

FULL COUNCIL



Agenda Item:	Health and Safety Report
Meeting Date:	Monday 12 October 2026
Contact Officer:	Compliance and Environment Officer

The purpose of this report is to update Councillors on Health and Safety across the services and facilities provided by the Council.

Background

It is the policy of Witney Town Council to comply with our obligations under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (as amended), the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (as amended) and other supporting legislation concerning Health and Safety. At all times we endeavour to provide and maintain a healthy and safe working environment for our employees, and to protect the health and safety of all visitors; including contractors, temporary workers, and members of the public, who might be affected by our operations.

Current Situation

In accordance with the approved Witney Town Council Health and Safety Policy Statement, Members are reminded that they have a collective responsibility for the Health & Safety of the organisation.

Departmental managers remain accountable for compliance within their areas of responsibility which is overseen by the Compliance and Health & Safety officer.

The key objectives are to ensure that the Council operates in a lawful manner in respect of health and safety compliance with its service delivery and functions, identifying and advising management and Council of possible risks and finding solutions to mitigate such risks.

The Council's health and safety consultants, Opus Safety Ltd provide additional specialist support to the Council.

Compliance Table

Compliance Inspection, Testing and Servicing Status	Town Hall	Corn Exchange	Burwell Hall	Windrush Depot	Works Depot
Fire Risk Assessment	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed
Fire Alarm Testing	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	Scheduled
Fire Extinguishers	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed
Steel fire exit staircase	N/A	Completed	N/A	N/A	N/A
Emergency Lighting	Completed	Completed	Completed	Scheduled	Completed
Security	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed
Lift	N/A	Completed	N/A	N/A	N/A
Gas Safety	N/A	Completed	Completed	N/A	N/A
Electrical Periodic Inspection	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed
PAT Testing	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed
Legionella Risk Assessment	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed
Asbestos	Completed	Completed	Review	Completed	N/A
Air Handling Unit	N/A	Scheduled	N/A	N/A	N/A
Air conditioning	N/A	N/A	Completed	N/A	N/A

Corn Exchange emergency lighting remedial works: Two lights being replaced in the gentleman's toilet and backstage corridor.

Burwell Hall emergency lighting remedial works: Two lights being replaced in the entrance lobby and storeroom.

Stanley Court temporary Works Depot has now been vacated by the Operations Team in accordance with the lease agreement for the premises. The new Operations Depot at West Witney Sports Ground has been added to the Council's compliance inspection schedule.

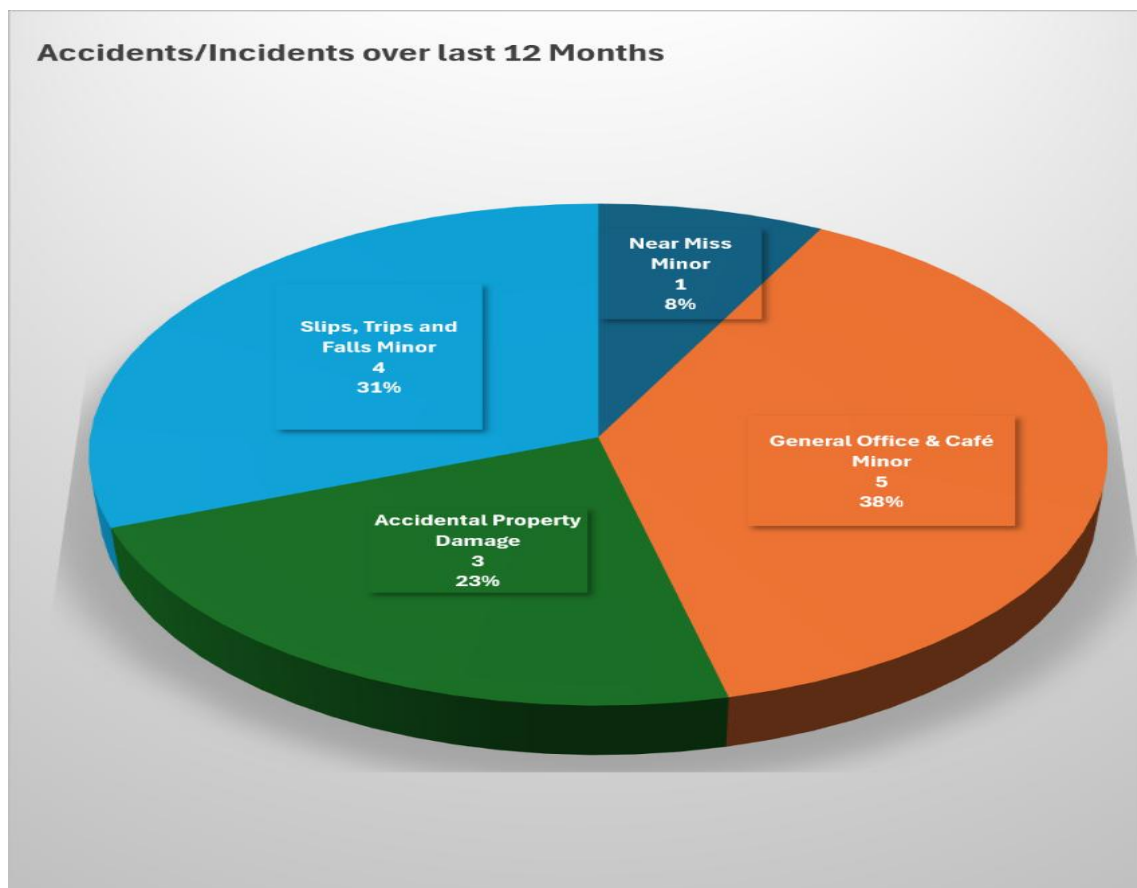
The Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025: Martyn's Law

The Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025 (Martyn's Law) received Royal Assent on 3 April 2025. While the Act is now law, the statutory requirements are subject to an implementation period of at least 24 months and are therefore not expected to come into force before April 2027.

Officers are monitoring the publication of supporting guidance and assessing the potential implications for Council-operated buildings, venues and events to ensure that appropriate policies, procedures, training and risk management arrangements are developed and aligned with the new legislative requirements.

Health and Safety incidents

- RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations)
 - No reportable incidents since the last meeting.
- Accidents/Incident since the last meeting
 - There have been two reported accidents/incidents since the last meeting relating to members of the public using the Council's facilities.
 - Slips, trips and falls - Accidental
 - an attendee of the Brass on the Grass at the Leys
 - an audience member at a Jazz event in the Corn Exchange
- Near Miss
 - One reported when the lift failed in the Corn Exchange



Impact of Prolonged Dry Weather on Mature Trees

On the very early morning hours of 23 September 2026, two large mature trees experienced significant branch failures at the council's Tower Hill cemetery, with substantial limbs falling onto footpaths below. Fortunately, no injuries or damage were reported. Both trees had been inspected within the preceding 18 months as part of the Council's routine tree safety inspection programme, and neither inspection identified any defects or conditions requiring remedial works.

Tree maintenance works were completed adjacent to the access lane linking Tower Hill and Fettiplace Road. Overhanging branches from mature trees were reduced to improve safety for residents and other users of the lane.

Following the prolonged period of hot and dry weather experienced during the summer months, officers have identified an elevated risk associated with large mature trees, particularly the phenomenon known as Sudden Branch Drop (SBD). This condition, which is most commonly associated with mature broadleaf species during or following periods of drought stress, high temperatures and increased humidity, can result in the unexpected failure of otherwise healthy-looking branches without obvious warning signs. Whilst the precise causes remain the subject of ongoing research, such failures have the potential to present risks to members of the public, staff, vehicles and property beneath the tree canopy.

In response to these incidents and the prevailing weather conditions, officers are reviewing the frequency of inspections for large mature trees in high-occupancy areas, including parks, public open spaces, cemeteries, footpaths and other locations with significant public use. Any trees identified as presenting an elevated level of risk will be referred for further arboricultural assessment and, where appropriate, managed through remedial pruning, temporary exclusion zones or other proportionate risk mitigation measures. This approach seeks to balance public safety with the retention of the significant environmental, ecological and amenity benefits provided by the Town Council's tree stock.

Corporate Strategy

The Council's Strategic Plan 2025–29 sets out the Council's long-term priorities and direction, supporting its mission to 'make Witney a great place to live, work and visit.' This report contributes to the delivery of the following strategic pillar of the plan:

1. A Forward Looking Town Council

Impact Assessments

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Ensuring equality in health and safety measures so that all individuals, regardless of their background, job role, or personal circumstances, have equal access to a safe and healthy environment.
- b) Biodiversity plays a crucial role in health and safety measures, influencing public health, workplace safety, and overall environmental well-being.
- c) Crime and disorder pose risks to health and safety in workplaces, public spaces, and healthcare settings. Issues such as violence, theft, and vandalism can compromise safety measures.
- d) The Environment & Climate Emergency is a critical issue that directly impacts health and safety measures in workplaces and communities. It is important to integrate environmental and climate considerations into the council's health and safety policies to protect workers, reduce environmental hazards, and build resilience against climate-related risks.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

All accidents and incidents are properly documented and investigated with measures put in place in order to prevent reoccurrences.

Social Value

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates.

There are the broader benefits that the Council generates for employees and the public embedding a safer, healthier, and more productive workforce.

Financial implications

The Council makes budgetary provision in order to carry out its obligations in relation to its statutory compliance checks using external contractors to certify the work accordingly.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report.