

<b>Committee(s):</b>	<b>Date(s):</b>
Open Spaces and City Gardens	15 July 2019
<b>Subject:</b> Health & Safety in the Open Spaces Department	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Director of Open Spaces	<b>For Information</b>
<b>Summary</b>	
<p>There was an increase in the number of reported accidents in the Open Spaces Department in 2018. Overall there was good reporting of accidents and near misses and most accidents were minor in nature. Seven of the more serious accidents were reportable to the Health &amp; Safety Executive.</p> <p>Accidents (resulting in injury) and incidents (where no injury occurred) are investigated and lessons learnt are shared across the Department. Officers continue to seek to reduce accidents through a variety of measures including collaborative working and an annual H&amp;S audit.</p>	
<b>Recommendation(s)</b>	
Members are asked to:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Note this report</li> </ul>	

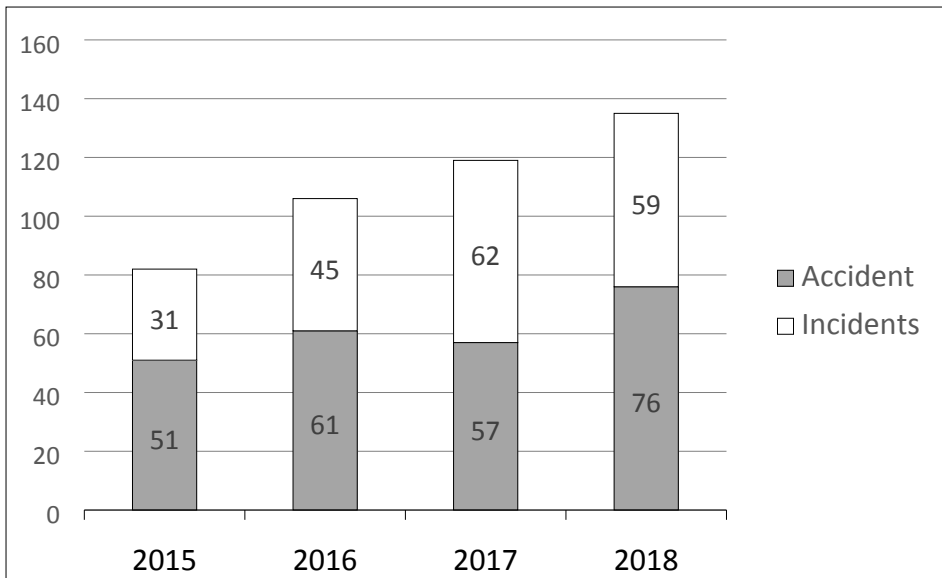
## Main Report

### Background

1. Health and Safety (H&S) in the Open Spaces Department is managed through the Open Spaces H&S Improvement Group which is chaired by the Director and is attended by senior representatives of all the Divisions. Risk Management of H&S is a key focus for this group and is monitored through an annual audit as well as scrutiny of accident and incident records.
2. In accordance with Health & Safety legislation, all accidents, incidents and near misses in the workplace must be recorded and investigations carried out where necessary.

