

FULL COUNCIL REPORT

Date Written	27 th October 2015
Report Author	Paul Philpott
Service Area	Business Change
Exempt/Non Exempt	Non Exempt
Committee Date	2 nd December 2015

To: Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council - Corporate response to the Casey Report

1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 A Task and Finish Group was set up as directed by the Chief Executive to consider the findings of the Casey Report on Rotherham Metropolitan Council. The Task and Finish Group undertook a piece of work to establish whether Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council was in the best position to respond if a similar occurrence to Rotherham happened in Merthyr Tydfil and, if not, identify the actions that needed to be carried out to ensure that this was the case.
- 1.2 This report outlines the work carried out to date by a Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council (MTCBC) Task and Finish Group, which involved a self-assessment process. An Action Plan is being developed to address the issues for MTCBC in light of the Casey report.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS that

- 2.1 The content of the report be noted.
- 2.2 The Corporate Safeguarding Group will implement the Action Plan which has been developed.
- 2.3 Once the Action Plan is fully completed it will be reported to Council and referred to Cabinet.

3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In March 2015 Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council's Transformation Steering Group was directed by the Chief Executive to consider the findings of the Casey Report. The purpose was to ensure that necessary actions were implemented to address any lessons learned from the findings of the report.
- 3.2 A Task and Finish Group was set up to undertake this piece of work to establish whether the Council was in the best position to respond if a similar occurrence to Rotherham happened in Merthyr Tydfil and, if not, identify the actions that needed to be carried out to ensure that this was the case.
- 3.3 The Terms of Reference of the Task and Finish Group is attached at Appendix 1.
- 3.4 In September 2014, the Secretary of State appointed Louise Casey CB to carry out an inspection of the compliance of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC) with the requirements of Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1999, in relation to the Council's exercise of its functions on governance, children and young people and taxi and private hire licensing.
- 3.5 This followed an Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham (Professor Alexis Jay), commissioned by RMBC which found that there was a 'collective failure' by both the Council and the police to stop the abuse.
- 3.6 The Casey Report identified that RMBC was not fit for purpose and that it was failing in its duties to protect vulnerable children and young people from harm. In particular, the investigations identified:
 - A Council in denial about safeguarding failures.
 - An archaic culture of sexism, bullying and discomfort about race.
 - Failure to address past weaknesses.
 - Weak and ineffective arrangements for taxi licensing.
 - Ineffective leadership and management, including political leadership.
 - No shared vision, a partial management team and ineffective liaisons with partners.
 - A culture of covering up uncomfortable truths, silencing whistle-blowers and paying off staff rather than dealing with difficult issues.

4.0 CONTENT

- 4.1 The MTCBC Safeguarding Review Task and Finish Group has met on a monthly basis to develop a programme of work based on the key themes within the Casey Report. The multi-agency Cwm Taf Safeguarding Children Board action plan has formed part of this work programme, with progress being reported by the Council's Safeguarding Manager.
- 4.2 As part of this programme of work a tool was developed by the Group to establish an effective self-assessment/challenge process based on the key questions contained within the Casey Report as follows:

1. Does the Council take steps to address past weaknesses and does it have the capacity to do so?
 2. Does the Council take steps to address past weaknesses in Children's Services and does it have the capacity to do so?
 3. Does the Council undertake sufficient liaisons with other agencies?
 4. Does the Council take sufficient steps to ensure only fit and proper persons are permitted to hold a taxi licence?
 5. Does the Council cover up information and silence whistle-blowers?
 6. Does the Council take appropriate action against staff guilty of gross misconduct?
- 4.3 A self-assessment timetable (Appendix 2) was agreed by the Group and workshops took place during June and July 2015.
- 4.4 Various groups took part in the self-assessment exercise. This included:
- The Senior Leadership Group
 - The Staff Forum
 - Cabinet Members
 - Children's Services Extended Senior Management Team
 - The Headteachers Forum
 - Social Services Scrutiny
 - SIP Steering Group and the Local Service Board
 - Licensing Staff and Members of the Licensing Committee
- 4.5 A detailed breakdown of all the results is attached as Appendix 3.
- 4.6 Following the workshops the answers were correlated with a view to highlighting the areas that we have made progress in and areas where further improvement is required.
- 4.7 An action plan to address any issues for Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council is currently being prepared.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There is no financial impact for the local authority in regards to this report.

6.0 SINGLE INTEGRATED PLAN AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT SUMMARY

- 6.1 The Single Integrated Plan & Sustainability Impact Assessment has been completed and there are no negative impacts identified.

7.0 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) form has been prepared for the purpose of this report. It has been found that a full assessment is not required at this time. The form can be accessed on the Council's website/intranet via the 'Equality Impact Assessment' link.

LISA CURTIS-JONES
CHIEF OFFICER (SOCIAL SERVICES)

ELLIS COOPER
CORPORATE DIRECTOR PLACE AND
TRANSFORMATION

COUNCILLOR LINDA MATTHEWS
CABINET MEMBER FOR SOCIAL
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BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Title of Document(s)	Document(s) Date	Document Location
Report to Transformation Steering Group	17-04-15	Q Drive/Business Change
Rotheram Report	29-06-15	Q Drive/Business Change
Draft Safeguarding Review Work Programme	19-05-15	Q Drive/Business Change
Timeline/Key Milestones	12-06-15	Q Drive/Business Change
Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?		No

Consultation has been undertaken with the Corporate Management Team in respect of each proposal(s) and recommendation(s) set out in this report.