

## APPENDIX A

### **Briefing on Assurance Arrangements in Children's Services for the Audit Committee meeting 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2015**

This paper outlines the governance arrangements in Children Services and aims to provide assurance to the Audit Committee that there are effective governance and risk management arrangements in place.

#### **1 Accountability Arrangements.**

The attached illustration outlines the accountability arrangements which are in place in Children Services.

The illustration demonstrates that there is robust political and managerial oversight of all aspects of the service.

The governance arrangements for safeguarding children have been subject to external scrutiny by Ofsted in November 2014. Ofsted confirmed:

*A strong senior leadership team ensures that the effective use of resources is ensuring exceptional early help services. There is effective governance in Lincolnshire and partnership arrangements are robust. A recent self-evaluation shows elected members and senior managers have a good overall understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in their work with local communities*

Whilst it is recognised that there is considerable transformation of all local governmental services and activities, our internal arrangements and external arrangements provide assurance that effective governance arrangements are in place.

Internal assurance has been obtained through staff consultation, staff surveys and termly staff briefings attended by DMT, extensive case audit programme, regular auditing and performance monitoring as well as case reviews.

#### **2 Risk management.**

It is recognised that safeguarding children is a strategic risk for the Council and consequently, safeguarding children remains on the strategic risk register

It is reassuring that the Ofsted inspection confirmed that Lincolnshire Children's Services are good with adoption being outstanding with good arrangements to manage risk.

There has been considerable national attention to the sexual exploitation of children and so it is appropriate that the service was asked to provide assurance to the

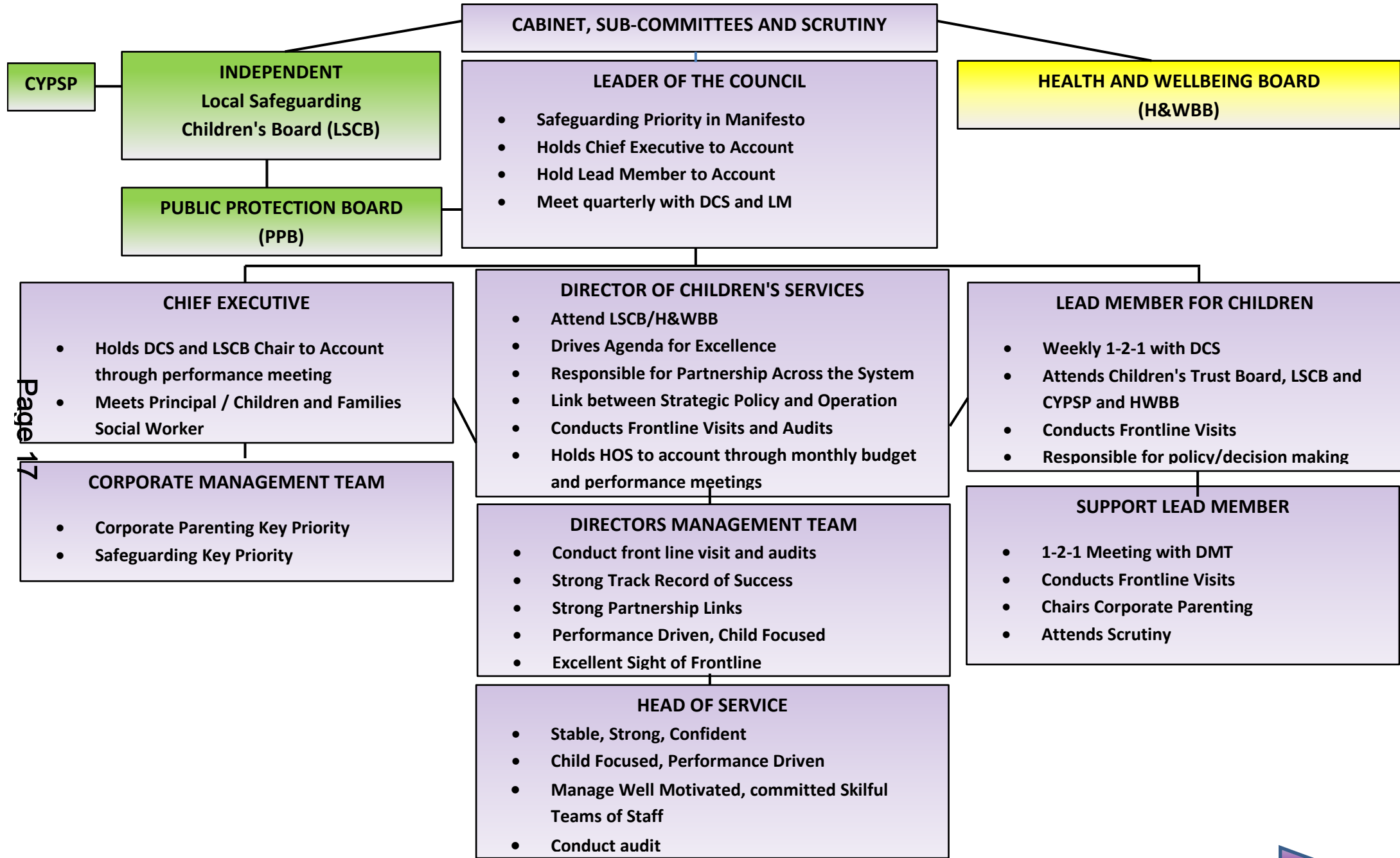
Executive on this issue. A problem profile, action plan and progress report was presented with Executive being assured that this risk is being effectively managed.

The most significant issue of risk which the service is facing is the budget reductions facing local government. Although safeguarding children is a council priority, the service is demand led and there is increasing demand being placed on safeguarding services. Maintaining preventative service is essential to reduce demand on statutory services, but this is a challenge in an environment of reducing budgets.

The other risk which needs to be highlighted relates to school performance. Local Authorities retain a statutory duty to ensure that there is a sufficient supply of good education places. However, the creation of an autonomous school system through the academy programme, means that the council retains accountability for all schools and academies but can only influence academies performance. In addition, the Council isn't funded to support the performance of academies despite the accountability it has for good school places. The LA can also be subject to an Ofsted inspection in relation to its school improvement. To minimise this risk, Children Services has established a sector led approach to school improvement through the Lincolnshire Learning Partnership. This new approach aims to engage all schools and academies to work together to ensure that no school is left behind so all children achieve their potential.

In summary, Children Services are confident that there are robust arrangements in place so risk is managed appropriately and governance is effective.

# DCS Leadership and Accountability Structure



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CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT IN OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN