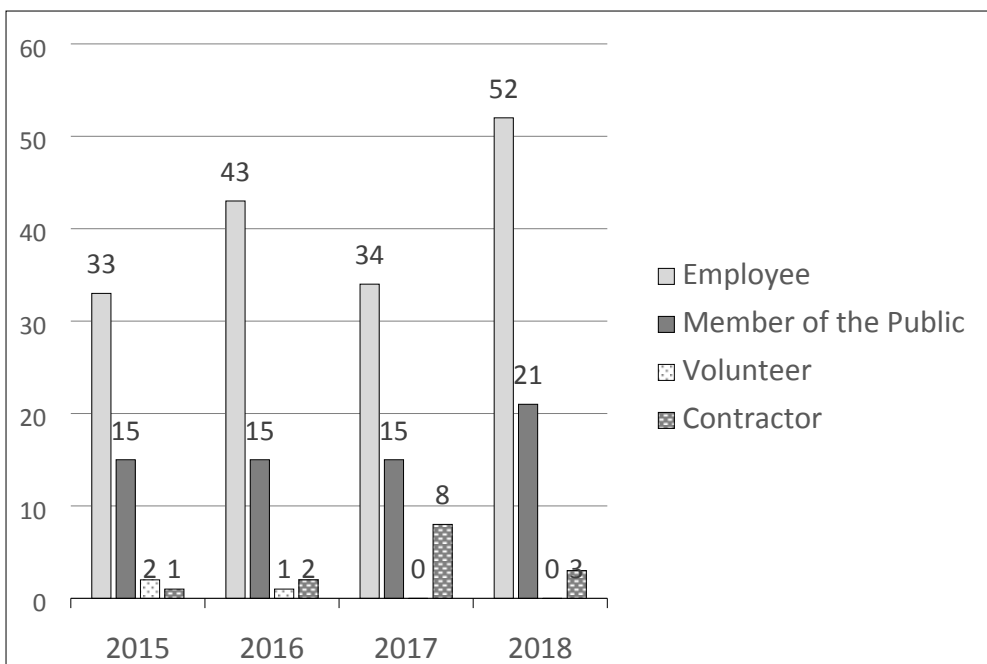
### Accidents and Incidents

3. There were 135 accidents and incidents recorded in the calendar year 2018 of which 76 resulted in injury. The graph at Figure 1 shows this in relation to the three previous years. There was an overall rise in accidents resulting in injury from 57 in 2017 to 76 in 2018.
4. There continues to be good reporting of minor accidents and incidents not resulting in injuries and this points to a positive, open H&S culture around reporting.



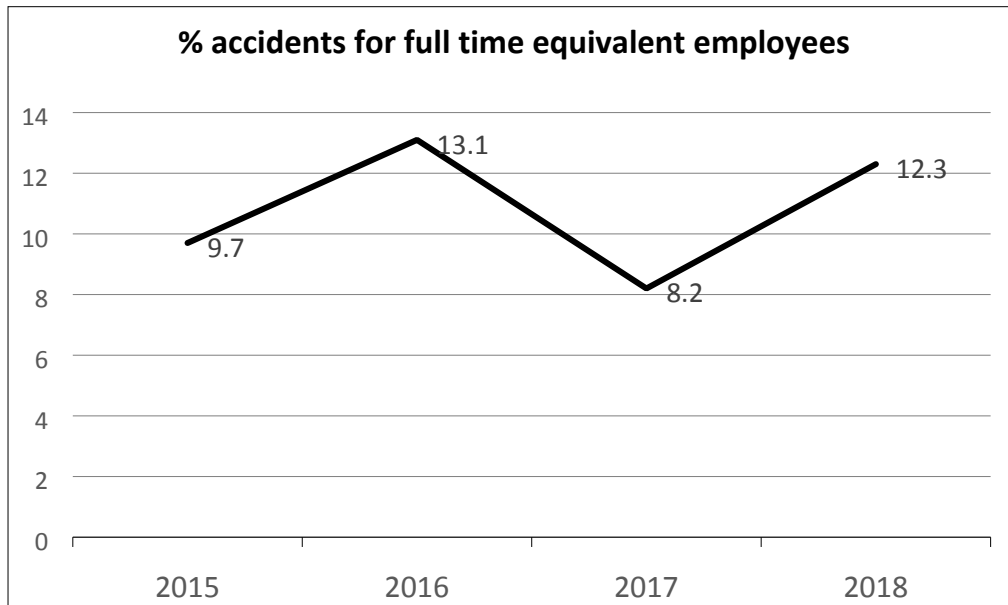
**Figure 1** Accidents (resulting in injuries) and Incidents (no injury).

5. This increase in the number of accidents resulting in injuries between 2017 and 2018 occurred largely among employees rather than other groups (Figure 2) with a rise from 34 accidents in 2017 to 52 staff accidents in 2018. The number of accidents to members of the public showed a smaller increase. There was a decrease in accident to contractors working on our sites in 2018. The increase in accidents may reflect the very good reporting noted generally, as these were largely minor injuries and there continues to be good reporting of near misses, where nobody was injured.



**Figure 2** Accidents (resulting in injuries) to Employees, Volunteers, Contractors and Members of the Public.

6. The rise in employee accidents is within the range that accidents have been occurring in recent years, when compared with accidents per 100 full-time equivalent employees (Figure 3). This shows a trend of about 11 accidents per 100 employees per year over the last 4 years, despite changing numbers of employees.



**Figure 3** Employee accidents per 100 full time equivalent employees by year.

#### **Severity of accidents** (see Tables 1 and 2 of Appendix 1)

7. Most accidents in 2018 involved minor injuries, 67 out of 76 were minor injuries which did not require significant time off work. Of the nine more serious injuries, seven were reportable to the HSE under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR).
8. Three staff injuries were reportable under RIDDOR as they necessitated taking more than 7 days off normal work activities:
- a broken finger;
  - sustained pain to the left calf while walking up an incline;
  - sustained pain to the back after lifting a heavy load.
9. One staff injury was reportable under RIDDOR due to a specified/major injury. This involved the member of staff suffering a broken ankle when they twisted their ankle in a small hole in a lawn area.
10. Three accidents involved members of the public being taken directly from site to a hospital for further treatment of which three were reportable under RIDDOR:
- a fractured arm following a fall on a level surface;
  - cut on abdomen after diving in a pond;

- suspected concussion, cuts and bruising to the head due to tripping on a grave edging stone and hitting another memorial.

