

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CABINET: 24TH JANUARY 2022

REFERENCE FROM HOMES AND SAFE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE: 16TH DECEMBER 2021

“684 CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING MID TERM REPORT (REF) –

The Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer made the Committee aware of a small error on the date of the Committee on the reference front sheet of the report, which read 8th December when it should be the 16th December.

The reference from the Cabinet meeting of 22nd November, 2021 as contained within the agenda was presented to the Scrutiny Committee for consideration. The Head of Housing and Building Services explained that the Council had a corporate responsibility to ensure effective safeguarding arrangements were in place for children and adults who require specific Council services and the report updated Members on the effectiveness of those arrangements and developments over the last period. He added that there was a cross Council commitment and involvement for safeguarding and that it sat in a number of portfolio areas and Committees and there was a statutory requirement to corporate safeguarding as part of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 and specifically under Part 7 of the Act.

The work of the Corporate Safeguarding Group (CSG) focused on the strategic overview of safeguarding across the Council and had met regularly since April 2021 and a number of priorities have been considered. Good practice was being shared both internally from work within the Vale, but also regionally in terms of the work of the Regional Safeguarding Board.

Furthermore, there had been contact with the new Wales-wide DBS representative who shared with CSG areas where they could support Councils in terms of DBS barring and referrals, safer recruitment data was also regularly reported to the group and on the whole safer recruitment practices were adhered to effectively, as well as having a Corporate Safeguarding Work Plan to focus on priority areas and areas of learning from reviews. CSG was involved in developing / reviewing safeguarding data and safeguarding training (ensuring greater focus and based on outcomes), as well as progressing developments in response to audit and considering wider quality assurance activity that can support the work of CSG.

A full year report, providing more detail, would come to the Committee in due course.

Following the presentation of the report, Councillor Nugent-Finn raised the issue of Elected Members for the Vale of Glamorgan Council not receiving DBS as part of their role, unlike the relevant employees within the Council and unless they individually chose to do so. Elected Members met with families and children at

surgeries. The Councillor felt that this issue should be taken forward to Cabinet as a recommendation as part of good practice. Councillor Parker added that many Elected Members were probably school governors as well and, in his experience, they were not asked for DBS checks even though governors could move around a school with only their governor's badge. The Head of Housing and Building Services explained that DBS checks were constrained by legislation and the statutory framework and would only apply to Members in circumstances where they actively engaged on their own with individuals, adults or children in their own homes or for example, at a children's home or sheltered housing scheme. This would have to be defined, regulated activity (such as lone working with children, etc.). He would seek further clarification on the issues raised with the lead officer in this area and with Democratic Services as well as sharing with Members the statutory basis on which DBS checks were made in order to help progress this area of concern for the Committee.

Committee, having considered the report and all the issues and implications contained therein, subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the Corporate Safeguarding Mid-term Report be noted.
- (2) T H A T Cabinet considers the comments made by the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee on Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks for Elected Members at the Vale of Glamorgan of Council and seeks clarification as to whether all Elected Members should be required to undertake such checks as part of their role.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.
- (2) In order that Cabinet considers the comments made regarding DBS checks for Elected Members by the Scrutiny Committee.”