

Committee: **Governance and Audit Committee**
 Date of meeting: **8th March 2023**
 Report Subject: **Audit Wales: Corporate Safeguarding Follow-up –
 Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council**
 Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Haydn Trollope, Cabinet Member People and
 Social Services**
 Report Submitted by: **Tanya Evans, Interim Corporate Director of Social
 Services**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance and Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
	23.02.23		08.03.23					

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide the Governance and Audit Committee with the Audit Wales Report, '*Corporate Safeguarding Follow-up*' (Appendix 1).

Attached at appendix 2 is the Council's current Safeguarding Policy for information.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 Audit Wales published their report, '*Corporate Safeguarding Follow-up*' in November 2022 and covers the audit year 2021/22.
- 2.2 In October 2019 Audit Wales published the '*Follow-up Review of Corporate Arrangements for the Safeguarding of Children*'. The report found that the Council had made limited progress in addressing Audit Wales recommendations and proposals for improvement around safeguarding.
- 2.3 This report looked at what progress the Council had made to address the outstanding recommendations and proposals for improvement.

In addition to the outstanding recommendations and proposals for improvement Audit Wales identified further recommendations:

- 2.4 **R1 – The Council needs to take further action to fully comply with the recommendations in the October 2019 follow-up report on corporate arrangements for safeguarding of children.**
- R2 – The Council needs to strengthen its monitoring arrangements of third parties so it can assure itself that they comply with the Council's safeguarding policies. It should consider whether a self-assessment tool like that recently used by Council directorates can be used with third parties to better understand compliance.**

Appendix 1 details the Council's progress against the outstanding recommendations and proposals for improvement identified in the October 2019 report.

Next Steps

- 2.5 The Council has in place a strategic lead for Safeguarding, Tanya Evans, Interim Director Social Services. This role is supported by the Interim Head of Children's Services, Alison Ramshaw.
- 2.5.1 The Council has in place a Strategic Safeguarding Leads Group. This is chaired by the Interim Head of Children's Services, with representation from each directorate across the Council. Each Officer on the group has been appointed as a designated safeguarding person for their directorate. This group will undertake implementation of the recommendations identified by Audit Wales.
- 2.5.2 The recommendations will be included within the relevant business plan for monitoring and reporting, these will link to the Officers identified on the Strategic Safeguarding Leads Group.
- 2.5.3 The Council has a Safeguarding Policy which is included on the front page of the Council's internet. This Policy will be updated, if required, to address any recommendations from Audit Wales.
- 2.5.4 The Council has an identified Member Lead for Safeguarding, Cllr Trollope, who will have an active role in supporting the implementation of the Council's Safeguarding Policy.
- 2.5.5 An Estyn Inspection of Local Authority Education Services was carried out during November / December 2022. The report was published in February 2023 and is also included on the agenda for this committee meeting. The report was positive regarding safeguarding procedures within the Council, and stated:

"The Officers and elected members are committed to safeguarding young people in their local authority. There is an appropriate safeguarding culture within the local authority. All officers and elected members receive suitable safeguarding training. The way in which education and children's services work together has contributed well to improving multi-agency working and the support schools receive to manage the needs of pupils and their families more effectively. The advice and guidance provided to schools by officers is valued by school leaders and helps them to respond to safeguarding concerns appropriately. Elected members are beginning to develop their understanding of safeguarding in education and challenge appropriately the content of reports they receive".

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 Prior to the final report being provided to the Council, CLT and relevant Officers provided comment back to Audit Wales on their findings.

3.2 **Option 1**

Governance and Audit Committee is assured that the Next Steps, identified in paragraph 2.5, will appropriately respond to the Audit Wales recommendations.

Option 2

Provide comment on the Audit Wales review and Next Steps, identified in paragraph 2.5, to address the recommendation for Officers to implement in order to provide continuous improvement.

4. **Monitoring Arrangements**

4.1 The recommendations from Audit Wales will be included within the business plan and updated on a quarterly basis.

The Strategic Safeguarding Leads Group will have responsibility for monitoring implementation of the recommendations.

The information will be reported within the Joint Finance and Performance Report to Corporate Overview and Performance Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet.

Regular meetings are held with Audit Wales to assess progress of reports.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

Appendix 1 – Audit Wales Report ‘*Corporate Safeguarding Follow-up*’

Appendix 2 – Council Safeguarding Policy