

HAVANT BOROUGH COUNCIL

SCRUTINY BOARD

**Meeting Date 23 February
2016**

SAFEGUARDING

**Report by the Community Scrutiny and Policy
Development Panel**

FOR RECOMMENDATION

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1** The Panel has undertaken a review of the Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Policy and the Council's safeguarding arrangements to ensure that they are fit for purpose.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1** The Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Policy be amended to reflect the requirements of the Modern Slavery Act 2015.
- 2.2** The Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Policy be amended to reflect the impact of the Prevent Agenda.
- 2.3** All councillors be required to undertake the e-learning "Basic Safeguarding Awareness " Course to ensure that all councillors are aware of their role in this area.
- 2.4** A councillor training session be arranged to ensure that all councillors are aware of the safeguarding policy and their role in this area.
- 2.5** The on line safeguarding report form be more accessible to staff and councillors
- 2.6** A progress report be submitted to the Board within six months.

3.0 Summary

- 3.1** The Panel concluded that overall the Council took its safeguarding arrangements very seriously and was undertaking steps to update the policy to reflect the Prevent Agenda and the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

- 3.2 However, a number of improvements have been identified which focus on maintaining the profile of this area to ensure staff and councillors are fully aware of the role they play in safeguarding arrangements

4.0 Membership of the Panel

- 4.1 Councillors Lenaghan (Scrutiny Lead), Howard (Deputy Lead), Francis, Kerrin, Patrick and D Smith

5.0 Panel's Brief

- 5.1 The Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Panel was requested to review the Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Policy ("Safeguarding Policy") and the Council's safeguarding arrangements.
- 5.2 The introduction of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and growing concerns about the radicalisation of vulnerable people had demonstrated the need to review the current Safeguarding policy and arrangements to ensure they are fit for purpose.

6.0 Scope of the Review

- 6.1 The review aimed to:
- the implication of ensure that the current Safeguarding Policy complies with the Modern Slavery Act 2015
 - To ensure that the Safeguarding Policy is designed to prevent the radicalisation of vulnerable young people
 - Investigate the safeguarding training provided to staff and councillors

7.0 Method of the Review

- 7.1 The principle method used to undertake the review was interviews with a range of Council officers to develop an understanding of the issues and new legislation and to develop.
- 7.2 The Panel also received a presentation from Inspector Dave Humphries on the Modern Slave Partnership.
- 7.3 To gain an understanding of the current training provided to staff and councillors. Members of the Panel undertook the mandatory staff training course.

8.0 Witnesses

- 8.1 Witnesses who gave evidence to the Panel were:
- Tim Slater, Executive Head (Communities)
 - Claire Hughes, Service Manager, Communities
 - Tim Pointer, Neighbourhood and Development Team Leader
 - Sara Bryan, Acting Solicitor to the Council
 - Inspector Dave Humphries, Hampshire Constabulary

9.0 Key Findings

Areas of Good Practice

The Role of the Council in Safeguarding

- 9.1 Evidence was provided to show that the Council understood its role in safeguarding children and that it was taken seriously: a Joint Policy with East Hampshire District Council has been adopted ("Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Policy").
- 9.2 Hampshire County Council was the strategic lead on safeguarding. They took an inter-agency approach with different local authorities and partners working together to identify and protect children and vulnerable young adults.
- 9.3 This Council seeks to ensure that all organisations it works with have a safeguarding policy in place. An organisation, which receives Council funding is required to have a safeguarding policy: funding could be withheld if such a policy is not in place or complied with.
- 9.4 It was not the role of HBC to investigate concerns, however the Council had a responsibility to take action when instances of harm or abuse was suspected.
- 9.5 The Panel was advised that there would always be sufficient resources to undertake an investigation

Impact of the Modern Slavery Act 2015

- 9.6 The Modern Slavery Act 2015, which received Royal Assent on 26 March 2015, is intended to provide law enforcement agencies with stronger legal tools to stamp out modern slavery, ensuring that the perpetrators receive suitably severe punishment, while enhancing the protection of, and support for, victims. The new Act consolidates and updates the existing criminal legislation on human trafficking, slavery, forced labour and domestic. In addition, the legislation creates the post of Anti-Slavery Commissioner and places a duty on specified public authorities including local authorities to report potential victims of trafficking to the National Crime Agency relating to slavery.
- 9.7 There is a need to ensure that the Council's current policy complied with the new legislation. It is understood that the Policy is being amended to reflect the requirements of this Act.

