

Community Justice Partnership

Minutes of Meeting of the Community Justice Partnership held in Committee Room 2, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday 1 September 2016 at 10.30 am

Present:

Mr L Fraser, Highland Council
Mrs I McCallum, Highland Council
Mr D Millar, Highland Council
Mr G Rimell, Highland Council
T/Supt C Gough, Police Scotland
Ms L Dorward, Scottish Prison Service
Ms K McEwan, Victim Support Scotland
Ms M McShane, Community Justice Project Manager

In attendance:

Ms F Palin, Head of Adult Services, Care and Learning Service, Highland Council
Mr J Maybee, Principal Officer, Criminal Justice, Highland Council
Miss M Murray, Committee Administrator, Highland Council

Mr D Millar in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Ms I Campbell (OCB), Mr G MacKenzie, Mr M MacBean, Mr A Macdonald and Ms J Macdonald.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Overview of Community Justice

There had been circulated Report No CJP/04/16 dated 23 August 2016 by the Director of Care and Learning which provided an update on progress with the implementation of Community Justice within Highland.

In response to a question, the Community Justice Project Manager explained that more information would be added to the Community Justice Highland Facebook page as it became available. Engagement with District Partnerships would continue and it was hoped that the use of webcast/webinar would enable wider promotion of Community Justice among agencies.

During discussion, Members commented that it was necessary to engage more widely than District Partnerships and it was suggested that consideration be given to having an item on Community Justice on a full Council or appropriate strategic committee

agenda as well as Community Council and Ward Forum agendas. In addition, it would be helpful to publish information on the Council website and Member's Bulletin.

The Head of Adult Services explained that one of the ways to improve community engagement was to talk about services in a particular area. For example, work had been undertaken in some areas in terms of Community Payback Orders and local people had valued the contribution of offenders. In addition, reference was made to projects in Skye relating to the Care and Repair Scheme and a centre for people with mental health issues. It was necessary to work with the third and statutory sectors to examine the work taking place throughout Highland, both in terms of working with offenders and preventing people from offending, and to use examples to engage more with communities.

In relation to victim engagement, it was suggested that large corporate organisations might be more likely to engage than small businesses or individuals.

Thereafter, the Partnership **AGREED**:-

- i. the plans which would take the implementation of Community Justice forward within Highland; and
- ii. that consideration be given to presenting a wider report on Community Justice to an appropriate strategic committee or the full Council.

4. Governance – Community Justice Partnership

There had been circulated Report No CJP/05/16 dated 25 August 2016 by the Director of Care and Learning which outlined the duties of the Community Justice Partnership and accountability of Members of the Partnership in delivering the Community Justice Plan.

In relation to governance, it was confirmed that the Chair would rotate on an annual basis and that the Partnership would be supported by the Council's Committee Services.

Thereafter, Members having welcomed all partners having an equal voice at the table and the opportunities the Partnership presented going forward, the Partnership **AGREED** the arrangements for the Chair, operation of the meeting and accountability of all partners in delivering the Community Justice Plan for Highland.

5. Budget Update

There had been circulated Report No CJP/06/16 dated 25 August 2016 by the Director of Care and Learning which detailed additional funding from the Scottish Government for the transition to the new model of Community Justice and asked Members to consider the future use of the resource for 2017/18.

The Head of Adult Services explained that some funding had not been allocated and the Officers' Group would present proposals to the Partnership for consideration. However, Members were invited to raise any particular issues they had in mind.

During discussion, Members welcomed the spend on improving video conferencing facilities for Criminal Justice Social Work.

