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|  <b>Executive – 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2014</b>                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                   | Agenda Item No.<br><br><h1>7</h1> |
| <b>Title</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Self-assessment audit of compliance with Children's Safeguarding duties                                                           |                                   |
| <b>For further information about this report please contact</b>                                                                                                                                                                 | Bill Hunt<br>Deputy Chief Executive<br><a href="mailto:bill.hunt@warwickdc.gov.uk">bill.hunt@warwickdc.gov.uk</a><br>01926 456014 |                                   |
| <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Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006?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>                                                                                                                                               | Executive 14 <sup>th</sup> September 2011<br>Minute number 59                                                                     |                                   |
| <b>Background Papers</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                        | s11 self-assessment audit tool – guidance from Warwickshire Safeguarding Childrens Board and working papers                       |                                   |

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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> | Yes |
| <b>Equality &amp; Sustainability Impact Assessment Undertaken</b>          | No  |
| .                                                                          |     |

| Officer/Councillor Approval                                       |         |                                                                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Officer Approval                                                  | Date    | Name                                                            |
| Deputy Chief Executive                                            |         | Author                                                          |
| Head of Service                                                   |         | n/a                                                             |
| CMT                                                               | 11/8/14 |                                                                 |
| Section 151 Officer                                               | 11/8/14 | Mike Snow                                                       |
| Monitoring Officer                                                | 11/8/14 | Andrew Jones                                                    |
| Finance                                                           | 11/8/14 | Mike Snow                                                       |
| Portfolio Holder(s)                                               | 18/8/14 | Cllr. Mobbs,<br>Cllr. Gallagher (Member Children’s<br>Champion) |
| Consultation & Community Engagement                               |         |                                                                 |
| N/A                                                               |         |                                                                 |
| Final Decision?                                                   |         | Yes                                                             |
| Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below) |         |                                                                 |

## 1. **SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform members of the outcome of the recent self-assessment audit of the robustness of the Council's approach to, and compliance with, its statutory duties in relation to Children's Safeguarding and to seek approval for an Improvement Action Plan.

## 2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That Executive notes the findings of the self-assessment audit as set out at Appendix One.
- 2.2 That Executive approves the Improvement Action Plan as set out at Appendix Two.
- 2.3 That Executive delegates responsibility for monitoring the delivery of the Improvement Action Plan to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, with a further report being brought to Executive on an exception basis if full implementation has not been completed by 31 March 2015

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

- 3.1 The Children's Act 2004 created statutory responsibilities for district councils in respect of Children's Safeguarding. Section 10 of the Act placed 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 placed 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 purpose is to coordinate the activities of its members in relation to all safeguarding and child welfare issues within the county and to ensure the effectiveness of the work being undertaken by each individual organisation. Further information on the WSCB and its work is available at: <http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/WSCB>
- 3.3 The WSCB recently instigated an audit of all its member organisations, using a standard self-assessment tool, designed to allow them to self-assess their compliance with all aspects of their Section 11 duties against the national minimum standard. The completed self-assessment audit report is attached at **Appendix One.**
- 3.4 The WSCB will assess the outcomes of these self-assessment reviews and use this information to assess its own robustness and to determine its future development and workplan. The WSCB will also, if appropriate, offer support and guidance to member organisations and amend its own training programme and the work of its sub-committees where necessary.
- 3.5 However, regardless of any feedback received from the WSCB it is important that members assess the outcome of the self-assessment audit and consider its response to areas where further development or improvement has been identified. An Improvement Action Plan is therefore presented, as set out at **Appendix Two.**

- 3.6 The tasks identified within the Improvement Action Plan are all scheduled for completion by 31 March 2015. A separate report, elsewhere on the agenda for this meeting, recommends that the role of Member Children Champions is formalised and that these Champions work with officers, in the role of 'critical friend' to ensure full implementation.
- 3.7 Subject to approval of the recommendations in the separate report the Council will have 2 Member Children Champions, one a member of Executive, the other a member of Overview and Scrutiny Committee. As Executive will be aware of the progress towards full delivery of the Improvement Action Plan through the Champion within its ranks it is proposed that formal responsibility for monitoring delivery is delegated to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee who can also undertake additional scrutiny as required. In the event that full implementation is delayed beyond 31 March 2015 it is recommended that an exception report, detailing the reasons and the remedial action required, is brought to the Executive.

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

- 4.1 The self-assessment refers to safeguarding responsibilities that are statutory duties placed on the Council. However, for the Council to deliver its Vision, to ensure that Warwick district is a great place to live, work and visit, it is incumbent upon the organisation to ensure it has robust safeguarding arrangements and processes in place.
- 4.2 Such safeguarding arrangements are not the responsibility of a designated service area but underpin the activities of the whole Council. Responsibility for their effective delivery therefore rests with the Corporate Management Team and consideration of these issues is implicit within the entire Fit for the Future programme.

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

- 5.1 There are no new budgetary implications arising from this report. As a member of the WSCB the Council contributes £3,000 per annum towards the costs of its operation but, in return, has free access to the comprehensive training programme it delivers.
- 5.2 The work required as a result of the proposed Improvement Action Plan can be accommodated within existing resources.

#### **6. RISKS**

- 6.1 The self-assessment audit identifies a number of areas for improvement and development. If the Council chose not to implement an Improvement Action Plan, or subsequently failed to ensure its delivery, there would be reputational risks and potentially a risk that the Council may not be effectively delivering its statutory responsibilities.

#### **7. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 7.1 No alternative options have been considered as the audit relates to the delivery of the Council's statutory responsibilities.