

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Leader's Portfolio Holder Meeting

16 September 2010

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SAFEGUARDING VULNERABLE ADULTS AND CHILDREN

Purpose

1. To propose that the safeguarding duties of South Cambridgeshire District Council are addressed as one strategic function to:
 - (a) Give parity of status and importance to both children and vulnerable adults
 - (b) Provide a holistic approach that will achieve value in consistency and clear lines of accountability.
2. This is a key decision because
 - it is likely to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area of the District, and
 - it raises new issues of policy, or is made in the course of developing proposals to amend the policy framework, or is a decision taken under powers delegated by the Council to amend an aspect of the policy framework.

Recommendations and Reasons

3. That the Leader endorses the:
 - (a) updated Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy attached as **Appendix A**
 - (b) proposal to bring together the responsibilities giving parity of status to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults under one officer group and one elected member as Champion.

Background

4. The Council in 2009 updated its Safeguarding Children policy and procedures to comply with section 11 of the Children's Act 2004. The updated policy and procedures define the Council's responsibilities and accountabilities.
5. Safeguarding Children has a compliance toolkit that ensures statutory compliance and seeks to drive Local Authorities forward in improving their services towards children.
6. An officer safeguarding group was formed to monitor compliance and take forward the action plan arising from the self-assessment toolkit. This group meets bi-monthly.
7. The work undertaken highlighted the level of responsibility the Council has in terms of customer contact with vulnerable people and the levels of training required to enable officers to effectively deal with matters arising.
8. The safeguarding vulnerable adults (often referred to as Protection of Vulnerable Adults, (POVA)) whilst having no legislative duty imposed on the Council does have an expectation that the Council will have in place appropriate policies and procedures to deal with such reports of abuse of a vulnerable adult.

9. The Council does have a POVA policy and is signed up to the Cambridgeshire County Council's procedures and protocols and has benefited from training and conferences provided by them. The Council, however, has no formal mechanism in place for monitoring safeguarding vulnerable adults nor of driving forward continuous improvement in this area. Issues that arise are dealt with in an ad hoc way by a range of officers.

Considerations

10. The Council needs to consider whether it is appropriate to combine both safeguarding children and POVA functions with one champion responsible for both areas.
11. The Council has a requirement to ensure that it meets its duties and expectations in a way that both are efficient and effective. To combine both areas saves officer time in terms of meetings and can integrate with existing mechanisms.

Options

12. The options are:
- a) to establish a joint officer group to be responsible for both safeguarding children and POVA matters together with one safeguarding member champion, or
 - b) to keep the areas of responsibility separate and establish a POVA group for officers to complement the existing safeguarding children officers group and have two corresponding member champions.

Implications

13. Financial	Savings in officer time and operational costs could be achieved by combining the safeguarding responsibilities.
Legal	None
Staffing	None
Risk Management	If one overarching group is established care will need to be taken to ensure that the full range of issues being addressed are given a balanced amount of attention.
Equal Opportunities	An Equality Impact Assessment is required
Climate Change	None

Consultations

14. No formal consultations have taken place to date.

Effect on Strategic Aims

15. To combine the duties would provide clarity in roles and responsibilities to ensure more accessible services.

Conclusions / Summary

16. The proposal to combine the Council's approach to safeguarding children and POVA is a pragmatic approach to meeting its obligations in a cost effective and added value manner.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:
Cambridgeshire County Council Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy and Procedure

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