

Safeguarding Policy Update (Community Services, Alice Foster/Darren Williams)

Synopsis of report:

In November 2022, a report was brought to this Committee to approve the revised corporate Safeguarding Policy. Within this report, was a recommendation to appoint a Councillor as Safeguarding Champion for the Council.

This report seeks to clarify the requirement of Members in relation to Safeguarding and proposes an appropriate way forward, which it is hoped Members will support.

In addition, while working on policy implementation, consideration has been given to the training requirements of all staff in relation to Safeguarding, against individual roles undertaken. With amendments made to this section of the policy, Members are asked to review and approve the policy.

Recommendation(s) that:

- i) Community Services Committee supports the direction proposed relating to Member safeguarding and agrees to encourage all Councillors to undertake the level 1 e-learning training as set out in the corporate Safeguarding Policy; and
- ii) the proposed changes to the Corporate Safeguarding Policy, as attached at Appendix 'A', be approved

1. Context of report

- 1.1 In November 2022, this Committee was provided with a summary of work that had been undertaken in relation to the corporate Safeguarding Policy and processes, following the outcome of a S11, Children's Safeguarding Audit in 2021. Members approved the revised Corporate Safeguarding Policy.
- 1.2 Members were also asked to appoint a Councillor Safeguarding Champion as a requirement within the revised policy. Subsequently, it was discussed whether this was an absolute requirement, and if so what level of involvement from the appointed Councillor should be.
- 1.3 Given that "Safeguarding is everybody's business", Councillors asked the question whether it was appropriate to have one appointed "champion", or whether all Members should have a greater understanding of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding.
- 1.4 This report seeks to clarify the role of Councillors in relation to Safeguarding.
- 1.5 Further consideration has also been given to the training requirements of all staff, and a re-assessment of this has been completed against roles and functions and with consideration to the capacity.

2. Report and, where applicable, options considered and recommended

- 2.1 Following the Committee meeting in November 2022, clarity on the role and requirement of a Councillor Safeguarding Champion was sought from the Council's Monitoring Officer.
- 2.2 The Monitoring Officer advised that there is no legal requirement for the Council to have a Councillor Safeguarding Champion. Given this, and the previous discussion, consideration has been given to the most appropriate way to engage Councillors in understanding their responsibilities in relation to Safeguarding. This report proposes two ways that the Council intends to promote Safeguarding amongst Members.
- 2.3 Firstly, all Members will be encouraged to undertake the level one training as set out in the corporate Safeguarding Policy, covering Adult and Children Safeguarding and Domestic Abuse. Level one is the training that all members of staff are required to undertake.
- 2.4 The Monitoring Officer has advised that whilst it can be recommended that Councillors undertake this training, there is no legal obligation for them to do so.
- 2.5 Secondly, it is proposed that all Councillors receive an email with a link to the Council's Safeguarding Policy, which is on the Council's website. Therefore, information will be made available on responsibilities relating to safeguarding and on the process to undertake when reporting a safeguarding concern. It is also proposed that when the policy is reviewed annually, an update email with a link to the reviewed policy is also provided.
- 2.6 In undertaking this review and given the advice of the Monitoring Officer, it is not proposed for a Safeguarding Champion to be appointed. Instead, Councillors who are members of Community Services Committee, are asked to encourage others to undertake the minimum training required. Therefore, this Committee becomes the champion for Safeguarding with Councillors.
- 2.7 Since the policy was approved, and subsequently issued across the organisation, the focus group working on this, consisting of representatives of Community Services, Corporate Project Management Office and Human Resources, have made slight amendments to the Policy.
- 2.8 Of note, the various levels of training that were detailed in the policy were considered. As a result, the policy attached at Appendix 'A' has reduced the tiers of training from four to three, to reflect our requirements in relation to Safeguarding.
- 2.9 The intention is still to have leads within each business unit trained to a more advanced level, who will be able to provide support to colleagues who may have identified a safeguarding matter or who have concerns. Also, individual business units that are more public facing (e.g. Community Services, Housing, Environmental Services) can identify specific training relevant to the roles they undertake.

3. Policy framework implications

- 3.1 The Council's Safeguarding Policy has been reviewed and updates have been proposed in line with internal and external audits and latest best practice guidelines.
- 3.2 The proposals within the policy support the "Organisational Development Strategy" within the forthcoming Health & Wellbeing Strategy. This will focus on Runnymede

as a Council and its own development as an employer and as an anchor organisation.

4. Legal implications

- 4.1 This Safeguarding policy is underpinned by a range of legislation including, but not limited to: The Children Acts 1989 and 2004 (as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017), along with the statutory guidance, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015, and 2018, which provide the legal framework for safeguarding children.
- 4.2 This legislation places an overarching responsibility on Surrey County Council, as the lead authority for children, for safeguarding and promoting the 78 welfares of all children in their area but makes clear that other agencies also have a role to play.
- 4.3 Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 places a statutory duty on various agencies, including district and borough councils, to make arrangements to ensure that their functions are discharged taking account of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. This includes any services or function they contract out.
- 4.4 This Act led to the establishment of the Surrey Safeguarding Children Partnership and required Surrey County Council to secure the co-operation of partners in setting up arrangements to improve the well-being of children in Surrey.
- 4.5 Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 replaced the Area Child Protection Committee and sets out how organisations and individuals should work together to achieve this, using the key principles: Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility: for services to be effective each professional and organisation should play their full part. The approach must be child-centred: in order to be effective, there needs to be a clear understanding of the needs of the child.
- 4.6 The Care Act 2014 sets out the legal framework for how local authorities and other statutory agencies, including district and borough councils, should protect adults with care and support needs who are at risk of abuse or neglect. It consolidates existing law and puts similar arrangements in place to those safeguarding children. The Act required Surrey County Council, as the lead authority for adults at risk to establish a Safeguarding Adults Board to bring together the key local partners to focus on safeguarding strategy and practice. The Act also places a duty on Surrey County Council to carry out safeguarding enquiries, where it is suspected that someone is suffering or at risk of abuse or neglect, conducting Safeguarding Adults Reviews (SARs) where there is a cause for concern about a particular case, to learn lessons for the future.
- 4.7 All these initiatives are designed to ensure greater multi-agency collaboration as a means of transforming adult social care.

5. Equality implications

- 5.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment screening has been completed in respect of the Policy and was considered by the Council's Equalities Group. A copy was provided to this Committee in November 2022.

6. Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications

- 6.1 None identified.

7. **Conclusions**

- 7.1 Members are asked to support the alternative approach to the appointment of a Councillor Safeguarding Champion and that, as members of the Community Services Committee, promote the importance of safeguarding with Councillors of all parties and groups.

(To resolve)

Background papers

[\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Community Services Committee, 10/11/2022 19:30](#)
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