

<b>Committee(s)</b>	<b>Dated:</b>
Establishment Committee – For approval	12 May 2021
<b>Subject:</b> Corporate Noise and Vibration Policy (draft)	<b>Public</b>
<b>Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?</b>	<b>1,2</b>
<b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>If so, how much?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>What is the source of Funding?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Chrissie Morgan, Director of HR	<b>For Decision</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Justin Tyas, Health Safety and Wellbeing Manager	

### Summary

Exposure to excessive noise can cause hearing damage and even hearing loss, whilst exposure to excessive vibration can damage joints, muscles, circulation and sensory nerves. This could lead to considerable pain, time off or even permanent disability.

The City of London Corporation has established health and safety guidance for both noise and vibration but there is no overarching corporate policy for either. There are areas of expertise in the City Corporation including Open Spaces and the Barbican Centre.

It is proposed that a new corporate policy on noise and vibration is articulated so that a framework is provided for the consistent management of noise and vibration across the City Corporation. This will be monitored via the health and safety audit and assurance programme.

### Recommendation(s)

Members of the Establishment Committee are asked to:

- Endorse the proposed draft Noise and Vibration Policy (Health and Safety)

## **Main Report**

### **Background**

1. Sound is what we hear. Noise is unwanted sound. The difference between sound and noise depends upon the listener and the circumstances. Exposure to excessive noise can cause hearing damage and even hearing loss. Noise also interferes with communication and may therefore compromise safety at work. The effects of noise may be cumulative and ultimately irreversible.
2. The Control of Noise at Work Regulations (“Noise Regulations”) 2005 places a general duty on employers to do all that is reasonably practicable to eliminate the risks to employees’ health and safety from exposure to noise at work.
3. Sources of noise at work can include loud music, workplace transport, power tools, motors and generators. Simplistically, work equipment that produces noise vibrates.
4. According to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) it is estimated that every day in the U.K. approximately 2 million workers are exposed to excessive levels of vibration at work. It can damage joints, muscles, circulation and sensory nerves. This could lead to considerable pain, time off or even permanent disability
5. The types of vibration of concern are Hand Arm Vibration (HAV) and Whole-Body Vibration (WBV). The difference between these types of Vibration is the entry routes into the body, and the different parts of the body they affect.
6. HAV can be caused by excessive vibration from power tools and associated equipment such as chainsaws, hammer drills and strimmer’s etc. Whereas WBV can be caused from excessive vibration from working on machinery or vehicles.
7. The Control of Vibration at Work Regulations (“*Vibration Regulations*”) 2005 stipulates that we must do all that is reasonably practicable to eliminate or reduce the risks from vibration.

### **Current Position**

8. The City of London Corporation has established health and safety guidance for both noise and vibration but there is no overarching corporate policy for either.
9. There are areas of specific expertise within the City Corporation for both noise and vibration. For example, Open Spaces have departmental policy, arrangements and proficiency with the management of noise and vibration and the Barbican has sound / noise expertise in relation to live performances and entertainment.
10. Health surveillance is the process of detecting injury/disease at an early stage, it is not a substitute for measures to control physical agents or the need to inform employees of the risk. The Occupational Health Service (OHS) has specific competency in relation to vibration and noise health Surveillance. Expertise is

available to departments from OHS when they identify the need for surveillance from local risk assessments.

11. An Occupational Hygienist (someone with specialist professional competency in the measurement and control of physical agents) was employed within the Health and Safety Team but the post holder and role no longer exist. Specialist advice can be commissioned where necessary.

## **Proposals**

12. That a new corporate policy for noise and vibration is developed as set out be endorsed with the aim of it being finally approved by the Establishment Committee.

13. The proposed policy on noise and vibration provide an articulated framework for the consistent management of noise and vibration across the City Corporation which will subsequently be monitored via the health and safety audit and assurance programme.

14. The new (draft) policy aims to:

- ensure that employees hearing is protected from excessive noise at work, which could cause them to suffer hearing loss and/or to suffer from tinnitus (permanent ringing in the ears).
- protect employees from the risks of Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS) and from Whole Body Vibration (WBV), which can be caused by excessive exposure to vibration.

15. The specific policy objectives will include (where necessary):

- Assessing the risks from noise and vibration exposure
- Taking measures to reduce noise and vibration exposure where a risk assessment shows that this is necessary
- Ensuring the level of noise and vibration generated is considered when a new piece of work equipment is purchased or hired
- Providing hearing / personal protection where appropriate if risks cannot be adequately reduced by other means
- Providing training and information for employees on the risks from noise and vibration and the measures in place to reduce these
- Providing health surveillance where the risk assessment shows that this is appropriate

16. The above will enable the City Corporation to consistently satisfy its obligations under the Noise and Vibration Regulations and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations.

17. The draft Noise and Vibration Policy does not apply to complaints about third party noise. For example, construction sites or intruder alarms which could be a *statutory nuisance* covered by the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

## **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

18. Everything we do supports the delivery of the Corporate Plan's three strategic objectives, including contributing to a flourishing society, especially:

- *People are safe and feel safe (Outcome 1)*
- *People enjoy good health and wellbeing (Outcome 2)*

19. The proposed Noise and Vibration Policy is entirely consistent with the above, providing the governance and framework (safety management system) to support these outcomes, and drive performance.

## **Financial and resource implications**

20. There are no adverse financial or resources implications anticipated. Changes to equipment and/or process etc. must be justified by risk assessment and would be met from local risk budgets.

## **Security implications**

21. None.

## **Climate implications.**

22. No adverse implications anticipated. Procurement options for phased replacement of older or obsolete equipment (e.g. for lower noise or vibrating tools) is likely to present opportunities for lower energy and lower emission alternatives.

## **Equalities implications**

23. The City Corporation is committed to:

- Eliminating discrimination and promoting equality and diversity in its Policies, Procedures and Guidelines, and
- Designing and implementing services, policies and measures that meet the diverse needs of its population and workforce, ensuring that no individual or group is disadvantaged

24. There are no anticipated equalities implications (positive or negative) from the proposed corporate Noise and Vibration Policy.

## **Legal and risk implications**

25. The proposed noise and vibration policy when consistently implemented, will support and protect the City Corporation from the risk of non-compliance with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, associated Regulations (Noise and Vibration etc.) and potential for Civil Claims.

## **Conclusion**

26. The City of London Corporation is committed to keeping our employees and those affected by our activities healthy and safe. There are health risks to

employees who undertake tasks that may involve exposure to vibration and noise at work.

27. The draft policy will provide services with the standards to reduce risk and comply with the relevant health and safety legislation ensuring good practice to manage exposure to vibration and noise at work which is consistent with our desired corporate outcomes.

**Appendices**

None

**Background papers**

[Corporate Health Safety and Wellbeing Policy](#)

[Corporate Noise Guidance](#)

[Corporate Vibration Guidance](#)

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