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|  <b>Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee</b><br><b>1 June 2016</b>  |  | <b>Agenda Item No. 9</b> |
| <b>Title</b>  | Member Children's Champions: End of Year Report  |                          |
| <b>For further information about this report please contact</b>   | Bill Hunt – Deputy Chief Executive & Officer Children Champion   |                          |
| <b>Wards of the District directly affected</b>  | All  |                          |
| <b>Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006?</b> | No   |                          |
| <b>Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number</b>   | Overview & Scrutiny Committee 8/4/15<br>Minute number 121  |                          |
| <b>Background Papers</b>  | Member Children's Champions: End of Year report, Overview & Scrutiny Committee 8/4/15; Member Children's Champions, Executive 3/9/14; Children's Safeguarding and the future role of Member Children's Champions, Overview & Scrutiny Committee 29/7/14; Warwickshire Safeguarding Children's Board papers and minutes |                          |

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| <b>Contrary to the policy framework:</b>                                   | No  |
| <b>Contrary to the budgetary framework:</b>                                | No  |
| <b>Key Decision?</b>   | No  |
| <b>Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number)</b> | No  |
| <b>Equality &amp; Sustainability Impact Assessment Undertaken</b>          | n/a |

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|--|-------------|---------------------|
| <b>Officer/Councillor Approval</b>                                       |             |                     |
| <b>Officer Approval</b>  | <b>Date</b> | <b>Name</b>         |
| Chief Executive/Deputy Chief Executive                                   |             | Author              |
| Head of Service  |             | n/a                 |
| CMT  |             |                     |
| Section 151 Officer  |             |                     |
| Monitoring Officer   |             |                     |
| Finance  |             |                     |
| Portfolio Holder(s)  |             | Cllr. Mrs. Grainger |
| <b>Consultation &amp; Community Engagement</b>                           |             |                     |
|  |             |                     |
| <b>Final Decision?</b>   | Yes         |                     |
| <b>Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)</b> |             |                     |
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## **1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1. The Executive agreed in September 2014 that two Member Children's Champions should be appointed, to work with the Officer Children's Champion to ensure that the Council delivers its statutory children's safeguarding responsibilities. Overview and Scrutiny Committee has previously agreed that it should receive an annual, end of year, report from the Member Children's Champions as part of its scrutiny of the safeguarding function.

## **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1. That Committee notes the end of year report.
- 2.2 That Committee notes that the two councillors initially appointed to the role of Member's Children Champion, Councillors Mrs. Gallagher and Mrs. Falp have recently resigned from the role and that the new Member Children's Champion will be the Portfolio Holder for Health and Community Protection, Councillor Mrs. Grainger.

## **3. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 The Children's Act 2004 created statutory responsibilities for district councils in the field of Children's Safeguarding. Section 10 of the Act places a reciprocal duty on the Children's Services Authority for an area (in our case the County Council) and local district councils within that area to co-operate in inter-agency work to improve children's well-being. Section 11 places a duty on named agencies, including district councils, to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- 3.2 The Act also required Children's Services Authorities to establish and maintain local Safeguarding Children Boards and for those agencies with Section 10 responsibilities to support the operation of those Boards. Consequently this Council has been a member of the Warwickshire Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB) since its inception in October 2005. The WSCB's role is to coordinate the activities of all of its members in relation to safeguarding and child welfare issues within the county and to ensure the effectiveness of the work being undertaken by each individual organisation. In order to discharge this role the WSCB undertakes periodic audits of all its member organisations, using a standard self-assessment tool to assess compliance with all aspects of their Section 11 duties against the national minimum standard.
- 3.3 As part of a self-assessment audit of the Council's Section 11 activities in September 2014 the Executive agreed to formalise the position of Member Children's Champions and that the role of the, initially two, appointed councillors would be to:
  - Assure themselves that the Council has sound arrangements in place to protect children and promote their welfare and is promoting and engaging in effective interagency cooperation and collaboration in these fields;
  - Undertake reasonable investigations so as to be able to form a view of the quality of the Council's child safeguarding activities and work with the officer Children's Champion to assist the Council to improve the quality and/or effectiveness of those activities whenever appropriate;
  - Act as a 'critical friend' to constructively challenge officers and elected members on child safeguarding and welfare issues as appropriate;

- Promote awareness of child safeguarding and welfare issues and the activities and processes undertaken by this Council amongst elected members.

