

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

2ND NOVEMBER 2016

WALES AUDIT OFFICE – LOCAL AUTHORITY ARRANGEMENTS TO SUPPORT SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN FOLLOW UP

REPORT OF GROUP DIRECTOR CORPORATE & FRONTLINE SERVICES, AND GROUP DIRECTOR COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, COUNCILLOR A MORGAN

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

This report updates Cabinet on the outcome of the follow-up visit undertaken by the Wales Audit Office (“WAO”) in respect of the Local Authority’s Arrangements to Support Safeguarding of Children, together with a progress report in respect of actions taken to address overall recommendations in relation to our Corporate Safeguarding responsibilities.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Consider the content of the WAO report ‘*Local Authority arrangements to Support Safeguarding of Children follow up*’
- 2.2 Review and challenge the Council’s progress to date against the planned actions as set out in the Corporate Safeguarding Delivery Plan endorsed by Cabinet in March 2016.
- 2.3 Refer the WAO report and associated Delivery Plan to Audit Committee to further challenge the overall governance arrangements in place.
- 2.4 Refer the WAO report and associated Delivery Plan to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

3. **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 To ensure that Cabinet is aware of WAO findings and recommendations and is able to challenge the progress made to date in respect of actions taken to improve the Council's Corporate Safeguarding arrangements, which specifically include arrangements for safeguarding children as per the WAO review, but also ensure that adults are safeguarded and protected.
- 3.2 Safeguarding and protecting children and adults at risk is a key priority for Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council and 'is everyone's business'.

4. **BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 Since October 2014, the Council has received three reports from the Wales Audit Office in respect of its safeguarding arrangements:

1.	Assessment of RCT's Arrangements to Support Safeguarding of Children	Local Report, issued October 2014
2.	'Review of Corporate Safeguarding Arrangements in Wales'	National Report, issued in July 2015
3.	Follow up of Assessment of RCT's Arrangements to Support Safeguarding of Children	Local Report, issued in May 2016

- 4.2 In 2014, the Wales Audit Office (WAO) conducted a '*Review of Local Authority Arrangements to Support Safeguarding of Children*' and produced individual reports in respect of arrangements in each local authority.

- 4.3 The local report issued to Rhondda Cynon Taf set out four recommendations:

1. Develop a Corporate Safeguarding Policy that clearly specifies roles, responsibilities and procedures for safeguarding.
2. Ensure all safeguarding risks are identified; ensure corporate and service level risks are integrated; and agree actions to mitigate these.
3. Improve the range, quality and coverage of safeguarding performance reporting to provide adequate assurance that systems are working effectively.
4. Ensure all elected members and staff who come into contact with children on a regular basis receive training on safeguarding and child protection issues and the Council's corporate policy on safeguarding.

- 4.4 An update of actions taken to address these recommendations, was reported to the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee on 21 March 2016 and a link to a report for that meeting is attached below:

<http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncillorsCommitteesandMeetings/Meetings/ChildrenandYoungPeopleScrutinyCommittee/2016/03/21/Reports/Item3ArrangmentsforSafeguardingChildren.pdf>

- 4.5 Subsequent to the publication of the local report on '*Arrangements to Support Safeguarding of Children*', in July 2015, the Wales Audit Office issued a national report '*Review of Corporate Safeguarding Arrangements in Wales*'.
- 4.6 The recommendations contained in this national report superseded the recommendations in the earlier local report and helped to inform the Council's current Corporate Safeguarding arrangements.
- 4.7 The development of the Council's Corporate Safeguarding arrangements, which included a programme of accountability, policy development, training and communication, was set out in a report to Cabinet on 17th March 2016. At this meeting, Cabinet adopted the Corporate Safeguarding Policy, endorsed a Delivery Plan and Corporate Safeguarding Risk Register. Cabinet also recommended that the Corporate Safeguarding Policy be presented to the Corporate Parenting Board on the 11th April 2016. Links to these reports are included below:

<http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncillorsCommitteesandMeetings/Meetings/Cabinet/2016/03/17/Reports/Agendaltem11CorporateSafeguarding.pdf>

<http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncillorsCommitteesandMeetings/Meetings/CorporateParentingBoard/2016/04/11/CorporateParentingBoard11Apr2016.aspx>

5. CURRENT POSITION

- 5.1 The Wales Audit Office's follow up review of '*Local Authority arrangements to Support Safeguarding of Children*' took place in February 2016. Following the review, a report was sent to the Council in May 2016. A copy of the report is provided at Appendix 1. The report concluded that: '***The Council is strengthening its corporate arrangements to support the safeguarding of children and is making progress in addressing our previous proposals for improvement.***'
- 5.2 Given the timing of the publication of the report in May 2016, covering work carried out in its review in February 2016, the progress made in implementing the Corporate Safeguarding Delivery Plan was not fully reflected in the Wales Audit Office follow up report.
- 5.3 Work continues to address the recommendations made by the WAO within the overarching plans to strengthen and communicate the Council's Corporate Safeguarding arrangements
- 5.4 Cabinet is requested to consider the attached updated Corporate Safeguarding Delivery Plan (Appendix 2) and Risk Register (Appendix 3), which provides an update in respect of progress made and next steps.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment screening form has been prepared for the purpose of this report. It has been found that a full report is not required at this time.

7. CONSULTATION

7.1 No specific consultation required at this time.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

8.1 Additional costs are likely given the scale and depth of training required, but these can be met from within existing resources.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

9.1 Extracted from Safeguarding Policy:

- Social Services and Well Being Act 2014
- Education Act 2002 – plus 'Keeping Learners Safe' -The role of local authorities, governing bodies and proprietors of independent schools under the Education Act 2002
- Children Act 1989 and 2004,
- 'Safeguarding Children: Working Together under the Children Act 2004'.
- 'In Safe Hands' 2000
- Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998,
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015
- Housing Act 2004
- Licensing Act 2003
- Human Rights Act 1998

10 LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN/OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/SIP/FUTURE GENERATIONS – SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

10.1 Links to the 'PEOPLE' priority of the Council's Corporate Plan.
Links to the 'SAFETY' Theme and 'SAFEGUARDING' Outcome of the current Single Integrated Plan.

Aligns with the Prevention aspect and the Healthier/More Equal/Cohesive Wales goals as set out in the Future Generation Act.

11. CONCLUSION

- 11.1 The Council has made positive progress in implementing its Corporate Safeguarding arrangements which is evidenced in the Delivery Plan and Risk Register updates.