

Report to: Cabinet



Date of Meeting 29 November 2023

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Safeguarding update

Report summary:

At an Extraordinary Council meeting on 11th July 2023 the Council considered a report from Verita into the actions of the Council following allegations and then criminal charges against former Cllr John Humphries. A number of recommendations were approved by members and the Monitoring Officer was invited to bring back a report to members to update on the timetable for implementing those resolutions.

This report therefore updates on the steps that have been taken since that meeting and that are planned moving forward.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes No

Policy Framework Yes No

Recommendation:

That Cabinet note the update

Reason for recommendation:

The Council made a number of important resolutions regarding the Council's safeguarding procedures and it is important that those resolutions are implemented.

Officer: Melanie Wellman, Director of Governance and Licensing and Monitoring Officer

Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- Climate Action and Emergency Response
- Coast, Country and Environment
- Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- Communications and Democracy
- Economy
- Finance and Assets
- Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities
- Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism

Equalities impact Low Impact

As this report is simply updating on the implementation of Council resolutions, there are no significant equalities implications arising.

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Medium Risk; It is important that the Council acts upon the recommendations coming out of the Verita report and that changes to the Safeguarding procedures are implemented.

Links to background information

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- Better homes and communities for all
 - A greener East Devon
 - A resilient economy
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Report in full

At Full Council on 11th July 2023 Members considered an original and supplementary report from Verita covering the independent investigation into the actions of the Council following the allegations and criminal charges against former councillor John Humphries and a supplementary report prepared at the request of the internal Commissioning Group.

Following a presentation from Mr Scott, the Verita representative, Council made the following resolutions and invited the Monitoring Officer to report back with an action plan.

Each of the resolutions, together with the steps that either have been taken or are to be taken, are set out below: -

In the event that a similar event arises in the future, we consider that anyone from EDDC invited to a LADO meeting should not go unaccompanied and should consult the Safeguarding Lead.

The Council's safeguarding procedures have been updated to reflect the need for anyone from EDDC invited to a LADO meeting should not go unaccompanied and should consult the Safeguarding Lead.

EDDC should revisit its discussions and plans to reform the Honorary Alderman/Alderwoman process.

No further Honorary Alderman/Alderwoman appointments have been made subsequently and a report will be presented to the Overview Committee in 2024 to review the process moving forward.

EDDC should consider implementing a development programme for members to incorporate regular 1:1s, ongoing training needs assessments, surveys and exit interviews for councillors.

This is to be picked up as part of the work that is in progress in relation to a member skills audit and will be considered by the Member Development Working Group.

The Safeguarding Lead to consider adding specific procedural guidance to the safeguarding policy to help users understand how, in practice, risk should be assessed and managed.

Specific procedural guidance has been added to the safeguarding policy to address this. A copy of the updated policy is on this agenda for Members approval.

EDDC should consider designating safeguarding champions from within the councillor body.

This has been picked up in the Safeguarding Policy and members will be invited to nominate a Safeguarding Champion at their Council meeting on 6 December 2023.

Officers and all councillors to attend mandatory safeguarding training. The Safeguarding Lead to set up a small working group with councillors to consider what training would be appropriate to improve understanding of preventative safeguarding practice.

Safeguarding training is already mandatory for all members and officers. Sessions have been made available to members and further sessions will be offered to any that have not yet been able to attend.

A safeguarding working group (to include the Safeguarding Champion once appointed) will consider what training is appropriate to improve Member understanding of preventative safeguarding practice.

Raise concerns with both Devon County Council and the Devon & Cornwall Police via the Monitoring Officer in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder

The Monitoring Officer in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Communications and Democracy wrote to Devon County Council and Devon and Cornwall Police and a copy of their respective responses is attached at Appendix A. The Monitoring Officer could further clarify some of the answers to the questions, but it is unclear as to whether this would illicit any further information bearing in mind that Verita has already investigated the matter and due to the lapse of time.

Refer a review of record keeping of the Council to the Audit and Governance Committee for scoping.

An Information Governance Audit has been conducted since the Full Council meeting which made a number of recommendations in relation to record keeping. This included an update of our Data Protection and Data Retention Policy together with an action for the Data Protection Officer to conduct proactive checks in relation to record keeping on a quarterly basis. Those actions have been assigned and dates agreed. The outcome of the Audit will be presented to the Audit and Governance Committee.

Financial implications:

There are no direct financial implications identified from the recommendations in the report.

Legal implications:

As this is an update report only, there are no substantive legal issues directly arising.