

LONDON BOROUGH OF HARROW

CABINET – 17 OCTOBER 2013

REFERENCE FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 17 SEPTEMBER 2013

YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN 2013-14

Members received a report of the Divisional Director of Targeted Services which presented the draft Youth Justice Plan for 2013/14. This was a statutory Plan which, once agreed, would be submitted to the Youth Justice Board as part of the conditions attached to the grant received from the Ministry of Justice.

The Divisional Director of Targeted Services introduced the report and outlined the key priorities for 2013/14 as well as the key challenges. She reported that considerable work had been done since the inspection, including the recruitment of a Service Manager. The Service Manager advised Members that the culture over the last twelve months had been of a highly effective, efficient workforce who worked in partnership with key agencies. Experienced staff had been recruited who were willing to work flexibly. Considerable work had been done in terms of embedding the performance framework and a steady improvement on performance figures had been seen. She added that there were two police officers now attached to the Youth Offending Team.

Members were advised that the aim was to identify young people at risk of offending. The reduction of first time entrants was due to the work of the triage. Targeted intervention had resulted in 98.2% of no further offending by first time entrants. It was important for young people to understand the impact of their offending. The Corporate Director of Children and Families stated that her team managers had turned the performance of the Youth Offending Team around. There had been a root and branch review and the result was a motivated team.

In response to a Member's question, the Corporate Director advised that there was a wide range of mentors working with young people and work had been done with different ethnic groups. A number of young people who had been through the criminal justice system were now mentors. The Council was involved in a national citizenship programme. She stated that more work on cross identity was required and that she would provide the Member with further information on this issue.

A Member commented that he had found the report confusing and difficult to identify what was planned for the next year or two. The Divisional Director advised that the plan was written in order to adhere to a nationally prescribed format.

Referring to page 217 of the report a Member questioned whether the reduction in number of offenders translated into fewer cases. The Corporate Director advised that the early intervention service had been built from scratch and case loads had been too high. She personally monitored caseloads every week and the service was in transition.

A Member reiterated concerns that he had raised previously in relation to action plans having no baseline figures. He stated it was not clear as to the starting point

and where the service was going. Members need to be clear as to what they should focus on. The Corporate Director advised that this information was not a requirement for this statutory plan but that she would provide Members with this information.

The representative of Harrow Youth Parliament congratulated officers on the work done making particular reference to the figures. She questioned the strategy for dealing with young people not in education and what happened to the young people once they reached the age of 17. The Divisional Director advised that the Youth Offending Team Management Board was in the process of developing an action plan for this small number of individuals. On reaching the age of 17, the Divisional Director advised that follow up depended on each individual, for example, some may be referred to probation. The Corporate Director added that she believed that early intervention work would pick up young people at an earlier stage.

In terms of partnership working, a Member expressed the view that the new Borough Commander was robust in dealing with offenders. The Divisional Director advised that it had been agreed that in circumstances where it was proving difficult to engage with a young person, the a member of the Youth Offending Team would make a home visit accompanied by a police officer. This would then reinforce the importance of the work to the parent(s).

The Chair thanked the officers for their attendance and responses and re-emphasised the importance of baseline data.

RESOLVED: That the Committee's comments be forwarded to Cabinet for consideration.

FOR CONSIDERATION

Background Documents:

Draft minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 17 September 2013

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