

Cabinet

17 December 2024

Quality Assurance Reviewing Officer (QARO) Independent Reviewing Officer's (IRO) Annual Report 2023-2024

For Review and Consultation

Cabinet Member and Portfolio:

Cllr. C Sutton, Children's Services, Education & Skills

Local Councillor(s):

All

Executive Director:

P Dempsey, Executive Director of People - Children

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Report Status: Public

Brief Summary:

This annual report provides evidence relating to the Quality Assurance Reviewing Officer (QARO) Service in Dorset Council, as set out in the IRO Handbook. In Dorset QAROs undertake the statutory function of the IRO. It covers the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

The report evidences a service which continues to develop and provides good quality work to support children being well cared for and achieving good outcomes. The report includes key information outlining the work of the service with and for children in care and the report includes case examples of IRO work with children.

This report includes a profile of the service, performance data including timeliness of review and the extent of participation, a profile of our children in

care, including their age, gender and ethnic background, details of the dispute resolution process and how effective this is. The report concludes with a review of aims and objectives set in the last annual report and aims and objectives for the service for the upcoming year.

Recommendation:

Members are invited to consider the content of the report and give a view on the strengths, challenges and forward plan for the service.

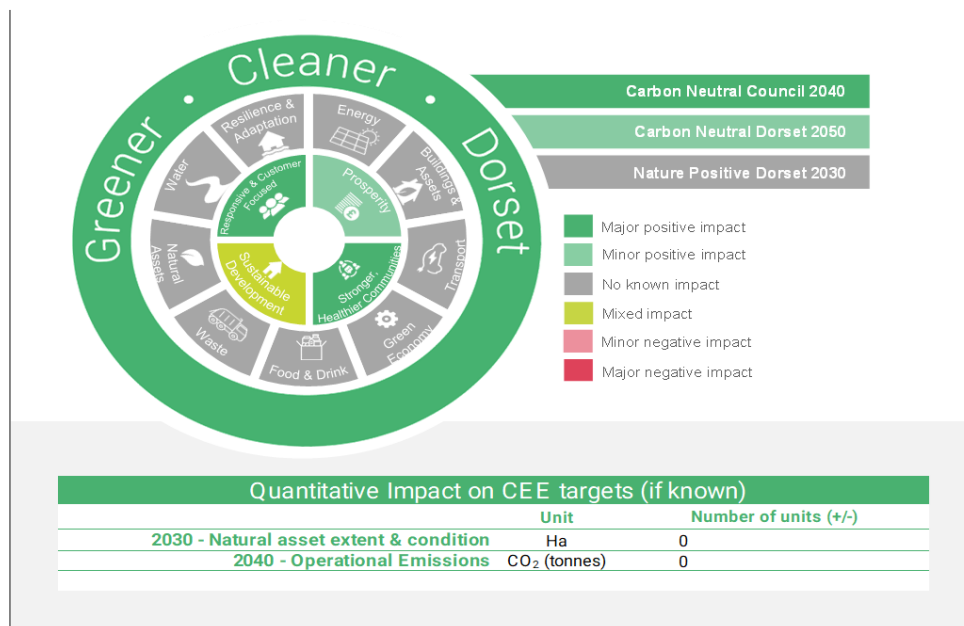
Reason for Recommendation:

To ensure that the QARO service continues to develop and evolve to offer the best possible support and challenge to the Local Authority in meeting the needs of our children in care, and to ensure voices of children and young people in care are heard and acted upon.

1. Financial Implications

An effective IRO service helps to reduce costs in Children’s Services by reducing drift and delay in care planning, promoting early support and reducing escalation of need and higher support costs later in life.

2. Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Implications



(No recommendations)

3. **Well-being and Health Implications**

An effective IRO service contributes to improved health and wellbeing outcomes for children in care, and those who will go on to family placements or adoption.

4. **Other Implications**

None identified

5. **Risk Assessment**

An effective IRO service prevents and helps manage risk for young people in care and to the council, by quality assuring plans and escalating issues of concern.

6. **Equalities Impact Assessment**

An effective IRO service promotes the child's voice, and independently advocates for care experienced children with a range of protected characteristics.

7. **Appendices**

Quality Assurance & Reviewing Officer (QARO) Annual Report 2023/2024:
Appendix A

8. **Background Papers**

None

9. **Report Sign Off**

- 9.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)