

SUBJECT: Wales Audit Office Report on Safeguarding within the Kerbcraft Scheme in Monmouthshire County Council

MEETING: Council

DATE: 20TH MARCH 2017

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: All

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide the Council with the Wales Audit Office Report into Safeguarding Arrangements within the Kerbcraft Scheme in Monmouthshire County Council.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Council receive the Wales Audit Office Report on the Kerbcraft Scheme.
- 2.2 That the Council accept the statutory recommendations in the report, consider the current position against the recommendations and agree the actions to address them.

3. KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 The Wales Audit Office has undertaken a review into the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements in the Council's Kerbcraft scheme. The review was conducted under the powers of the Auditor General for Wales to assure that the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of its resources. It follows on from and makes reference to the proposals for improvement within the 2014 report on the Council's wider safeguarding arrangements.

- 3.2 Kerbcraft is a road safety scheme for children aged between 5 and 7. The scheme has operated since 2002, initially provided by the joint venture company Capita Gwent Consultancy Limited and since 2012, by the Council's Operation's Directorate. The service consists of 3 employed Kerbcraft co-ordinators who recruit volunteers and work in partnership with schools to support children to gain the skills and confidence to safely cross the road. It is projected that in 2016/17 Kerbcraft will have worked with 26 Monmouthshire primary schools and delivered road safety training to around 673 children. The scheme is supported by a Welsh Government grant of £50,000.
- 3.3 The operating model for Kerbcraft is that road safety training is delivered by school staff, kerbcraft co-ordinators and volunteers. Recruitment processes for volunteers must be carried out in accordance with the Councils safe recruitment policy. Comprehensive support to officers who recruit volunteers has been developed through the Council's lead officer on volunteering and through the volunteer network. The nature of Kerbcraft activity means that volunteers need DBS checks, pre-employment health screening and appropriate references prior to commencing work.
- 3.4 Due to concerns around the understanding of safeguarding and the robustness of the volunteer recruitment within Kerbcraft, operation of the scheme has either been suspended or operated without volunteers for large periods of time since June 2015. Options for its future management are under active consideration, however, it is important to note that steps taken to operate the scheme without volunteers has significantly reduced any risk to children. There have been three decision making points during the course of the review:
- June 2015 – suspension of the scheme
 - October 2015 – decision by the CYP Chief Officer to reinstate the scheme on an assured incremental basis, although despite this intervention two schools became active in September 2015 without wider approval (following the initial communication on this activity from the Kerbcraft Service)
 - August 2016 – all volunteers withdrawn from the scheme
- 3.5 The current position is that the scheme is operational without volunteering input. A SAFE audit of the scheme has identified a number of actions that need to be completed in order that volunteering involvement in the scheme can be undertaken.
- 3.6 The Auditor General can make the following recommendations for areas that require improvement depending on the significance of the issue:
- Proposals for improvement – there were 3 proposals for improvement in the 2014 report which are referenced in this report;

- Statutory recommendations for improvement to which the Council needs to make a formal response within 30 working days and needs to be reported to Council within one month of the issue of the report – there are 3 statutory recommendations within the report;
- Conduct a special inspection and publish a report and make recommendations; and
- Recommend to Ministers of the Welsh Government that they intervene in some way.

3.7 The headline finding of the Wales Audit Office report is that “Children are being put at risk because of continuing weaknesses in safeguarding arrangements for the Kerbcraft Scheme that the Council has not adequately addressed.” Included within the report are 3 statutory recommendations. Appendix 2 sets out the action the Council will take in response to these recommendations. This highlights:

- The specific proposal/recommendation made;
- Extracts from the report relevant to each proposal – these are not extensive or comprehensive but are intended to give a flavour of the issues behind each of the proposals made by WAO;
- The current position which includes progress made since the fieldwork was undertaken by WAO;
- Actions for each of the proposals that show how the Authority will continue to address the issue.

3.8 As a Council, safeguarding has been given the very highest priority and the issues raised by this review are taken very seriously by the Cabinet, Chief Executive, Statutory Director of Social Services and Senior Leadership team. The report highlights that despite the progress made to systematically embed a safeguarding culture, knowledge and practice in every area of the Council’s responsibility there are areas where the understanding and operation of safeguarding are not yet of the standard they need to be. The report reinforces the need to be constantly vigilant in understanding the effectiveness of our governance and assurance systems. Culture has to be open and transparent to improve any arrangements to safeguard children and adults at risk.

3.9 The Wales Audit Office report documents thoroughly the chronology of Kerbcraft in Monmouthshire County Council to August 2016. In addition to responding to the service specific issues that were raised within the initial concerns in July 2015, the volunteering element of the safeguarding activity programme was strengthened and the Volunteering Programme Lead for the Council became a key and active member of Whole Authority Safeguarding Co-ordinating Group. Further, the Internal Audit Service undertook a wide review of safeguarding which reported in January 2016 and followed this with a subsequent in-depth audit of volunteering (issued as a draft in March 2017). A specific investigation into the Kerbcraft service will feature as a very early commitment in the Internal Audit work programme for 2017/18.

- 3.10 The Wales Audit Office report recommends that:
- The Council should establish effective performance management and scrutiny arrangements for the Kerbcraft scheme
 - Responsibility for ensuring the recommendations are implemented and that officers and a Cabinet Member are held to account as a high priority within the work programme of the appropriate select committee in the new Council
 - There are progress reports to Cabinet on a biannual basis until a high assurance level is achieved
- 3.11 The Wales Audit Office have indicated that there may be opportunity to incorporate a wider review on the effectiveness of safeguarding in Monmouthshire County Council into their 2017/18 programme.

4. REASONS

- 4.1 To ensure that the Council receives the Wales Audit Office report into Safeguarding in the Kerbcraft Scheme within statutory timescales and establishes a set of actions to address the statutory recommendations made.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Actions within the report are to be delivered within existing resources. Any further proposals developed in response to this report and which have resource requirements, will require a separate decision.

6. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS:

- 6.1 None - This report does not propose a change of policy or service delivery. Individual actions which require an explicit decision from Cabinet will require a separate Future Generations Evaluation to be completed.

7. SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Wales Audit Office Report on Safeguarding within the Kerbcraft Scheme in Monmouthshire County Council details inadequacies in safeguarding arrangements within the service. The actions to address the statutory recommendations need to be actioned in a timely manner to ensure that those safeguarding concerns have been adequately addressed and that implications for wider safeguarding are understood and acted upon.

8. CONSULTEES

Head of Children's Services and Safeguarding
Safeguarding Lead in Education
Traffic & Road Safety Manager
Head of Policy and Performance
Chief Internal Auditor
Scrutiny Officer
Senior Leadership Team
Cabinet

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Wales Audit Office Report into Corporate Safeguarding in Monmouthshire County Council (2014)

10. REPORT AUTHOR

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11. CONTACT DETAILS

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See separate attachment or visit www.wao.gov.uk

Subject area and evidence source

Wales Audit Office - Safeguarding arrangements – Kerbcraft scheme – Monmouthshire County Council

WAO Statutory Recommendation made under section 25 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004

The Council should keep complete records in relation to volunteers, including evidence of DBS checks, occupational health questionnaires, safeguarding training, and reference details.

Key issues from WAO report

- Major weakness in volunteer record keeping in the Kerbcraft scheme prior to June 2015
- No central Council database for volunteers to ensure they have had the right pre-employment checks, therefore children are at risk
- Despite improvements made, there remain major weaknesses in the Council's monitoring and record keeping

Current position

- Internal Audit have undertaken a thorough review of the Council's arrangements for supporting volunteers, including safeguarding and volunteering. The draft report was issued on 3rd March 2017.
- The Volunteer Toolkit is in place to provide support, consistency and best practice both for volunteers and the staff that support them.
- The Volunteer Network supports the sharing of good practice and ensures a coherent message regarding safeguarding
- An extensive programme of training to volunteer co-ordinators and volunteer leads
- Within Kerbcraft, the SAFE evaluation has identified that training records are held in the form of paper documents by the Road Safety Officer and the Safeguarding Unit has a copy of who has been trained in regard of Service Staff and dates. However no formal spreadsheet or database is kept of what training has been undertaken and when it is due for renewal.

Actions	Desired Result	Action	Measure or milestone	Accountable Officer	Timescales
	Central database in place for volunteers to ensure there is safe and consistent recording of all pre-employment checks and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central Data Base Developed • Information with every Council volunteer recorded in one place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Database operational • Database fully populated 	<p>Chief Officer for Resources</p> <p>Chief Officer for Resources</p>	<p>June 2017</p> <p>June 2017</p>
	High level assurance that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place for volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issue of internal audit report into volunteering • Development of action plan to address any issues within internal audit report • Follow up audit to review any issues identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration of internal audit report at WASCG • Action Plan in place • Follow up audit undertaken 	<p>Chief Officer for Resources</p> <p>Chief Officer for Resources</p> <p>Chief Officer for Resources</p>	<p>April 2017</p> <p>May 2017</p> <p>January 2018</p>
	Clear roles and responsibilities for volunteer co-ordinators in Monmouthshire County Council.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roles including volunteer co-ordination are clearly represented in job descriptions • All volunteer co-ordinators have the required training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take forward actions from the Internal Audit report • Ensure complete training 	<p>Chief Officer for Resources</p> <p>Chief Officer for Resources</p>	<p>March 2017</p> <p>March 2017</p>