- 3.4 Councillors Mrs. Gallagher and Mrs. Falp were appointed as Member Children's Champions, with the role as described above, until May 2015 on the understanding that the new Council would then appoint two Councillors to undertake the role for the four year period of the newly elected administration. Both councillors were subsequently confirmed in this role by the new Council
- 3.5 As a result of the Executive decision to formalise the role, Overview and Scrutiny Committee decided that it should receive an annual report from the Member Children's Champions. The first such report was presented in April 2015.
- 3.6 Prior to the completion of this report, the second annual report, both councillors resigned from their roles as Member Children's Champions. The Executive have requested that the Portfolio Holder for Health and Community Protection, Councillor Mrs. Grainger now undertakes this role.
- 3.7 As Cllr. Grainger has only taken on this role since the Council AGM earlier this month this report has been prepared by the Officer Children Champion. It sets out the work that has been undertaken since the last report in section 8 and lessons learnt in section 9.
- 3.8 An annual end of year report will become a feature of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's workplan but the Committee will also have the opportunity to ask questions of the Portfolio Holder when they appear at Committee and/or determine whether it wishes to undertake additional scrutiny of this area of the Council's work.

#### **4. POLICY FRAMEWORK**

- 4.1 The Council's statutory duties are set out within the Children's Act 2004. However, the principles of child safeguarding and the promotion of children's welfare are relevant to all the Council's activities.

#### **5. BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK**

- 5.1 There are no budgetary implications arising from this report

#### **6. RISKS**

- 6.1 Whilst there is no specific or statutory requirement for a local authority to have a Member Children's Champion(s) there is a risk that, in the absence of such a role, elected members could become disconnected from, and unaware of, the Council's statutory responsibilities and the actions and activities that need to be in place to discharge them. The annual report is a further safeguard against such a possibility.

#### **7. ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S) CONSIDERED**

- 7.1 No alternative options have been considered as the end of year report was an agreed item on the Committee's workplan.

## **8. WORK UNDERTAKEN**

- 8.1 The Council has a senior officer (Deputy Chief Executive BH) fulfilling the role of Children's Champion, who attends the WSCB and is responsible for ensuring the Council is fulfilling its Section 10 and 11 responsibilities. This officer also supports the Member Children's Champions in their work.
- 8.2 The Member Children's Champions felt that gaining a broader understanding of the work of the WSCB was a key requirement to allow them to discharge their role. Arrangements were consequently made for them to attend a WSCB meeting as an observer and, although diary clashes made this problematic, Cllr. Mrs Gallagher was able to do so. Further information about the role and work of the WSCB is available at: <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/wscb>  
The WSCB annual report for 2014-15 is available at: <https://apps.warwickshire.gov.uk/api/documents/WCCC-850-539>
- 8.3 As highlighted in the previous report the Member Children's Champions considered that their top priority was to ensure that awareness of the safeguarding agenda and the Council's role in children's safeguarding was highlighted for both elected members and staff. They both felt particularly strongly that awareness training for members should be a key focus of the member training programme that was delivered after the May 2015 elections.
- 8.4 A member training session on children's safeguarding was consequently delivered in January 2016 by the Officer Children Champion and the Learning & Development Officer and a programme of refresher training is being developed.
- 8.5 During the last year, as a result of this focus by the Member Children's Champions, the staff induction process has been revised to specifically include an overview of the Council's safeguarding responsibility, a training needs review has been undertaken and specific training offered to all staff on Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), delivered by Barnardo's. It is intended to make the CSE training available to members during the coming year.
- 8.6 CSE has also been the focus of the work undertaken by the Health and Community Protection team for all licensed hackney carriage and private hire operators within the district, a programme that the Member Children's Champions have taken a keen interest in. 314 drivers attended the 6 free sessions and attendance has now been made compulsory prior to the granting of a new licence and for all existing license renewals. The WSCB considers the work undertaken by the Council in this area to be an exemplar and is encouraging all the other Warwickshire district and borough councils to run a similar programme.

## **9. LESSONS LEARNT**

- 9.1 The role of Member Children's Champions has proved to be effective in raising awareness of children's safeguarding amongst elected members. However, the member training event held in January was relatively poorly attended despite it being listed in the programme as a mandatory training event and, whilst there were a number of factors contributing to this, not least the lack of prominence and consequently late date for delivery assigned to it within the programme, it is clear that further work in this area is required in the coming year.

- 9.2 Another key lesson learnt is that close liaison between the Officer and Member Children's Champions is critical to ensuring that the Council is properly monitoring the discharge of its children's safeguarding responsibilities. Over the course of the year these meetings ceased to happen regularly and re-establishing them will be a top priority for the new Member Children's Champion.
- 9.3 Training and awareness raising is needed for all members, as it is for staff, but this equally applies to the Children's Champions themselves. Observing a WSCB meeting would assist the new Champion and, again, this will be an early priority for the coming year.
- 9.4 Staff awareness has been considerably improved but the information on the new intranet is tired and in need of a refresh, with new links, specifically aimed at CSE also required.
- 9.5 The previous Member Children's Champions were keen to ensure that all staff receive a simple pocket sized information card on who to contact with any safeguarding concerns. For various reasons this was not put in place during the last year but is currently being worked on