In response to questions, it was explained that:-

- each of the 32 Community Justice Partnerships in Scotland had to produce a Community Justice Outcomes Improvement Plan by December 2016 and one of the Community Justice Project Manager's key tasks was to gather information in that regard. The Plans would be scrutinised by the new body, Community Justice Scotland, to ensure they addressed the outcomes specified by the Scottish Government;
- the Chair and Chief Executive of Community Justice Scotland had been appointed but had not yet been announced by the Scottish Government. It was anticipated that Community Justice Scotland would be operational from 1 October 2016 but would take some time to become a fully functioning body as staff would have to be recruited. There would be a Community Justice Learning Hub but this had been put back as the Training and Development Officers currently employed through Community Justice Authorities had had their contracts extended to the end of September 2017 in recognition of the fact that it would take time for Community Justice Scotland to establish that part of its business;
- the Officers' Group was key in terms of offering support and giving clear direction to the Community Justice Project Manager. The Group had a wider membership than the Partnership and included staff from the Council's Care and Learning Service and Community Services, NHS Highland, Police Scotland, the Procurator Fiscal, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Skills Development Scotland, the Third Sector Interface and Victim Support;
- in terms of working with other local authorities, Highland was still part of the Northern Community Justice Authority which included Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Moray and the island authorities. In addition, the Scottish Government had held meetings for the Community Justice leads from each authority and these had proved useful in terms of sharing information. It was highlighted that there were still some shared services that would not be disbanded, despite the new Community Justice arrangements – eg multi-agency public protection arrangements with the island authorities and the Joint Sex Offender Project delivered by Aberdeenshire Council; and
- in relation to the how the Community Justice Partnership linked to the Community Planning Partnership structure, the Community Justice Outcomes Improvement Plan would have to take cognisance of the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan and priorities identified in Locality Plans. It was highlighted that Local Outcomes Improvement Plans would not be ready until October 2017 so the Community Justice Outcomes Improvement Plan, which had to be completed by 31 March 2017, would initially be linked to the Single Outcome Agreement.

Thereafter, Members having commented on the number of Plans and emphasised the need to minimise duplication, the Partnership **NOTED** the spend to date and that proposals for the unallocated funding would be presented to a future meeting.

6. Consultation Response on Self-evaluation/Testing Phase of Self-evaluation

There had been circulated documentation in relation to the Care Inspectorate consultation on Community Justice self-evaluation and the testing phase of self-evaluation.

The Community Justice Project Manager explained that this had been brought up at a recent meeting of the Officers' Group and it had been decided to bring it to the

Partnership for discussion. The Care Inspectorate had requested a Partnership response and she sought Members views as to how best to proceed.

In response to questions, the Community Justice Project Manager explained that the Care Inspectorate had no plans to inspect Community Justice at present. As to how long it would take to complete the self-evaluation process, there was no definitive answer.

In relation to the self-evaluation documentation, the Principal Officer, Criminal Justice, expressed concern that there was a lot of repetition and blurring of the boundaries between Community Justice and individual agency's responsibilities. Self-evaluation exercises could be helpful and informative but there was a lot of work to be done to improve the documentation and make it more streamlined and focussed on Community Justice.

The Head of Adult Services explained that the Improvement Service had a tool to evaluate how agencies worked together and it was suggested that self-evaluation should be much more focussed on joint working. The key to Community Justice was how well partners were working together to improve services for people within the criminal justice system, make neighbourhoods safer and prevent people from offending.

Members commented that the documentation was not helpful and shared officers' concerns in terms of repetition and a lack of focus. In addition, there was no information on how to quantify the success of the Partnership.

Following discussion, the Deputy Governor, HMP Inverness, suggested that she and a small group of partners work with the Community Justice Project Manager to prepare a response that reflected the views of the Partnership. The Principal Officer, Criminal Justice, also volunteered and T/Supt Gough, Police Scotland, undertook to liaise with T/Detective Chief Inspector McLaughlin in that regard. The Chair requested that the response be emailed to Members of the Partnership.

In relation to the testing phase, given the comments on the self-evaluation documentation, Members did not feel it was appropriate to take part and the Chair undertook to respond to the Care Inspectorate on behalf of the Partnership.

Thereafter, the Partnership **AGREED:-**

- i. that the Deputy Governor, HMP Inverness, the Principal Officer, Criminal Justice and a representative of Police Scotland work with the Community Justice Project Manager to prepare a consultation response that reflected the views of the Partnership and that it be emailed to Members for information; and
- ii. that the Chair respond to the Care Inspectorate indicating that the Partnership did not wish to take part in the testing phase of self-evaluation.

