

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL
EDUCATION, CHILDREN AND ADULT SERVICES COMMITTEE
CRIMINAL JUSTICE SUB COMMITTEE

Minutes of Meeting of the Criminal Justice Sub-Committee held in the Convener's Hospitality Room in Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Tuesday 8 September, 2015 at 10.30am.

PRESENT

Dr D Alston
Mr S Fuller
Mr D Millar

Mr G Ross
Ms J Slater

Officials in attendance:-

Ms F Palin, Head of Adult Services, Care and Learning Service
Mr J Maybee, Principal Officer, Criminal Justice, Care and Learning Service
Ms A Macrae, Committee Administrator, Corporate Development Service

Also in attendance:-

Mr M MacBean, Victim Support Scotland
Mr M Richardson, High Life Highland
Mr N Ross, High Life Highland

1. Appointment of Chair

On the motion of Mr G Ross seconded by Ms J Slater, the Sub Committee **AGREED** to appoint Mr D Millar as Chair.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mrs I Campbell, Mr A Christie, Mr M Green, Mrs D Mackay, Mrs M Paterson and Ms G Ross.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Performance Report – Quarter 4 2014/15 Northern Community Justice Authority & Quarter 1 The Highland Council 2015/1

There had been circulated Report No CJ/04/15 dated 20 August 2015 by the Director of Care and Learning which provided the most recently available performance and monitoring information for Criminal Justice Services. This covered Quarter 4 2014/15 as reported to the Northern Community Justice Authority and Quarter 1 2015/16 as reported to the Chief Executive, Highland Council respectively.

Arising from the report, the Principal Officer referred to the action being taken by the Research and Information Officer and through engagement with the third sector to improve the return rate for exit questionnaires issued to offenders on the basis that the questionnaires generated important qualitative information in terms of the Service's performance. It was anticipated that the number of returns would increase over the next few months which would then feed through in terms of the information provided to Members. In regard to the performance indicator which related to breach rates he advised that a piece of work was to be carried out in response to the inconsistencies in the rates recorded across the seven local authorities within the NCJA, and that further information would be brought back to a future meeting of the Sub Committee on this matter.

During discussion, Members raised the following points:-

- the issues around setting targets in regard to the performance indicator for the proportion of criminal justice social work reports submitted to the courts by the due date;
- that further clarity be provided in regard to the period covered by some of the performance information set out in the report;
- It was suggested that to allow for further Member scrutiny of trends consideration be given to the performance information being provided over a period of three years in future reports; the Head of Adult Services and Principal Officer referred to the difficulties associated with providing information for that period in regard to some of the individual performance measures but confirmed that this would be investigated for the next meeting, it being suggested that this information could be included as a summary within the report; and
- a point in regard to whether there was sufficient capacity within the system to provide work opportunities for all those offenders starting unpaid work.

The Sub-Committee **NOTED** the performance report and **AGREED** to investigate the potential for performance and monitoring information for Criminal Justice Services to be provided over a period of three years in future reports.

5. Redesigning the Community Justice System

There had been circulated Report No CJ/05/15 dated 20 August 2015 by the Director of Care and Learning which invited Members to consider the proposed model for the future model of community justice described in the report and the transition arrangements.

In presenting the report, the Head of Adult Services reported that the Scottish Government had determined that community justice would move from the Northern Community Justice Authority, back to localities and specifically to the Community Planning Partnerships. She advised that the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) in Highland had agreed that the current structure around the Council should be enhanced to create the new governance model within Highland. And that the Council's existing Criminal Justice Sub Committee is enhanced to become a Sub Committee of the Partnership as well as a continuing Sub Committee of the Council.

The Head of Adult Services further reported that shadow/transitional arrangements were required to be in place from April 2016, with full responsibility to CPPs being conferred from April 2017. It was noted that the Scottish Government required that CPPs produced their local community justice plans for 2016/17 for comment by January 2016. However she advised that the Scottish Government had yet to produce their

national strategy and performance framework which created challenges in terms of developing local plans in the required timescale. She also reported that limited 3-year transitional funding had been made available but there was no indication to date in regard to funding for the administration and management of the structures required to deliver community justice beyond that period. A further discussion event was to be held on 1 October 2015 for those agencies across Scotland involved in supporting the transition of criminal justice services to the CPPs, and it was hoped that further clarity would be provided at this event.

In regard to the future funding of Criminal Justice Services, the Principal Officer reported that Community Justice Authorities currently received ring fenced funding from the Scottish Government, based on an existing formula of two thirds workload and one third needs. He advised that this formula was being reviewed and that this may have a negative impact on the level of funding received in the Highlands on the basis that the new formula was to be based around economic and social indicators, with the workload element being removed. The new funding arrangements were to be implemented over a three year period, from 2017, and it was understood that there would be some mechanism to protect authorities who lose funding over that period.

