

Report

Cabinet

Part 1

Date: 16 October 2019

Subject **Wales Audit Office Follow-up review of corporate arrangements for the safeguarding of children**

Purpose To present Cabinet with the Wales Audit Office (WAO) Follow-up review of corporate arrangements for the safeguarding of children.

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Ward All

Summary In 2014 WAO published a report into the *Council's arrangements to support safeguarding of children* and also in 2015 as part of the Auditor General's report *Review of Corporate Safeguarding Arrangements in Welsh Councils*.

This report outlines WAO findings from the follow up review that sought to seek assurance that the Council has acted upon previous national recommendations and local proposals for improvements for corporate arrangements for safeguarding children. The WAO report concluded that: 'The Council has acted on all our previous recommendations and proposals for improvement, however, aspects of some remain to be fully addressed. The report raised 3 'national recommendations that have yet to be fully addressed'.

Proposal **Cabinet are requested to note the outcome of the review contained in the WAO report, recommendations that have yet to be addressed and the Council's management response in implementing the necessary actions.**

Action by Cabinet

Timetable Immediate

This report was prepared after consultation with:

- Senior Leadership Team
- Head of Corporate Safeguarding

Signed

Background

The Wales Audit Office (WAO) is an independent public body that aims to ensure that the people of Wales know whether public money is being managed wisely and that public bodies in Wales understand how to improve outcomes. As part of the Council's regulatory activity, the WAO undertakes a programme of work to ensure the Council is discharging its duties. In May 2019 WAO undertook a review of the progress the Council has made on findings from the 2014 report into the *Council's arrangements to support safeguarding of children* and the 2015 Auditor General's report *Review of Corporate Safeguarding Arrangements in Welsh Councils*. Self-assessment of progress was provided by the Council on its progress made on the recommendations and proposals through provided documents and interviews with key officers and the lead member for Corporate Safeguarding. The report acknowledges that it is limited in reviewing self-assessment progress against the WAO's previous recommendations and proposals for improvements, and that WAO have not tested the effectiveness of the Council's safeguarding arrangements in practice.

In their follow up review, the WAO examined 7 National Recommendations and 5 local proposals for improvement. A summary of their findings is set out in the table below:

National Recommendations (2015) / Local Proposal for Improvement (LPI)	Wales Audit Office Assessment of Council's Progress
R1 – Improve corporate leadership and comply with Welsh Government policy on safeguarding. LPI 2 – The Council should clarify who designated officers with responsibility for safeguarding are.	Fully Met
R2 – 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. LPI 1 – Develop a Corporate Safeguarding Policy that clearly specifies roles, responsibilities and procedures for safeguarding.	Fully Met
R3 – Strengthen safe recruitment of staff and volunteers.	Partially Met
R4 – Ensure all relevant staff, members and partners understand their safeguarding responsibilities. LPI 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. This should also include volunteers.	Partially Met
R6 – 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 covering. LPI 3 – Improve the range, quality and coverage of safeguarding performance reporting to members to provide adequate assurance that corporate arrangements are working effectively.	Partially Met
R7 – Establish a rolling programme of internal audit reviews to undertake systems testing and compliance reviews on the council's safeguarding practices. LPI 5 – Identify and agree an appropriate internal audit programme of work for safeguarding.	Fully Met
R8 – 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.	Fully Met

Management Response

A copy of the full report is attached at Appendix 1 (Welsh) and Appendix 2 (English) of the report. A Management Response outlining how the Council will action the 3 recommendations that were 'Partially Met' is also attached at Appendix 3 of this report. The management actions will be monitored by the Council to ensure that these are met.

Newport City Council accept the findings of the WAO report and will use the evidence gathered to ensure we continue to embed and develop the corporate safeguarding recommendations within Newport City Council.

Members and senior officers are committed to the on-going development of 'safeguarding involves us all' ethos within and across Council services, the findings of the report evidence the significant progress the council has achieved ensuring all previous recommendations are addressed. We have a clear action plan already in place to address on-going objectives as a responsible and positive employer delivering services for our citizens in Newport.

Financial Summary

The financial implications of actions and projects identified by this and other regulatory work will be reported and considered in the normal way, in accordance with the council's financial plans and regulations.

Risks

The Corporate Risk Register has identified Safeguarding as a risk to the activities undertaken by the Council. The findings of this report and further actions support the overall management of this risk for the Council.

Risk	Impact of Risk if it occurs* (H/M/L)	Probability of risk occurring (H/M/L)	What is the Council doing or what has it done to avoid the risk or reduce its effect	Who is responsible for dealing with the risk?
The 'National recommendations that have yet to be fully addressed' are not addressed by the Council which impact the Council's safeguarding arrangements.	High	Low	There will be regular monitoring and reporting of the management actions to ensure that they are implemented by the Council.	Strategic Director – People Head of Children & Young People Services Head of Corporate Safeguarding

* Taking account of proposed mitigation measures

Links to Council Policies and Priorities

Social Services and Wellbeing Act
NCC Corporate Plan 2017-22
NCC Safeguarding Policy

Options Available and considered

- a) To note the outcomes from the Wales Audit Office report and to receive regular updates on the implementation of the management actions;
- b) To disregard the contents of the report and its findings.

Preferred Option and Why

The preferred option is (a) and for Cabinet to note the outcomes of the report and to be provided with regular updates on the progress of the service area implementing the necessary management actions.

Comments of Chief Financial Officer

There should be no additional financial impact as a result of this report, all of the recommendations are being dealt with through the use of existing budgets.

Comments of Monitoring Officer

There are no specific legal issues arising from the report. The report sets out the findings of the follow-up WAO review of the corporate arrangements for safeguarding of children and, in particular, progress made in meeting the national recommendations and local proposals for improvement identified during previous reviews. The report confirms that action has been taken by the Council in response to all of the recommendations for improvement and identifies where further action is required to fully address some of the proposals.

Comments of Head of People and Business Change

The findings in the report show the significant progress that has already been achieved by the Council in addressing the previous national recommendations and local proposals for improving corporate arrangements for safeguarding children. There is a clear action plan in place to address the proposals for improvement that have been partially met and the Council is committed to continually developing these recommendations. There will be regular monitoring and reporting of the management actions to ensure that they are implemented by the Council.

In People and Business Change we will examine all of our key policies, procedures and guidance documents including the Safe Recruitment of Volunteers Policy, Safer Recruitment Guidance and Volunteer Recruitment Guidance to ensure compliance with the recommendations.

Comments of Cabinet Member

As Cabinet Member for this portfolio I believe the Safeguarding arrangements we have for our children are first class especially our safeguarding hub which now includes Police and Education. We are committed to all of the work outlined in the report and our response, and I am confident that the partially met requirements will be met through our member and senior officer commitment.

Local issues

None

Scrutiny Committees

A copy of WAO report has been received by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee.

Equalities Impact Assessment and the Equalities Act 2010

Not Applicable

Children and Families (Wales) Measure

This report reflects the assurance work undertaken by the Wales Audit Office as part of their annual audit programme. The purpose of this report is to provide assurance over the safeguarding measures and activities in place to ensure children, young people and vulnerable adults that use our services are protected and supported. The findings of the report and actions undertaken by the Council will ensure these safeguards are robust and effective to minimise safeguarding risk.

Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

In relation to the requirements for the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 the WAO provide the council with assurance as well as helping to identify areas for improvement. The review undertaken by WAO was completed with regard to the Well-being Act and its five ways of working principles. Therefore the Local Proposal's for Improvement noted in the WAO report have been aligned with the sustainable development principle put into place by the Act.

Crime and Disorder Act 1998

Section 17(1) of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 imposes a duty on the Local Authority to exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area.

Consultation

Comments received from wider consultation, including comments from elected members, are detailed in each application report in the attached schedule.

Background Papers

Appendix 1 – Wales Audit Office Report June 2019 (Welsh)

Appendix 2 – Wales Audit Office Report June 2019 (English)

Appendix 3 – Newport Council's Management Response

Dated: October 2019