



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

28TH JULY 2020

THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING ARRANGEMENTS

REPORT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND GROUP DIRECTOR COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH CLLR MORGAN

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek Cabinet's approval of an Action Improvement Plan in respect of the Council's Corporate Safeguarding arrangements and a revised Corporate Safeguarding Policy.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Approves the Action Improvement Plan in respect of the Council's Corporate Safeguarding arrangements.
- 2.2 Approves and adopts the new Policy as the Council policy and;
- 2.3 Subject to 2.2 the policy is translated, published on the Council's website and embedded into associated Council policies and strategies as appropriate.
- 2.4 Subject to 2.2 that a wider Communications and Awareness raising plan is developed to make sure that all staff and Managers are reminded of their responsibilities in respect of the new Policy.
- 2.5 Subject to 2.2 the new Policy is reflected in future training for Safeguarding training
- 2.6 Refer to Overview and Scrutiny Committee for scrutiny and monitoring.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Safeguarding and protecting children and adults at risk is a high priority for Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council.

- 3.2 Maintaining a robust Action and Continuous Improvement Plan will ensure that we continue to strengthen the arrangements that will help to keep children and adults at risk safe.
- 3.3 It is important that Cabinet is aware of Wales Audit Office findings and recommendations and is able to challenge the progress in respect of actions taken to improve the Council's Corporate Safeguarding arrangements.
- 3.4 The Action Improvement Plan aims to address the Proposals for Improvement contained within the report of the Wales Audit Office (Audit Wales) in respect of Corporate Safeguarding arrangements, including the completion of a revised Corporate Safeguarding Policy, following its review of the effectiveness of the Council's Corporate Safeguarding arrangements.
- 3.5 The new Corporate Safeguarding Policy strengthens the framework for every Service within the Council and sets out responsibilities in relation to safeguarding and protecting children and adults at risk as well as the methods by which the Council will be assured that it is fulfilling its duties.
- 3.6 The policy applies to all Rhondda Cynon Taf employees, Councillors, volunteers and service providers that are commissioned by the Council.

Safeguarding is everyone's business whether they work for, or on behalf of the Council

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 In 2014, the Wales Audit Office undertook a 'Review of Local Authority Arrangements to Support Safeguarding of Children'. The findings from the Review contained four Proposals for Improvement:
 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.
- 4.2 During 2015 the Wales Audit Office (WAO) published its report 'Review of Corporate Safeguarding Arrangements in Wales'. The review was issued to all Council's, there was not a specific 'local' report provided to Rhondda Cynon Taf at that time.
- 4.3 The WAO report identified the following recommendations for all Councils to consider. In summary:

1. Improve corporate leadership and comply with Welsh Government policy on safeguarding.
 2. Ensure there is a corporate-wide policy on safeguarding covering all council services to provide a clear strategic direction and clear lines of accountability across the council.
 3. Strengthen safe recruitment of staff and volunteers.
 4. Ensure all relevant staff, members and partners understand their safeguarding responsibilities.
 5. In revising guidance, the Welsh Government should clarify its expectations of local authorities regarding the roles and responsibilities of the designated officer within education services, and the named person at senior management level responsible for promoting the safeguarding.
 6. Improve accountability for corporate safeguarding by regularly reporting safeguarding issues and assurances to scrutiny committee(s) against a balanced and council-wide set of performance information.
 7. Establish a rolling programme of internal audit reviews to undertake systems testing and compliance reviews on the Council's safeguarding practices.
 8. Ensure the risks associated with safeguarding are considered at both a corporate and service level in developing and agreeing risk management plans across the council.
- 4.4 Following receipt of these recommendations and in line with the work arising from the earlier review of arrangements for Safeguarding Children, Officers undertook a Self-Assessment against the expected standards. At its meeting on [17 March 2016](#) Cabinet agreed a new Corporate Safeguarding Policy as well as putting in place an Action Plan to deliver key actions for improvement and a Corporate Safeguarding Risk Register.
- 4.5 Since then, the Council has implemented a Corporate Safeguarding Policy and the agreed Action Plan to address the recommendations and has taken steps to strengthen its Corporate Safeguarding arrangements. This work has also been reflected in various reports including Cabinet, Scrutiny Committees, Audit Committee and the Corporate Parenting Board:
1. [Audit Committee 20/3/16](#) reviewed arrangements to support safeguarding children and determined there were no matters of governance, internal control or a risk management nature that required further action or attention.
 2. [Corporate Parenting Board 11/4/16](#) noted the progress to date and the need to continually raise awareness of individual's responsibilities in respect of safeguarding.

3. [Audit Committee 20 March 2017](#) was satisfied with the progress that has been made in relation to the steps taken by the Council to monitor the implementation of 'proposals for improvement' by the WAO.
 4. [Children and Young People Scrutiny 22 March 2017](#) resolved to receive update reports at future meetings
 5. [Children and Young People Scrutiny 6 September 2017](#) received annual report of Cwm Taf Safeguarding Board
 6. [Overview and Scrutiny 14 November 2017](#) received presentation of progress to date.
 7. [Children and Young People Scrutiny 12 September 2018](#) received annual report of Cwm Taf Safeguarding Board
 8. [Overview and Scrutiny Committee 5 February 2019](#) – received update and next steps in respect of Corporate Safeguarding.
- 4.6 The Wales Audit Office reviewed the Council's progress and issued a follow up report in respect of 'Local Authority arrangements to Support Safeguarding of Children' in 2016. The report, which concluded '*The Council is strengthening its corporate arrangements to support the safeguarding of children and is making progress in addressing our previous proposals for improvement.*' was considered by [Cabinet in November 2016](#).

