

<b>MEETING:</b>	<b>HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>
<b>MEETING DATE:</b>	<b>4 FEBRUARY 2015</b>
<b>TITLE OF REPORT:</b>	<b>Mandatory training for elected members</b>
<b>REPORT BY:</b>	<b>Cabinet Member (Young People and Children's Wellbeing)</b>

## **Classification**

Open

## **Key Decision**

This is not an executive decision.

## **Wards Affected**

Countywide

## **Purpose**

To consider a proposal for mandatory corporate parenting and safeguarding training for all Councillors.

## **Recommendation**

**THAT:**

- (a) **the Committee endorse the principle of mandatory training for elected members in respect of safeguarding and corporate parenting, and comment on the proposals set out at paragraph 7.**

## **Alternative options**

- 1 The current system is retained ie, training is available but is not mandatory and/or no sanction is applied if training is not completed. This is not recommended because experience has shown that not all elected members complete training. The risks associated with a lack of awareness of key issues, roles and responsibilities were highlighted during the Ofsted inspection of children's safeguarding; introducing a mandatory requirement for training mitigates that risk.

## **Reasons for recommendations**

- 2 To gain the support of the Committee on the principle of making training mandatory

and seek the Committee's views on the proposals for doing so.

## Key considerations

- 3 In 2012 Ofsted graded Herefordshire's children's safeguarding services "inadequate". Amongst the areas needing improvement, the lack of councillor interest and responsibility in these safeguarding were key indicators of inadequate management, leadership and governance of these services All elected members are expected to take an appropriate interest in children's and adult's safeguarding issues and understand that safeguarding forms a fundamental part of councillor's duties, in the same way that the economy, roads and planning are.
- 4 In 2014, Ofsted reinspected the Council and re-graded the service as "requires improvement". This grading demonstrated the improvements made. One of the elements of that improvement was the significant engagement by all members in safeguarding and corporate parenting, since 2012. Ofsted also reinforce the point that to get to "good", the authority has to further sharpen and embed many aspects of the improvement it had started to deliver within its services. Amongst these was further strengthening and embedding of the involvement of all councillors, as well as the involvement of specific councillor post holders, in key aspects of children's services. Although regular member seminars are held throughout the year, there is currently no requirement for members to complete training and development or any sanction applied if they do not do so.
- 5 Following the 2014 Ofsted report, recommendations made by the Safeguarding Task Group for the HOSC, and questions asked by members at Council, the leader of the council asked the cabinet member young people and children's wellbeing to draft a proposal for improving this situation on a permanent basis to ensure our looked after children obtain the full support and involvement as required from every elected member as a corporate parent and to ensure that all members have a full awareness of safeguarding issues, roles and responsibilities.
- 6 At present all members have access to induction training when first elected and subsequent regular invitations to children's wellbeing seminars held every two to three months. All such training and development opportunities are optional (although recommended) and no sanction is applied to members if they do not take up this training and development offer.
- 7 As part of a wider review of member induction, training and development, it is proposed to make the following changes with effect from May 2015:
  - Councillors must complete mandatory training in a number of key areas to include safeguarding (children and adults) and corporate parenting. Training will where possible be accessible online, and where it is necessary or desirable to have additional face to face sessions these will be run on more than one occasion to enable attendance.
  - Deadlines will be set over a reasonable timescale during the induction period within which members will be required to complete all mandatory training elements. Any member who fails to complete a mandatory training element by its due deadline could affect their entitlement to allowances. (This is a concept used in other authorities with some success.)
  - The mandatory training programme will be available online throughout the year

to enable any member to review the training at any time and for members joining the council mid term to complete the mandatory training. Where annual refresher sessions are mandatory (as with children's safeguarding and corporate parenting) the deadlines for completion will be made clear to all members and the same sanction for non-completion may be applied.

- The governance team will monitor completion rates of training and report any instances of con-compliance to the relevant group leader and the assistant director governance. The decision to apply a sanction if mandatory training has not been completed within agreed deadlines will rest with the assistant director governance having consulted with the relevant group leader.
- Individual member's training completion rates will also be available in the 'my councillor' section of the website (alongside register of interests etc).

## **Community impact**

- 8 By enabling members to have the necessary information and skills to carry out their roles and responsibilities effectively the council will be better able to meet its corporate plan priorities, and its statutory duties.

## **Equality duty**

- 9 Training for members will include gaining an understanding of how the council can ensure it is meeting its public sector equality duty. Training and development opportunities will be made available to members in such a way as to be fully accessible.

## **Financial implications**

- 10 Budgetary provision is made for member induction and training; there are no additional financial implications arising from introducing a mandatory requirement in respect of that training.

## **Legal implications**

- 11 The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 require the council to provide for the payment of a basic allowance which must be the same for each member and also the opportunity for members to elect, giving notice in writing, to forgo their entitlement or any part of their entitlement to allowances.
- 12 The Independent Remuneration Panel would have to make a recommendation to Council to amend the scheme. Options for ensuring that mandatory training is attended could involve setting the basic allowance at a certain rate and increasing it once mandatory courses are completed and or members electing to forgo a percentage of the allowance
- 13 The allowance however could not be suspended or withheld as this is only permitted under the Regulations where the member is suspended or partially suspended from his responsibilities or duties as a member of the council.

## **Risk management**

14 As identified in the alternative options above.

## **Consultees**

15 Group leaders have been consulted and are supportive of the principle of introducing mandatory training elements and applying a sanction if those mandatory training elements are not completed in a timely manner.

## **Appendices**

None.

## **Background papers**

- None identified.