

To: Cabinet
Date: 12 June 2019
Report of: Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report: Scrutiny Committee recommendation concerning the Council's Safeguarding Report 2018/19

Summary and recommendation	
Purpose of report:	To present a Scrutiny Committee recommendation for Cabinet consideration and decision
Key decision:	Yes
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Councillor Andrew Gant, Scrutiny Committee Chair
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Nigel Chapman, Safer Communities and Customer Focussed Services
Corporate Priority:	Strong and Active Communities
Policy Framework:	Corporate Plan, Safeguarding Policy
Recommendation: That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendation in the body of this report.	

Introduction and overview

1. The Scrutiny Committee met on 4 June 2019 to consider the Safeguarding Annual Report. The Committee would like to thank Councillor Nigel Chapman (Cabinet member for Safer Communities and Customer Focussed Services), Daniella Granito (Policy and Partnership Team Manager) and Rosie Woollcott (Safeguarding Coordinator) for producing the report and attending the meeting to answer questions.

Summary and recommendation

2. The report highlighted key achievements of the Council in relation to its safeguarding responsibilities, which were welcomed by the Committee. More broadly, councillors commended the report and the work being undertaken. It was positive to see that as part of the recent Safeguarding Audit, the Council was judged to have evidenced full compliance in ten out of ten safeguarding standards (up from 8 in the previous year). Since the previous year's report, the Committee

also noted that the MyConcern reporting system had been implemented, and safeguarding concerns were being reported through it.

3. The Committee discussed the approach the Council took when dealing with people who may be experiencing significant stress or anxiety concerning debts owed to the Council. The very nature of debt collection may firstly contribute to the development of mental health issues, and the pressure to repay may cause safeguarding concerns in itself. It was suggested that in some cases, the wording of letters to residents on these matters could be more compassionate. There may be alternative more personable approaches, including face to face interactions that may be more welcome.
4. Councillors sought assurances that Council officers approached debt recovery and other challenging conversations in a way that would limit any distress caused. The Committee heard that frontline officers had appropriate training in dealing with these cases, such as managing distressing phone calls.
5. The Committee noted that following the deaths of 5 individuals who were, or had previously been through the Oxfordshire homeless pathway, Oxford City Council had made a referral to the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board to undertake a Safeguarding Review. Councillors indicated their wish to review the outcome of this work at the Housing Scrutiny Panel later in 2019. The view was expressed that there should be formal public consideration of the outcome by the City Council.
6. When considering the 2017/18 Safeguarding Report on 5 June 2018, the Committee made the following recommendation:

That the Council works with partners, such as the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Board, to gather data on the number of school aged children that receive face to face safeguarding awareness training, such as that delivered by the youth ambition team, to better understand the reach of safeguarding work in Oxford. Once collated, this should be shared with partners such as the Children's Trust, together with any evaluation and analysis.

7. The Cabinet's previous response said the Council would work with the Local Authority Designated Officer at Oxfordshire County Council to collate, evaluate and analyse data on safeguarding awareness training in Oxford City Schools, which would be included in this year's Safeguarding Report for review by the Scrutiny Committee. This information was not included, and the Committee requests for this information to be made available.

Recommendation 1: That the Council revisits the safeguarding recommendation made by the Scrutiny Committee on 5 June 2018 concerning the number of school aged children that receive face to face safeguarding awareness training, and provides the Committee with further information on progress against the agreed action.

8. Councillors discussed that in recent history, significant safeguarding cases had been raised in relation to guest houses operating in the City. This was thought to have occurred in part because guest houses are not covered by the same regulatory regime as hotels. Councillors noted with regret that the recommendations and associated actions from the 2015/16 [Guest House Scrutiny](#)

[Review](#) Group did not feature in the Annual Safeguarding Report. The report previously concluded that:

It is clear some offences of exploitation took place within a number of Oxford's guest houses. Some of these detected offences centred on organised exploitation of vulnerable children.

9. Given these conclusions, it is strongly felt that the recommendations and actions resulting from the review should be revisited to ensure the Council has appropriate safeguards in place in relation to guest houses. An update on progress against the recommendations may be requested by the Committee in 2019/20.

Recommendation 2: That the Council revisits the recommendations, and agreed actions resulting from the 2015/16 Guest House Scrutiny Review Group to clarify that actions are being pursued, and ensures that matters relating to guest houses are a feature of future safeguarding reports to Cabinet.

Report author	Stefan Robinson
Job title	Scrutiny Officer
Service area or department	Law and Governance
Telephone	01865 252191
e-mail	Srobinson@oxford.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank