

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL
ADULT AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE
CRIMINAL JUSTICE SUB COMMITTEE

Minutes of Meeting of the Criminal Justice Sub-Committee held in Committee Room 1, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Tuesday 12 November 2013 at 11.00am.

PRESENT

Mr A Christie
Mr G Mackenzie
Mrs L Munro

Mrs M Paterson
Ms J Slater

Officials in attendance:-

Ms F Palin, Head of Social Care, Health and Social Care Service
Mr J Maybee, Criminal Justice, Health and Social Care Service
Ms A Macrae, Committee Administrator, Chief Executive's Service

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mrs M Davidson, Ms J Douglas, Mr M Greene, Mrs D Mackay, and Mrs F Robertson.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Appointment of Chair

On being nominated by Mr A Christie seconded by Mrs M Paterson, the Sub-Committee **AGREED** to appoint Mr G Mackenzie as Chair of the Sub-Committee.

4. Performance Report

There had been circulated Report No CJ/08/13 dated 1 November 2013 by the Director of Health and Social Care which provided the most recently available performance and monitoring information for Criminal Justice Services for Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 of 2013/14 as reported to the Northern Community Justice Authority and the Highland Council respectively.

In regard to ongoing developments, the Principal Officer reported on the Performance Management project being progressed as part of the Scottish Government's Reducing Reoffending Programme (RRP2). He reported that the aim of the project was to address a number of areas for improvement identified by Audit Scotland, particularly the development and implementation of a national performance framework for the delivery of community justice across Scotland. He reported on the key developments in regard to the project and advised that he would continue to update Members on progress.

The Principal Officer further reported that he and the NCJA Chief Officer had met with academics from the School of Applied Social Studies at Robert Gordon's University

(RGU) to discuss a proposal to undertake a longitudinal study of offenders. However he advised that the Association of Directors of Social Work and the Scottish Government were unable to provide financial assistance for the study and therefore, while a draft proposal was awaited from RGU, it may not be possible to proceed due to funding constraints.

In discussion reference was made to the performance indicator which recorded the percentage of offenders starting unpaid work within seven working days. Members noted that this performance indicator was adversely affected by the non-attendance of offenders at scheduled appointments and by late notification orders from the Courts. The Principal Officer advised that the figures showed an improvement and that the issues around performance would continue to be monitored with a view to those improvements being sustained going forward.

The Sub-Committee **NOTED** the report.

5. Services Provided by Apex Scotland in Highland

There had been circulated Report No CJ/09/13 dated 4 November 2013 by the Director of Health and Social Care which explained the range of employability related services for offenders provided by Apex Scotland to Criminal Justice Social Work in Highland. The report advised that the geographical reach of the service provided by Apex Scotland was restricted to the Inner Moray Firth area due to funding constraints.

Members were advised that Apex Scotland was a charitable trust limited by guarantee and that its purpose was to contribute towards reducing Scotland's re-offending rates and increase labour market participation by working in partnerships to support ex-offenders and young people at risk into employment, education or training. Further information was also provided on the aims and objectives of the Criminal Justice Social Work's Service Level Agreement with Apex Scotland in Highland, and in regard to performance and outcomes in 2012/13.

In this regard, it was confirmed that the aims of the Service Level Agreement with Apex Scotland were to:

- reduce re-offending by working with offenders and young people at risk of offending to help them address their employability needs and progress towards employment, education and training;
- secure equality of access to employment for those individuals with a criminal record by working with employers to promote fair recruitment policies and practices;
- help offenders and young people at risk of offending to realise their potential for employment in order to reduce crime;
- contribute to the provision of employment focused activities and employment related services; and
- create equality of access to employment and to employment opportunities for individuals with a criminal record.

The Chair welcomed Mr D McNulty and Ms C Beattie to the meeting who proceeded to give a presentation on the work of Apex Scotland. During the presentation Mr McNulty reported that Apex Scotland was a national charity which provided specialist skills in training and employment; expertise in disclosure and rehabilitation of offenders legislation; and advice on recruitment practices and conviction relevance.

Thereafter Mr McNulty provided a detailed overview of Apex Scotland's main activities in Highland. This included its Community Challenge Outdoor Project which had involved service users and those on Community Payback Orders clearing up areas in and around Inverness, including Kingsmills, Raigmore Estate, Millburn Road, and also assisting with outdoor maintenance work at the Kinlochiel Outdoor Centre, Fort William, and at Abriachan Forest. He reported that at a recent meeting with Council Ward Managers it had been agreed that the work carried out under the Project had significantly improved the visual effect of those areas. It had also been agreed that the Ward Managers within Inverness would seek to identify new projects where the Community Challenge Team could benefit the community both now and in the future.

Mr McNulty continued that Apex Scotland were involved in a range of other activities and projects in Highland which included;

- Care Farm Scotland - a collection of farmers who provided work on their farms to groups of people including those with mental health issues, the long-term unemployed and ex-offenders. It was confirmed that a farm located on the Black Isle was involved in the project;
- access to peer based recovery support such as the SMART recovery programme which helped participants build up their motivation to change by offering a set of proven tools and techniques to support recovery; and,
- in partnership with Criminal Justice Social Work an eight week rolling programme to support women on community based orders. The first course had commenced in August 2013, and was due for completion on 23 October 2013, with further ongoing support being provided thereafter in the community.

Following the presentation Mr McNulty responded to a number of questions from Members during which he confirmed that:-

- in regard to the Community Challenge Outdoor Project it was reported that serious sex offenders and those subject to MAPPAs were not involved in projects where there was direct contact with the public;
- the Community Challenge Team could not become involved in project which was the Council's responsibility and where staff were employed to do the work. However the Team would carry out works where a service was no longer provided by the Council, or staff were no longer employed to do a particular job;
- he would investigate the opportunity to undertake works at an area at Craig Road, Dingwall on receipt of further information from Mrs M Paterson;
- the organisation sought to track and monitor offenders to determine whether they were achieving positive outcomes and whether further assistance could be provided; and
- the first step back into employment was extremely important for an offender on the basis that the evidence showed that people were significantly more likely to secure a better job if they were already in employment.

In conclusion Members welcomed the work being undertaken by Apex Scotland in the Highlands to assist offenders and young people to achieve more positive destinations.

Thereafter, the Chairman thanked Mr McNulty and Ms Beattie for their presentation.

The meeting ended at 11.45am.