Recommendation 1

The Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Policy be amended to reflect the requirements of the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

Impact of the “Prevent Agenda”

- 9.8 Members were advised that the ‘Prevent’ agenda was a method of reducing terrorism by preventing or intervening in radicalisation of individuals.
- 9.9 The Panel received a presentation that included various case studies that documented far right view points and individual testimonies on the effect far right radicalism had had on their respective lives. The testimonials also included details of how the Prevent Agenda had intervened and bettered their lives.
- 9.10 Central government is offering local authorities £10,000 per annum to fund the Prevent agenda. The Panel has been advised that the use of this funding would be to pool it with 11 district councils in Hampshire.

Recommendation 2

The Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Policy be amended to reflect the impact of the Prevent Agenda.

Training

- 9.11 The Panel discussed training with the Officers at length and are very supportive of the increased opportunities available to staff and Councillors. It is hoped that over time, all staff and councillors should be aware of how to identify vulnerable people and report concerns.
- 9.12 A new e-learning portal has been developed for use by staff and councillors. All staff are required to pass an online training course on safeguarding. Additional training is provided by staff in high risk areas: 60 staff have already received advanced training.
- 9.13 The portal is also available for use by councillors and the Members of the Panel tested the staff course on safeguarding and found it to be suitable for use by Councillors.

Recommendation 3

We recommend that all councillors be required to undertake the e-learning “Basic Safeguarding Awareness “ course to ensure that all councillors are aware of their role in this area.

Recommendation 4

A councillor training session be arranged to ensure that all councillors are aware of the safeguarding policy and their role in this area.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks

- 9.14 The Panel considered whether the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) should carry out checks on Councillors. However, it was advised that the Council could be penalised if it undertook too many checks.

Reporting Arrangements

- 9.15 Taking the role seriously was further demonstrated by good reporting mechanisms in place. Councillors could raise their concerns with the officers, who could then pass these concerns onto the correct statutory body. Although a safeguarding reporting form was also available online, the Panel considers that this should be more easily accessible.

Recommendation 5

The on line safeguarding report form be more accessible to staff and councillors

10.0 Implications

10.1 Resources:

The recommendations can be implemented within the existing budgetary provision.

10.2 Legal:

The Council is required to change its policy so that it complies with the new legislative requirements

10.3 Strategy:

Safeguarding vulnerable people is vital if the Council is to improve the health and prosperity of its communities.

10.4 Risks:

The Procedure will allow Councillors to assess and mitigate the risks involved in safeguarding children

10.5 Communications:

Training will ensure that all staff and Councillors are aware of the of their roles in safeguarding vulnerable people.

10.6 **For the Community:**

Every Councillor could play a part in safeguarding by the nature of their role and involvement in the community.

An updated policy will:

- help to protect and improve the Health & Wellbeing of vulnerable people in the community
- promote community safety
- help ensure organisations working with the Council are not engaged in extremist activities and seek to protect vulnerable people in the community

10.7 **Consultation:**

As set out in the report

10.8 **The Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA):**

An updated Policy is intended to ensure that the needs of children and vulnerable adults are appropriately recognised promoting equality of opportunity for all.

Background Papers:

The Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Policy

Agreed and signed off by:

Legal Services: 12 February 2016

Financial Services: 12 February 2016

Executive Head for Economy and Communities: 10 February 2016

Contact:
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