In regard to the above, it was reported that as the Service's workload was almost entirely dependent on the courts, the risk was there would be an impact on the quality of service and its ability to meet its statutory obligations, and potentially on staffing if funding was reduced. However it was explained that discussions on the new funding formula were ongoing and final details were awaited.

During discussion, Members raised the following points:-

- concern at the potential impacts any future significant reduction in the ring fenced funding for Criminal Justice Social Work in Highland in terms of the service delivered and also in regard to staffing levels, and whether there would be a process of appeal on this matter;
- concern in regard to the need for more detail in regard to the proposals contained within the Bill, for example in regard to the expectation around elected members and the need for there to be reference to the third sector; and
- that at this stage as there were no timescales for the Scottish Government publishing its national strategy and performance framework, it was difficult to make representations or develop plans locally until this information was made available.

Thereafter, the Sub Committee **NOTED** the proposed model for the future model of community justice described in the report and the transition arrangements

6. Victim Support Scotland

There had been circulated Report No CJ/06/15 dated 15 August 2015 by the Operations Manager, Grampian, Highlands and Islands which outlined the services provided by Victim Support Scotland in the Highland Local Authority Area.

Mr M MacBean, Operations Manager, Grampian, Highlands and Islands, Victim Support Scotland proceeded to give a presentation on this item and advised that the organisation sought in partnership to support those who had been affected by crime, help to rebuild the damage criminal acts could cause, and ensure those individuals and communities affected by crime were listened to and had a voice.

Mr MacBean outlined the importance of support being provided to the direct victims of crime in terms of both the physical, emotional, social and economic impacts, but also to others that may be affected by an incident, such as witnesses of the crime, family members and close friends of the victim. These support services were delivered by trained staff and volunteers through both the organisation's victim support and witness services. A Victims' Fund had also been set up to help victims and their families in the immediate aftermath of crime, to cover reasonable expenses in the circumstances when no other agency could meet their needs.

In conclusion, Mr MacBean provided some facts and figures in regard to the work undertaken by the organisation in Highland since April 2015 and also the costs of delivering the service including the training and supporting volunteers.

During discussion, Members raised the following points:-

- the opportunities to improve the current system to remove barriers to reporting incidents of crime, and the campaigning role of Victim Support Scotland in this regard;
- a point in regard to whether the organisation had any plans to undertake a recruitment drive for volunteers, and the level of training and time required to become fully trained volunteer;
- that the level of work the volunteers in delivering the service was invaluable and the organisation was also commended on delivering an excellent service at relatively low cost;
- the opportunities to make the court appearances for victims and witnesses less intimidating, and also the potential for visits to be arranged for younger people to de-mystify the process; and
- in regard to the above it was suggested that this matter be discussed with the Highland Youth Parliament and it was suggested that the Youth Convener would be the appropriate contact in this regard.

The Sub Committee **NOTED** the range of support offered by Victim Support in Highland.

7. High Life Highland Contributions to Offender Learning

There had been circulated Report No CJ/07/15 dated 19 August 2015 by the Director of Care and Learning which provided a summary of High Life Highland's contributions to offender learning.

Mr M Richardson and Mr N Ross from High Life Highland proceeded to give a presentation on the organisation's work in relation to offender learning in Highland. It was reported that 23% of the population had difficulties with literacies but that this figure increased to 80% for the prison and offender population, and reference was made to the link between low literacies and repeat offending. The contribution that offender learning could make towards unlocking potential was emphasised in addition to the challenges which existed in regard to breaking the cycle of reoffending. Information was also provided on the issues around evidencing the impact of offender learning and some individual case studies were provided in this regard.

During discussion, Members raised the following points:-

- clarification on the type and frequency of contacts undertaken with offenders in prison;

- discussion around what were considered as successful outcomes in terms of breaking the cycle of reoffending, noting that in some cases this may mean preventing an individual from reoffending for a longer period than in the past; in this regard it was suggested that it was important to focus on realistic outcomes in relation to individual offenders rather than wider performance measures and the importance of targeting resources towards those individuals requiring the most support;
- a point in regard to recruitment and the number of staff and volunteers currently engaged in delivering the adult learning services for offenders in Highland and how links were maintained with offenders on their release into the community; and
- that the person centred open door policy operated in regard to offender learning through High Life Highland be welcomed.

The Sub Committee **NOTED** the presentation on High Life Highland's positive contribution to offender learning.

The meeting ended at 11.45pm