managers have understood the processes in place'.

The second option of developing our own 'in-house' course would ensure we presented information needed by our site managers to understand our internal procedures and processes. The key drawback of this option was the time element required to write and develop a course, and then convert to an E-Learning resource.

The health and safety team decided to progress with option 2, as this would result in a more effective E-Learning module and minimise costs to the Council.

Whilst developing the course for site managers, it became apparent that much of the general information to be included, would also be beneficial for other employees. As such, during the development phase it was decided to produce two separate E-Learning modules, one general fire safety awareness course for all employees, including site managers, and then, one specifically for site managers to incorporate the requirements of their particular role in managing fire safety.

Both courses were drafted by July 2019 and then consulted on with a small group of representatives during August this year, before being finalised. The courses were handed over to colleagues in the Council's People Development Team, during October and have been tested to ensure they run effectively. Both courses went 'live' on the RCT Source on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2019.

The courses will be widely promoted across the Council and all staff encouraged to complete the general awareness module. Site managers will be requested to complete their specific module and this will be monitored by the health and safety

team with an update report presented to each meeting of the Fire Safety Working Group (FSWG) for consideration. The courses are accessible from the 'My Learning Zone' section of the RCT Source, and an email has been circulated to senior managers requesting they be brought to the attention of all staff.

The E-Learning modules will now form an additional layer of training to complement the various other methods that are already provided. For example, this year a number of staff from residential services within Community and Children's Services Group have received fire safety training, including specific training for the safe evacuation of residents. In addition, 101 school site managers / caretakers attended a one day health and safety awareness course during May this year, and this course included a section on fire safety, covering both general fire safety awareness and responsibilities of site managers. The Council's health and safety team continue to provide ad-hoc training on various fire safety matters as required, often following a query from an individual manager or during a site visit.

Training in the use of the on-line fire risk assessment system (RAMIS) used by the Council, is available from Riskmonitor, the Council's appointed fire risk assessors. The training is free of charge if delivered at Riskmonitor's premises, but there is a cost if site managers wish to receive the training at their own site. All site managers are made aware of, and encouraged to take this training.

- 4.2 The health and safety team has continued with its programme of fire audits and have undertaken 16 such audits this year. In addition the health and safety team has also completed 11 general visits to a selection of Council premises which included a review of fire safety arrangements and practices. The results of the audits have generally been good with the identification of some areas for improvement, usually around record keeping and in-house testing of alarms / emergency lighting. All fire alarms, emergency lighting, fire-fighting equipment etc. are routinely checked by external contractors as required by various standards.
- 4.3 The health and safety team has continued to produce quarterly fire safety compliance reports and circulate to key officers within the Council. The compliance levels have increased significantly from 60% in 2016 to 77% currently and the work of the FSWG has been instrumental in achieving this improvement.
- 4.4 The FSWG has met twice since this Committee last considered fire safety, and continues to monitor compliance with the quarterly compliance reports. At the last meeting the group also considered the possible fire safety implications of draft security guidance, particularly in regard to lock down procedures which may need to be implemented in Council premises.

At the December 2018 meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, it was recommended the FSWG be provided with additional nominated members, who may deputise for the key officers, to ensure each service area is appropriately represented during meetings. As a result of this recommendation, the establishment of the FSWG has been reviewed and changes made, as outlined in the table below, to ensure the group adequately represents the existing Council

structure. Each Service Area now has at least one key nominated officer, together with a deputy where relevant. In addition the Council's Insurance Manager, Andrew Gough, and Health and Safety Adviser, Mike Murphy attend the meetings.

<b>Service Area</b>	<b>Nominated Officer(s)</b>	<b>Deputy Officer</b>
Chief Exec., Corporate and Frontline Services	Phil Bond (Head of Corporate Maintenance) Jeanette Howells (Business Support Manager)	Carl Hardman (Electrical Engineer)
Education	Andrea Richards (Head of 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Schools)	Chantal Ferguson (21 <sup>st</sup> Century Support and Compliance Officer)
Community and Children's services	Paula Griffiths (Business Support Manager) Anne Isingrini (Business Support Manager)	

4.5 All Council premises have an up to date fire risk assessment, which has been undertaken by external specialist consultants. There is a risk based planned programme for the review of all assessments and a procedure is in place to ensure the reviews take place in a timely manner.

4.6 The Council approved and adopted a fire Safety Policy in October 2017, and this policy is currently being reviewed.

## **5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 This is an information report, therefore, no Equality and Diversity Assessment is required.

## **6. CONSULTATION**

6.1 This is an information report, therefore, no consultation is required.

## **7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

7.1 There are no financial implications at this time.

## **8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

8.1 The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 requires employers to have due regard to fire safety arrangements in the work place, including the need to assess the risk from fire.

**9. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/SIP**

- 9.1 The effective management of fire safety risks supports the Council's Corporate Plan by protecting assets, including staff and premises, which are required to deliver essential services well, and will also assist the Council live within its means by minimizing avoidable losses.

**10. CONCLUSION**

The development and roll out of an E-Learning module for site managers to better understand the processes in place for fire safety will complement existing training plans and further add to the Council's robust management practices for ensuring the risks from fire are adequately controlled.