5. **CURRENT POSITION**

- 5.1 The most recent Wales Audit Office report in respect of the Council's Corporate Safeguarding arrangements followed a "*Review of the effectiveness of corporate safeguarding arrangements building on the study previously undertaken by the Auditor General in this area*" in June/July 2019 as part of the Wales Audit Office 2018-19 Work Programme.
- 5.2 The Review considered the findings of the 2014 report into the Council's arrangements to support safeguarding of children. It also considered the Council's progress in implementing the recommendations contained in the Auditor General's report, 'Review of Corporate Safeguarding Arrangements in Welsh Councils'.
- 5.3 Following the review, Wales Audit Office issued its report in [September 2019](#). The review found that "*The Council has met, or partially met, most of our previous recommendations and proposals for improvement, but we have identified some further proposals for improvement to strengthen aspects of the Council's corporate safeguarding arrangements*".
- 5.4 In summary, the six Proposals for Improvement are that the Council should:
1. Strengthen the Corporate Safeguarding Policy
 2. Strengthen the Recruitment and Selection Procedures

3. Gather contractual monitoring information from across all Council Directorates
 4. Should improve its approach to safeguarding training
 5. Consider producing performance measures (for example in respect of DBS check compliance) to enhance the performance information that goes to scrutiny and aid transparency and that
 6. The Corporate Safeguarding Working Group should have oversight of corporate safeguarding risks from across the Council.
- 5.5 The Wales Audit Office Report was presented to the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee on [20 January 2020](#). Committee was advised that the Council agreed with the Proposals for Improvement and it also received a brief update of the Council's position in respect of each of these Proposals. Committee was also advised that a more detailed plan setting out progress and next steps to address these proposals was scheduled for consideration by Overview and Scrutiny Committee in March 2020.
- 5.6 Since then, progress has been affected by the need to refocus resources to address the Council's response to Covid-19. However, the Action Improvement Plan and the revised Corporate Safeguarding Policy are now available for consideration by Cabinet.
- 5.7 In accordance with the recommendations of this report as set out in section 2. Cabinet is requested to consider
- a) the attached updated Corporate Safeguarding Action Improvement Plan (Appendix 1) which also provides an update in respect of progress made and next steps, and
 - b) the revised Corporate Safeguarding Policy (Appendix 2)

6. NEXT STEPS

- 6.1 To continue work to strengthen and communicate the Council's Corporate Safeguarding arrangements and address the recommendations made by the Wales Audit Office.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) 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.

8. CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Internal consultation and engagement will be undertaken as necessary to ensure effective implementation and delivery of this new policy. The Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board will also be engaged to ensure multi agency oversight and evaluation of effectiveness.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 9.1 There may be a requirement to deliver training and awareness which could have financial implications.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 10.1 The Council recognises that good practice in safeguarding brings together all activity aimed at promoting safe practice with vulnerable groups and preventing abuse and neglect. For this reason, and because the law, policy, guidance and regulations change from time to time, it is impossible to provide an exhaustive list of relevant documents but the most significant items are included below:-

- 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,
- ‘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

- 10.2 The Council will ensure that practice is compliant with the following policies and procedures:-

- Wales Safeguarding Procedures 2019
- RCT CBC Whistle-Blowing policy
- RCT CBC Recruitment Policies
- RCTCBC Dealing with Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence
- Cwm Taf Morgannwg Schools Safeguarding Policy

11. LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN/OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/ WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

- 11.1 At a strategic level, this approach to safeguarding supports the delivery of the Council’s three priorities as set out in the new [Corporate Plan](#),

1. Ensuring **People: are independent, healthy and successful;**
2. Creating **Places: where people are proud to live, work and play;**
3. Enabling **Prosperity: creating the opportunity for people and businesses to: be innovative; be entrepreneurial; and fulfil their potential and prosper.**

- 11.2 It also supports the work the Council undertakes in partnership to meet the Vision of the Council and its partners in the Cwm Taf Well-being Plan i.e.

To help people live long and healthy lives and overcome any challenges.

- 11.3 At an All Wales level, keeping people safe contributes to the seven Well-being goals as set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act in order to **improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales.**

12. CONCLUSION

- 12.1 An updated Corporate Safeguarding Policy has been compiled that reflects current legislative requirements as well as the recent Audit Wales findings. This will support the Council's continuing work to strengthen its Corporate Safeguarding arrangements to keep our children and adults at risk safe, especially in these uncertain times.



LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972
AS AMENDED BY
THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985
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Background Papers

Cabinet – 17th March 2016
Audit Committee – 20th March 2016
Corporate Parenting – 11th April 2016
Audit Committee 20th March 2017
Children and Young People Scrutiny – 22nd March 2017
Children and Young People Scrutiny – 6th September 2017
Overview and Scrutiny – 14th November 2017
Children and Young People Scrutiny – 12th September 2018
Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 5th February 2019

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