EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Due to legislation changes following the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse it is proposed to establish a Strategic Child Safe Policy.

LINK TO DELIVERY/OPERATIONAL PLAN

The recommendation in this report relates to the Delivery/Operational Plan strategy “17.1 Collaborate - Provide representative, responsible and accountable community governance”.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Nil

POLICY AND GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS

Should the anticipated Mandatory Child Safe Scheme legislation pass in late 2020, Council will be required, to implement a Child Safe Policy. This policy seeks to serve the requirements and proactively support the Child Safe practices while working towards the requirements of a Child Safe organisation.

Councils Complaints Strategic Policy will also be reviewed and amended to reflect the Child Safe practices.

RECOMMENDATION

1  Place the Child Safe Policy on public exhibition for a period of 28 days.

2  That the policy be referred to the Councillor Policy Review Committee for comment.

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Consideration has been given to the recommendation’s impact on Council’s service delivery; image and reputation; political; environmental; health and safety; employees; stakeholders and project management; and no further implications or risks have been identified.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Background

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse found that many organisations in Australia failed to protect children from abuse, failed to listen to children who tried to disclose abuse and failed to respond appropriately when abuse came to light.

The new Children’s Guardian Act 2019 commenced on 1st March 2020. Council is a relevant entity that is covered by the Reportable Conduct Scheme in NSW, therefore Council and its workers will be subject to the new legislation.
The new Act includes responsibility for the Reportable Conduct Scheme, which is being transferred to the Office of the Children’s Guardian from the Ombudsman. The Scheme oversees an organisation’s response to allegations of reportable misconduct made against their workers.

The Office of the Children’s Guardian have also now released a guide to the Child Safe Standards which provides a framework for making organisations safer for children in line with the Royal Commission. They have been accepted by the NSW Government. Based on extensive research and consultation, the Standards provide tangible guidance for organisations to create cultures, adopt strategies and act to put the interests of children first, to keep them safe from harm.

It is also anticipated the Mandatory Child Safe Scheme legislation will be passed late 2020, and will formally commence mid 2021 (timeframes subject may change due to COVID).

**Implementing a Child Safe Council**

To build an integrated and embed approach to these Child Safe Standards, a child safe working party of employees have been established. The attached Policy and poster is the first step in implementing and embedding these Standards.

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. DRAFT - Strategic Policy - ST146 - Child Safe (October 2020), D20/58998
2. DRAFT - Proposed Child Safe Poster, D20/41846