

Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel

Minutes - 10 April 2018

Attendance

Members of the Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Barry Findlay
Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre
Cllr Linda Leach (Chair)
Cllr Lynne Moran
Cllr Anwen Muston
Cllr Rita Potter
Cllr Tersaim Singh

Witnesses

Hannah Pawley - Graduate Management Trainee CWC
Rachel King – Head of Youth Offending CWC
Carla Jordan – National Probation Service

Employees

Julia Cleary	Systems and Scrutiny Manager
Lynsey Kelly	Community Safety Manager
David Watts	Director of Adult Services
Earl Piggott-Smith	Scrutiny Officer

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

- 1 Apologies**
Apologies for absence were received from the following:

Cllr Pat Patten
- 2 Declarations of Interest**
There were no declarations of interest recorded for the meeting.
- 3 Minutes of previous meetings**
That the minutes of the meeting be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.
- 4 Matters arising**
There were no matters arising from the minutes.

5 **Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel - work programme**

Earl Piggott-Smith, Scrutiny Officer, presented the work programme report and invited panel comments. Cllr Leach advised the panel that David Jamieson, West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner, had accepted an invitation to attend a future meeting of the panel. A date will be confirmed asap.

The panel were advised to submit questions to the Scrutiny Officer in advance of the meeting and these will then to be collated and sent to Police and Crime Commissioner to include in the report to panel.

The panel discussed the idea of having a public meeting to get the views of issues of concern and these will help inform possible lines of enquiry in preparation for the meeting with the Police and Crime Commissioner.

The Chair invited panel members to contact the Scrutiny Officer if they would be interested in arranging a visit to talk to members of the Adult Safeguarding Team.

Julia Cleary, Scrutiny and Systems Manager, outlined new plans to deal with the issue of delayed reports and explained that she will be meeting with senior management team regularly to update them on the work programme. In addition, all reports will have to be submitted to modern.gov which will create automatic dates for tasks to be completed, which can be monitored. The Scrutiny and Systems Manager explained the importance of member led scrutiny in suggesting agenda topics and in shaping the content of reports.

The Scrutiny and Systems Manager explained changes to the annual scrutiny work planning event. A council wide briefing session will be held in 18 June 2018 for Directors to brief Councillors on the key priorities of the Council. A separate event will be held with only non-executive Councillors to discuss possible agenda topics for each of their panels. The Scrutiny and Systems Manager commented on the positive responses to reviews completed during the year and set out ideas for further raising the profile of scrutiny work across the Council. The Scrutiny and Systems Manager commented on the importance of scrutiny in supporting the work of the Council and the expectation that the plans will lead to reports being submitted on time to the panel in the future.

The panel discussed the importance of having the time to read reports before panel meetings. The Scrutiny and Systems Manager commented on the role of panel members in helping to shape the content of report so that they provide answers to their questions. This could include panel members commenting on draft reports. The Scrutiny and Systems Manager commented on work planned to change the culture so that scrutiny in Wolverhampton can move forward.

The panel discussed the need for training and support to newly elected councillors on developing their questioning skills. The panel commented that during induction sessions that it is important that members are clear about the role of scrutiny and advice on how to prepare for scrutiny meetings.

The panel discussed a request for the date of panel meeting on 25 September 2018 to be changed. The Scrutiny Officer explained that a report Calendar of Meetings 2018-2019 listing dates of meetings was approved by Council at a meeting in 13

December 2017. The Scrutiny Officer agreed to discuss the request for a date change with Democratic Services Manager. The issue will also need to be discussed with members of the Adults and Safer City panel about any change in the meeting schedule at the first meeting of the year.

6 **Black Country Reducing Reoffending Strategy**

Lynsey Kelly, Community Safety Manager, introduced the report and welcomed representatives from Probation Service and Community Rehabilitation Company who were involved in drafting the strategy document to the meeting. The Community Safety Manager outlined the background to the drafting of the consultation document and the overarching priorities of the organisations involved in working together to develop a joint strategy. The aim of the strategy is to reduce re-offending rates across the Black Country region.

The Community Safety Manager explained that a separate action plan for each Black Country area involved will be drafted to meet local needs. The local plans while allowing for variations but will be expected to support the delivery of the overarching priorities detailed draft consultation document. The public consultation is due to end on 8 May 2018.

