

Report to: Cabinet



Date of Meeting 31 January 2024

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Safeguarding Policy Review

Report summary:

As part of East Devon District Council's commitment to raising safeguarding standards, it has reviewed its Safeguarding Policy. It has taken the Devon Districts' Safeguarding Policy pro-forma as an overarching framework and includes some additional requirements to the original policy specific to East Devon District Council. The wider policy covers children and vulnerable adults in one high level statement, and also incorporates modern slavery and counter terrorism. The East Devon District Safeguarding policy now covers all staff, councillors, other workers and volunteers of East Devon District Council.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes No

Policy Framework Yes No

Recommendation:

1. To adopt and implement the updated East Devon District Council Safeguarding Policy.
2. To refer to full Council for approval of additional funding of £3,000 for requesting Disclosure Barring Service checks for Councillors.

Reason for recommendation:

To ensure that we have a 'fit for purpose' safeguarding policy in place for the organisation.

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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 Medium Impact

The equalities considerations are as set out in the report and the policy. The policy itself and processes that underpin the policy are an important way of reducing inequality and ensuring that vulnerable people are protected. An [Equalities Impact Assessment](#) has been conducted.

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Medium Risk; failure to take action around Safeguarding is a Medium risk as we have an existing Policy and reviewing this policy keeps it current with learning and legislation and therefore a continued mitigation against those risks occurring.

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

1. Background

- 1.1 The Council has adopted policies for staff and members to follow, that set out our roles and responsibilities for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults, drawing on good practice found in existing safeguarding policies to ensure that we all have access to a policy that is relevant and appropriate to reflect East Devon District Council's (EDDC) specific way of working. The East Devon District Council safeguarding policy was last reviewed and presented to Cabinet in July 2021. The East Devon District Council Safeguarding policy has been developed to include the recommendations from the Verita report, our response to the 2022 Self-assessment audit commissioned by The Devon Children's Safeguarding Partnership (specifically 'listening to the voice of the child or adult at risk' and 'corporate parenting') and feedback from local training delivery. The proposed policy is shown at annex 1.
- 1.2 The policy sets out a series of high level aims and goes into detail on the responsibilities to provide clarity on who should be doing what.
- 1.3 The Council has a duty to work with other agencies and the policy specifies its responsibility under the Children's Act 2004, the Care Act 2014 and related legislation, to ensure that functions are discharged with regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and other vulnerable groups.
- 1.4 There is a shared responsibility with a variety of statutory agencies to protect children and vulnerable adults from harm, ensure their safety, and prevent impairment of their health or development. As a partner agency we appreciate that safeguarding is not just the duty of Social Services and child protection specialists.
- 1.5 Typically, in a district council staff and councillors dealing with housing, environmental health, countryside, benefits and leisure have the most contact with children and families, and vulnerable adults. Other services and councillors will also get involved in service delivery where they come into contact with families and children. As an example, housing officers are involved in homeless situations; anti-social behaviour; community development; children's case conferences; investigating housing conditions etc. that requires close working with Social

Workers, and there will be examples in other services where operationally we come in to contact with children and their support workers.

- 1.6 As a minimum all staff, elected councillors and partners/contractors should become familiar with the Council's safeguarding policy and procedures on how to report and handle incidents where we suspect abuse or neglect.

2 The Council's Commitments

- 2.1 We have set out a series of commitments in the Policy which says that we will seek to tackle and manage safeguarding concerns.
- 2.2 We have designated Safeguarding Leads and Champions for both staff and councillors, to give greater support and oversight.
- 2.3 We have raised awareness of our duties through the staff welcome process, making safeguarding training mandatory for staff and councillors, managers meetings, development of an Internal Safeguarding Forum and reports to the Senior Leadership Team.
- 2.4 There is now mandatory training on induction which is renewable every three years for staff and councillors. Also available through our learning provider is a Level 2 course for frontline staff that come into regular face to face contact with customers and require more than just an awareness of the issues. We have also provided an ongoing package of safeguarding training for councillors, Senior Leadership Team, and bespoke enhanced safeguarding/mental capacity act training for staff.
- 2.5 The EDDC Safeguarding Forum has been in place since November 2022 it is made up of representatives from key services, including the safeguarding lead, safeguarding champions, Housing and Benefit managers and safeguarding support officers. The forum meets every two months to discuss the direction of safeguarding delivery internally, monitoring how we are currently working and drawing on National/County and local learning to inform staff and keep their knowledge current around emerging trends.
- 2.6 We have encouraged managers to reinforce awareness of safeguarding issues with their teams at team meetings to help keep this important duty in our corporate consciousness.
- 2.7 In adopting a standalone policy that dovetails with the wider Devon Districts initial policy it will be necessary to underpin this policy with procedures that set out how staff and councillors should deal with particular situations. We draw on good practice and advice from our Safeguarding Boards to ensure that we have a policy and procedure that is clear and easy to follow.
- 2.8 Our attendance as a member of the Devon Districts Safeguarding Officers Network, which has representatives from both safeguarding boards and the other Devon Districts, ensures that we are aware of all relevant local updates, changes and emerging threats. We share these updates with our Safeguarding Champions and through our forum for cascading to our frontline staff.

3 Enhancements

- 3.1 Key changes to the existing East Devon District Council policy are as follows:
 - 3.1 Aims of Policy, to include voice of the vulnerable & Corporate Parenting
 - 4.5 Volunteer policy & Councillor Code of Conduct included.
 - 5.3.1 Councillor Safeguarding Lead
 - 5.3.2 Councillor Safeguarding Champion.
 - 5.3.3 Councillor responsibilities including mandatory training attendance.
 - 5.3.3 Councillors to ensure they have an up-to-date DBS disclosure.
 - 5.3.4 Councillor Safeguarding Champion or Lead support in a safeguarding concern.

- 5.4.1 Accompanied LADO meeting attendance consultation with safeguarding lead and reference to EDDC Safeguarding Forum.
- 5.4.2 Designation of Assistant Director/Director as Champions.
- 5.4.2 Line manager responsibility.
- 5.4.3 Contractor safeguarding delivery.
- 5.4.4 Officer Safeguarding Champion responsibility and Director Lead responsibility.
- 5.4.6 LADO liaison role.
- 5.4.7 Monitoring Officer responsibility for councillor DBS disclosure
- 5.4.8 Officer mandatory training requirement.

Appendix 1 - inclusion of process flowchart

4 Financial

- 4.1 Most of the amendments will be delivered within existing budgets.
- 4.2 The requirement for Councillors to have a Disclosure Barring Service check will have a budgetary impact. This will depend on the level of disclosure required:
 - Basic - £1,920
 - Enhanced - £2,940

5 Conclusion

- 5.1 The proposed amendments build on the Devon Districts' initial Safeguarding Policy and take into account changes since it was adopted by East Devon.
- 5.2 The amended policy is now tailored to East Devon procedures and practices.

Financial implications:

There is a request for a supplementary budget of up to £3k as identified in the report.

Legal implications:

This is an important policy and it is important that it is regularly reviewed and updated, to ensure it is robust and in accordance with best practice. As it is not part of the policy framework, it can be adopted by the Cabinet. The proposals for DBS checks for members will be subject to a further report from the Monitoring Officer setting out the proposed arrangements for member approval.