			records for all volunteer co-ordinators		
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WAO Statutory Recommendation made under section 25 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004	The Council should develop specific internal guidance and procedures for the operation of its Kerbcraft scheme so that staff are clear about how the scheme should operate.				
Key issues from WAO report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No appropriate controls were in place for the operation of the scheme from September 2012 to June 2015 As at June 2016, no specific guidance was in place for staff operating Kerbcraft to which they could be held accountable No adequate assurance arrangements in place The Council's Internal Audit has not reviewed Kerbcraft since its suspension in July 2015 No formal operating framework in place for the scheme 				
Current position	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kerbcraft has operated without volunteering input since August 2016 New management arrangements are in place and a review of the operating model is underway A SAFE audit completed and an action plan in place to address safeguarding gaps. 				
Actions	Desired Result	Action	Measures or milestones	Accountable Officer	Timescales
	A sustainable operating model is in place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appraise the options for the future operating model for Kerbcraft Recommend future operating model to Cabinet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Option appraisal undertaken Operating model approved by Cabinet 	<p>Chief Officer for Operations</p> <p>Chief Officer for Operations</p>	<p>April 2017</p> <p>June 2017</p>

	Clarity of roles and responsibilities of those working within Kerbcraft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operating model will set out clear role profiles, competencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Framework embedded in the policy development process of the council 	Chief Officer for Operations	June 2016
	Clear safeguarding procedures are in place to give assurance on Kerbcraft operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assurance by Internal Audit on the effectiveness of Kerbcraft 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audit field work completed 	Chief Internal Auditor Chief Officer for Operations	April 2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of all actions identified in the SAFE action plan 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All actions identified completed 	Chief Officer for Operations	June 2017	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement an action plan to address any issues identified in the audit 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action plan in place and considered at appropriate officer and Member committees 	Chief Internal Auditor	September 2017	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a follow up audit if indicated 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audit fieldwork undertaken 	Chief Internal Auditor	April 2018	

WAO Statutory Recommendation made under section 25 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004	The Council should establish effective performance management and scrutiny arrangements for the Kerbcraft scheme and clarify the roles of the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Unit and Internal Audit in those arrangements.
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Key Issues from WAO Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no reports to Members regarding the transfer of responsibility for Kerbcraft to Monmouthshire County Council • The Council does not receive reports on how the scheme is operating and whether it is achieving its objectives • Lack of effective oversight of the scheme • Internal Audit has not been asked to review the service • Concerns regarding the scheme's operations were not raised with the Council's Cabinet 				
Current Position	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There has been no reporting on Kerbcraft performance to any select committee since the scheme transferred to the Council • As the scheme is funded by a Welsh Government specific grant, there are quarterly returns to Welsh Government on performance, e.g. number of children who participate and achieve outcomes • The Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Unit has a role with Kerbcraft and other service areas which supports self evaluation and improvement. It has supported the service responsible for Kerbcraft to complete a SAFE audit, develop an action plan and is providing some support to complete the identified actions. The Unit is not resourced to provide this high level of support to all parts of the Council, or to Kerbcraft on an ongoing basis. The long term relationship will be one of high level support and assurance, reporting any issues to the Whole Authority Safeguarding Co-ordinating Group. • Internal Audit has planned but not yet undertaken an audit of Kerbcraft. 				
Actions	Desired Result	Action	Measure or Milestones	Responsible Officer	Timescale
	Effective governance arrangements for the political reporting of Kerbcraft performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine a Select Committee to hold officers and Cabinet Member to account for delivery of the actions to implement these recommendations and for the ongoing performance of Kerbcraft • Report on delivery of WAO recommendations to Audit Committee and Cabinet on a biannual basis until there is high level assurance that performance has improved and risks have been reduced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select Committee confirmed and first report received • Report on progress with this action plan to audit committee 	<p>Chief Officer for Operations</p> <p>Chief Officer for Operations</p>	<p>June 2017</p> <p>July 2017</p>

	Clear relationship articulated between Internal Audit and Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memorandum of Understanding between Internal Audit and Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Unit which sets out the respective roles in assuring the effectiveness of safeguarding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memorandum of Understanding in place and agreed by Senior Leadership Team 	Chief Internal Auditor/ Chief Officer for Social Care and Health	April 2017
	Performance Measures for Kerbcraft which demonstrate how effectively the service purposes are met	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance measures developed • Scrutiny by the appropriate select committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measures in place • Select committee scrutiny of performance 	Chief Officer for Operations Chief Officer for Operations	April 2017 June 2017 and thereafter on at least an annual basis