



CABINET- 10TH DECEMBER 2014

SUBJECT: LOCAL AUTHORITY ARRANGEMENTS TO SUPPORT SAFEGUARDING OF CHILDREN

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR SOCIAL SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The Auditor General for Wales, as part of the programme of works for the year 2014-15 has issued (October 2014) the findings of his review into the local authority arrangements to support the safeguarding of children.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 In the period March to May 2014 the Wales Audit Office completed a review of Caerphilly County Borough Council's (the Council) assurance and accountability arrangements for ensuring that safeguarding policies and procedures are in place and are being adhered to.
- 2.2 This report summarises the conclusions and recommendations of this review and explains how the actions will be implemented and monitored.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 Safeguarding of Children is a key Statutory Duty of the local authority.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 The WAO study focused on: Does the Council's governance and management arrangements provide assurance that children are safeguarded?

The main questions that the review sought to answer were:

- Are there clear governance, accountability and management arrangements for overseeing whether the Council is meeting its safeguarding responsibilities to children?
- Is the Council monitoring and evaluating appropriate information, which provides assurance that it is meeting its safeguarding responsibilities to children?
- Are assurance systems operating effectively

- 4.2 The report concludes that,

- The governance, accountability and management arrangements for overseeing whether the Council is meeting its safeguarding responsibilities to children have some weaknesses which the Council is

addressing.

- The Council's arrangements for monitoring and evaluating its safeguarding responsibilities to children have some weaknesses which the Council must address.
- The Council's approach to identifying and acting on improvements in its safeguarding arrangements has some weaknesses which the Council is addressing.

4.3 Members should note that the report does not identify any weaknesses in the safeguarding of children, the recommendations relate to the governance of those arrangements.

4.4 Following on from the conclusions referred to in paragraph 4.2, the report makes five proposals for improvement. These are,

P1 - Develop a Corporate Safeguarding Policy that clearly specifies roles, responsibilities and procedures for safeguarding.

P2 - The Council should clarify who designated officers with responsibility for safeguarding are.

P3 - Improve the range, quality and coverage of safeguarding performance reporting to members to provide adequate assurance that corporate arrangements are working effectively.

P4 - 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. This should also include volunteers.

P5 - Identify and agree an appropriate internal audit programme of work for safeguarding.

4.5 A small group of officers is currently finalising the action plan that will ensure all five of the recommendations are acted upon and that the improvements required will be delivered upon. Progress against the action plan will be reported to Audit Committee on a quarterly basis.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

5.1 This report requires no specific equalities impact assessment.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no personnel implications associated with this report

8. CONSULTATIONS

8.1 There are no consultees that have not been included in the overall report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 That Cabinet note the conclusions and recommendations contained in the WAO study.

- 9.2 That Cabinet accept the five recommendations made in the study.
- 9.3 That Cabinet agree that progress against the action plan is monitored by Audit Committee on a quarterly basis.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 Compliance with the recommendations from the Wales Audit Office study will further strengthen the authority's arrangements for the safeguarding of children.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Local Government Act 2000,

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Consultees:

Chris Burns, Interim Chief Executive

Nicole Scammell, Acting Director of Corporate Services

Sandra Aspinall, Acting Deputy Chief Executive

Gareth Jenkins, Assistant Director Children's Services

Appendix One : Wales Audit Office: Local Authority arrangements to support the safeguarding of children.