### **Types of Accidents and Incidents**

11. The types of minor accidents vary greatly and the numbers in any one category are low. Table 3 (in Appendix 1) broadly summarises the types of accidents/injuries which occur repeatedly in 2018. The highest frequency were accidents involving slips, trips and falls. Manual handling issues were responsible for many of the minor accidents and this is reflected in the numbers involving either crush, cuts, punctures or musculoskeletal injuries.
12. Recording and understanding incidents where injury did not occur is an important part of accident reduction. Incidents which do not result in injury are investigated along with those which do, to determine if there were lessons to be learnt from the event and information to be shared across the department.
13. These incidents (Table 4 in Appendix 1) include outcomes where there was damage to property, near misses and other incidents such as verbal abuse. There were 34 near miss incidents in 2018, slightly more than in 2017. The number of verbal abuse incidents reported was down from 13 in 2017 to 9 in 2018. There was slight decrease in 'damage to property' incidents, from 12 to 8 in 2018, largely minor vehicle collisions such as damaged wing mirrors.

### **Accident Investigation Performance Indicator (PI)**

14. A PI requiring accidents to be investigated within 28 days, with a target of 85%, was introduced as a corporate wide performance indicator in 2018. This was introduced partly in recognition that investigations of accidents in departments like Open Spaces can often be complex and other factors like shift patterns can also influence the response performance for this indicator. Open Spaces achieved 96% compliance in 2018. Investigations were generally carried out to a high standard. (Performance against the previous PI of a 14-day investigation response was 77% in 2018.)

### **Preventative action**

15. There are procedures in place to reduce risk and avoid chronic issues, such as hand arm vibration and noise related conditions. Driver assessment and training are being carried out in line with driver management guidance and the corporate driving policy. Officers in Open Spaces work routinely with colleagues in other departments to provide a safe working environment and safe working procedures, such as H&S teams in the Town Clerk's and Surveyors departments, including Occupation Health, the Fire Officer and other specialist advisors.
16. A workshop on H&S Leadership for Senior Management was attended by the Director and the Senior Leadership Team in March 2018. This focused on their responsibilities and role in the strategic management of H&S and its integration into business management.
17. There is evidence of a link between poor mental health and higher rates of accidents in the workplace. Prolonged absence following an accident or

sickness may also hide underlying poor mental wellbeing. The CityWell initiative launched in April 2016 continues to promote wellbeing among staff, including mental health awareness. Mental Health First Aid training has been rolled out in 2018, with further training opportunities planned. A referral system for mental healthcare is available and awareness campaigns are being run to help destigmatise discussions of mental health in the workplace and to help with the process of disclosure to line managers.

18. Although staff are routinely trained and instructed in manual handling in the Department, towards the end of 2018 we began developing our own programme for the prevention of musculoskeletal injuries through physiotherapy sessions across the open spaces, focusing on warmup exercises which staff will be encouraged to complete before daily work. They will be aimed at as many manual staff as possible. This programme is supported by the H&S advisory team in the Town Clerks department.
19. The annual audit of H&S procedures and practices across the department provides assurance and an opportunity to share good safety practice and expertise. Self-assessments are carried out in each division and these are validated by peer visits between all divisions on a two-year cycle. A summary of the results of the audit is submitted by the Director in consultation with the unions, to the Town Clerk each year to provide an Annual Certificate of Assurance (ACA). A copy of the 2018 audit summary is attached as Appendix 2. The successful submission of the ACA is a corporate performance indicator.
20. Additional Open Spaces H&S policy and guidance documents were developed during the year for topics including, breaking ground, unexploded ordnance & found firearms.
21. Significant progress was made in fire prevention in the department in 2018. Fire risk assessments were brought up-to-date and actions identified. Habitat fire management plans are in place in relevant divisions. Despite this work a significant area of Wanstead Flats was damaged by fire during the hot weather. Officers worked well with the Emergency Services in responding to the incident and the ongoing relationships built up with emergency planning contacts (Local Authority Liaison Officers), assisted in this regard. Lessons learnt were reported back to officers in other divisions.

### **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

22. Managing Risk and reducing our accident rates is driven by three of our departmental values of 'Quality', 'Inclusion' and 'People' as expressed in the Open Spaces Business Plan. Accident reduction is a key part of the Open Spaces H&S Plan as part of the Corporate H&S Policy.

### **Conclusion**

23. 2018 saw a significant increase in accident numbers in the Open Spaces Department. However, the majority of accidents across all groups resulted in minor injuries and there is a decrease in the number of more serious accidents. There is also very good reporting of incidents which did not result in injury, which suggests the overall increase may partly reflect a good and open culture of reporting. Seven incidents warranted reporting to the Health &

Safety Executive under RIDDOR. Accidents, and incidents where no injury has occurred, are investigated and the lessons learned are shared across the Department.

## **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 – Tables 1 to 4
- Appendix 2 – 2018 Open Spaces H&S Annual Certificate of Assurance Summary

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