7. Development of Community Justice Projects

There had been circulated Report No CJP/07/16 dated 15 August 2016 by the Director of Care and Learning which advised that with the additional allocation of Section 27 monies to criminal justice social work in 2016/17, a number of community justice related projects were currently being developed in consultation and collaboration with statutory and third sector partners. The report outlined current progress in that regard.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- reference was made to the potential for links with the project supporting offenders to grow vegetables which, it was confirmed, was based at the Black Isle Animal Sanctuary;
- Members having commented that most of the projects were in the Inverness area, the Principal Officer, Criminal Justice, explained that it was necessary to work hard not to be Inner Moray Firth centric and discussions could take place to explore opportunities to develop projects in other areas;
- the benefits of different groups of people with a common interest working together were emphasised;
- Members commended the report and, referring to the previous item, suggested that some of the proposals be outlined in the response to the consultation; and
- it was important that the necessary safeguards and checks were in place to ensure that victims and perpetrators were not inadvertently brought together.

Thereafter, the Partnership:-

- i. **NOTED** the proposals and their link to community justice; and
- ii. **AGREED** that discussions take place to explore opportunities to develop projects in other areas of Highland.

8. Justice Committee Visit to HMP Inverness

Ms Linda Dorward, Deputy Governor, HMP Inverness, gave a verbal update on the Justice Committee's recent visit, which presented an opportunity to advertise the work of the Scottish Prison Service in Inverness, including work with partners and the local community. She explained that HMP Inverness was the smallest prison in Scotland and the first to be visited by the Justice Committee. The population was mainly short-term prisoners, the majority of which were from the Inverness area. There was a high occupancy rate, usually 112-120%, which meant that some prisoners had to be transferred to Grampian or the Central Belt. In addition, there was a high proportion (45% in July 2016) of remand prisoners which was cause for concern.

The Justice Committee had gone on a tour of the prison and had been impressed with the fabric of the building given its age. Discussion had taken place regarding the potential new HMP Highland and the ongoing work in relation to identifying a site. The Committee had met with Independent Prison Monitors and had been impressed with the service. They had also met with some prisoners.

Overall it had been a positive visit. Issues raised included the provision of more educational opportunities, both in and outwith the establishment. In addition, the Committee had asked about alternatives to custody given the high remand population. It was suggested that the limited use of bail by some Sheriffs could be contributing to the increase in remand prisoners and that the issue might merit discussion at a future meeting of the Partnership.

Considerable discussion then took place on the issue of remand prisoners, during which it was explained that the challenge was that there was no statutory obligation to have any input with them, despite the fact that they might be detained for longer than a convicted prisoner. Most resourcing was therefore focused on the convicted population.

In response to a question, it was confirmed that discussion had taken place in relation to the Bail Supervision Scheme, an explanation of which was provided. Bail supervision was underused, not only in the North but throughout Scotland. Whilst not for everyone, it could be very effective and, given the high numbers on remand, was considered to be something the Courts could implement more often. Electronic monitoring was being revisited which, linked with bail supervision, might give Sheriffs more confidence to use bail.

During further discussion as to how to raise awareness of the challenges being experienced and the options open to the judiciary, it was suggested that Members, as community representatives, could make contact with Sheriffs. It was explained that officers engaged regularly with the judiciary, defence agents and court liaison groups. However, it was difficult to engage with Sheriffs collectively and some were more open to alternatives to remand than others.

In response to further questions, it was confirmed that the majority of remand prisoners were acquitted. If found guilty, they often served a very short sentence as a convicted criminal as they had served a lot of time on remand. The majority of prisoners in Inverness were low risk and it was necessary to consider how to manage the remand population more effectively. In addition, it was necessary to work with the community in terms of their expectations of the criminal justice system.

The Partnership otherwise **NOTED** the update.

9. Presentation - Inverness Response Team

T/Supt Colin Gough, Police Scotland, gave a verbal presentation on the Inverness Response Team during which he summarised the background to the initiative, the aim of which was to make a difference at the frontline, benefiting the community and reducing demand on policing throughout the city. The core partners were Police Scotland, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and the Council but others participated depending on the nature of the case – eg NHS Highland, Apex Scotland, Victim Support Scotland, housing associations etc. Details were provided of the agreed operating protocol which included a daily (other than at the weekend) partnership teleconference to discuss any cases assigned to the Team and an action tracking table setting out the agreed actions and which partner was responsible. He went on to provide a case study which demonstrated the success of the Response Team.

The Partnership **NOTED** the presentation.

The meeting ended at 11.57 am.