

POTENTIAL SCRUTINY ITEM REFERRED FROM PERFORMANCE, GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE (PGA)

Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults

The PGA at its meeting on 19 January 2023 (Minute 493(v)) referred this matter to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for review to ensure that the Council is supporting this area of work appropriately together with the Officers undertaking the actual work. The reference has now to be received by the Committee for consideration as to whether it should be added to the Scrutiny Workplan.

Background information to assist Members in dealing with this reference confirms that there is a structure of wide-ranging Designated Safeguarding Officers in place throughout the service areas of the Council.

In the last quarterly performance reporting on corporate risks to the PGA Committee it was reported that Safeguarding risks continued to be well served via the Council's online Freshserve reporting tool and its Safeguarding leads.

In addition to this, the Council's Safeguarding Forum continued to meet for discussion, sharing information, and case reviews. However, a concern had been expressed as to Officer capacity to attend.

The commentary in the last quarterly report outlined some measures proposed to be undertaken, including a review of the internal list of Designated Safeguarding Officers in a more concise way, reflective of the expertise in the various fields and the capacity to support the workstream.

As a pre-emptive measure, Officers adjusted the risk factor to reflect the review taking place and the possibility of the Safeguarding Forum not being able to meet.

Members were reassured that, while cases tended to be more complex in nature, the Council has in place a robust reporting mechanism and there was no shortage of expertise internally to deal with them, with cases regularly escalated to Essex County Council (where required).

Discussions around carrying out this review have already begun. Upon conclusion, attendance at the Safeguarding Forum will be monitored via future meetings to gauge success.

Recent recommendations from the internal audit review will also feed into a review of the Council's Safeguarding Policy scheduled to take place in 2023/2024. In all other respects, good controls remained in place without the need for any further mitigating measures.

At a meeting of the Committee's Working Group on 9 March 2023, Members were mindful of the internal audit report to be considered by the PGA later that day, and concerns were expressed as to safeguarding in relation to volunteering and contractors. Here is a link to that report -

<https://democracy.maldon.gov.uk/documents/s30244/6d%20-%20Safeguarding%20Final%20-%202022.23Report.pdf>

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