

Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: C/030/2006-07.

Date of meeting: 4 September 2006.



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Portfolio: Finance, Performance Management and Corporate Support Services.

Subject: Child Protection Policy.

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Democratic Services Officer: Gary Woodhall (01992 – 56 4470).

Recommendations:

- (1) That the Child Protection Policy be agreed; and**
- (2) That the Supplementary Policy for carrying out disclosure checks on existing staff be agreed.**

Report:

1. The Council's Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) report noted that child protection arrangements existed in areas of the Authority that had a particular focus on children (e.g. Leisure) but an overall strategy and approach was missing at a corporate level. Given the prominence of child protection issues at a national level, and the increasing focus on the role of District Councils in this area, it is timely to address this matter.
2. Attached at is a draft Child Protection Policy, which has been constructed as a framework document. This means that individual services, which deal with children/child protection issues, can then use this as a basis for drawing up local arrangements. The policy sets out the roles and responsibilities of designated staff, to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place.
3. In addition to this work, it has been timely to review the current arrangements for carrying out disclosure checks under the Disclosure of Criminal Background Regulations. Under these regulations the Council is required to carry out a check on the criminal background of all staff who are in posts that involve substantial unsupervised access to children or vulnerable adults. In practice, following the externalisation of Leisure, there are now very few posts of this nature, the majority being in the remaining sports centre and certain posts in housing.
4. Prior to appointment the Authority is required to satisfy itself that an applicant for a post has no convictions that might make it a risk for him/her to work with children or vulnerable adults. Offers of employment are made on this basis and an individual is not usually allowed to take up the offer until this process is completed. That said, there are no arrangements in place for the re-checking of staff, who in very rare cases may commit relevant offences whilst in employment, and which the Authority may not be aware of. It is therefore recommended that a process be put in place under which all staff in designated posts are checked on a three yearly basis.
5. For existing staff this process would be optional i.e. the individual could refuse to submit to the checks, as it is not an existing contractual requirement. However, for newly appointed staff it would be a contractual requirement, the process being managed by the Human Resources Unit. In proposing these arrangements, the Council is simply taking an approach based on a risk assessment and in the majority

of cases it is unlikely that any issues will arise as a result of the rechecking process. That said, the public and service users are entitled to be assured that appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure that staff working with children and vulnerable adults are suitable and proper.

Statement in support of recommended action:

6. This policy will address a deficiency highlighted during the last Comprehensive Performance Assessment.

Options for action:

7. To not implement the policy, and the associated policy for carrying out disclosure checks on existing staff.

Consultation undertaken:

8. Joint Consultative Committee.

Resource implications:

Budget provision: Within existing resources.

Personnel: Within existing resources.

Land: None.

Community Plan/BVPP reference: N/A.

Relevant statutory powers: N/A.

Background papers: File papers in Human Resources.

Environmental/Human Rights Act/Crime and Disorder Act Implications: N/A.

Key Decision reference (if required): N/A.