The Community Safety Manager outlined the work done to consult with different community groups about the plans. The Community Safety Manager explained that a full equalities assessment will be completed before a final draft is published.

The panel discussed the identified outcomes listed in para 3.3 of the report and whether they should more Wolverhampton specific so that the public can assess the progress made and also the inclusion of key milestones. The Community Safety Manager explained that there would be a separate local action plan for Wolverhampton but agreed to discuss the issue with Board about making the suggested change to the outcomes. Any changes to the draft strategy would however need to be agreed by representatives of the other local authorities involved in the partnership.

The panel queried whether the plan was compliant with the Council's public-sector equality duty and the groups consulted about the draft strategy. The panel suggested a wide range of groups should be encouraged to respond to the consultation. The Community Safety Manager explained that WVSC had been invited to share the draft consultation document with organisations on its distribution database to get wider range of views on the plans.

The panel suggested that the reference to a 'whole family' approach in the strategy document should be changed to a whole community approach to reflect important work of other agencies and people that can have on reducing the risk of a person re-offending following their release from prison by offering different kinds of support. The Community Safety Manager agreed to propose this change to Board when they next meet to discuss responses to the public consultation.

The panel discussed the issues detailed in Appendix A of the report which list the risk factors that leads to young people getting involved in crime has been extensively researched and documented and the solutions are known – it was important to accept the need for organisations to be properly funded so that the necessary

services are provided otherwise only limited progress would be made in achieving the desired outcomes of the strategy.

The panel commented on the impact of national policy changes following major changes in the structure of the probation responsibilities and there was concern this had contributed to the increase in re-offending rates. The panel commented on the wider costs to society of not providing offenders with the necessary support to reduce the risk of them re-offending after their release from prison.

Carla Jordan, National Probation Service, accepted the point about the challenges facing the organisation in supporting vulnerable young people to change behaviour when in prison or when discharged without proper support such as suitable accommodation.

Carla Jordan highlighted the problem of supporting people with drug addiction as an example of where repeat offenders are given short custodial sentences but without drug treatment orders being granted. As a result, it is difficult for the Probation Service to make a lasting impact in tackling the causes that led to offending behaviour and provide the necessary support needed to prevent it in the time available - this situation is made more challenging by limitations of sentencing options following changes introduced by Government. The Government expects the service to meet the national target of completing 95% of pre-sentence reports within timescales set by the courts. This is a challenge for the service as it very difficult to get mental health assessments completed in time available or arrange for a proper diagnosis of their condition; if there are concerns about the health and wellbeing an offender.

The panel discussed the issue of persistent offenders and what can be done to prevent them re-offending again when released. The panel discussed the issue of limited housing options for offenders and the poor quality of the current offer. David Watts, Director of Adult Services, advised the panel that Government introduced changes to homeless legislation which places a legal duty on councils to give people meaningful support to try to resolve their homelessness, as well as introducing measures to prevent people becoming homeless in the first place. Ex-offenders have been highlighted as a key group at risk of being homeless and finding a suitable home for ex-offenders is a key part of the strategy.

The panel discussed if the current Council housing offer is properly meeting the needs of ex-offenders. The Director of Adult Services agreed to make enquiries about the implications of the changes for Wolverhampton and report the findings to the panel when received.

The panel discussed concerns about the care of prisoners and the pressures on prison staff.

Rachel King, Head of Youth Offending, CWC, commented on the work done with families of young offenders to build relationships that reduce the risk of them offending. The Head of Offending commented on the funded projects and the work of the community reference group who work directly with young people considered to be at risk of re-offending.

The panel thanked the witnesses for their evidence.

Resolved:

1. The panel comments on the draft Black Country Re-offending Strategy to be included in the consultation response.
2. The panel approved the draft strategy proposal but would welcome a response to the suggestion to develop outcomes and performance measures for Wolverhampton.
3. The Director of Adult Services to report to a future meeting about the implications of the Homelessness Reduction Act with reference to Council response to meeting the housing needs of ex-offenders.
4. The Community Safety Manager to provide the panel to receive a report on the response to consultation document from the Community Safety Board meeting in June 2018 before it is approved.
5. The panel agreed to receive a final draft of the Black Country Re-Offending Strategy report at the panel meeting on 27 September 2018.