

CABINET MINUTES

17 OCTOBER 2013

Chairman: * Councillor Susan Hall

Councillors:

* Kam Chana	* Janet Mote
* Tony Ferrari	* Paul Osborn
* Stephen Greek	* Simon Williams
* Manji Kara	* Stephen Wright
* Barry Macleod-Cullinane	

**Non Executive
Non Voting
Councillors:**

* Graham Henson	* David Perry
* Thaya Idaikkadar	

**In attendance:
(Councillors)**

Mano Dharmarajah	Minute 698
Asad Omar	Minute 698
William Stoodley	Minute 698

* Denotes Member present

RECOMMENDED ITEMS

699. Key Decision - Youth Justice Plan 2013-14

The Portfolio Holder for Children and Schools introduced the draft Youth Justice Plan for 2013-14, a statutory plan, which when approved by Council would be submitted to the Youth Justice Board as part of the conditions attached to the grant received from the Ministry of Justice.

The Portfolio Holder explained that the purpose of the Youth Justice Plan was to outline how it would meet the key objective of reducing young offending. She added that the Plan had been produced by a multi-agency group and had

had the support of Council's statutory partners, which was accountable to Harrow Chief Executives' Group. She outlined its key aspects, as follows:

- the partners had been successful in stopping young people from entering the criminal justice system but there was work to be done in this area. It was important that the youth were made aware of the impact of a criminal record on their future prospects;
- there was a need to reduce the youth from re-offending and stringent processes were required;
- there was a need to reduce the number of young people in custody.

Cabinet was briefed on the work carried out by the Youth Offending Service and that its aim was to protect the public – young people themselves, both as perpetrators and victims – and to prevent the perpetrators from offending. The Portfolio Holder outlined some of the successes and the challenges that lay ahead and she set out the various figures detailed in the Plan. A key achievement had been a reduction in the number of first time entrants to the youth justice system but the challenges that lay ahead included the need to improve the quality and timeliness of assessments, a stable and empowered workforce, increasing the number of young offenders in education, training and employment, and sharing of resources with other local authorities. Positive intervention was key, including the work being carried out with the Third Sector. A triage system had helped reduce the number of young people entering the system. There was also a need to improve on the rates of young offenders in education, training and employment.

The Portfolio Holder explained that attached to the Youth Justice Plan was an action plan, an ongoing flexible tool which reflected real time targets. She was pleased to report that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had recognised that good processes were being put in place to improve the lives of young people. She added that the action plan was forward looking in that:

- due to pressures and anticipated reductions in the grant received, discussions with other local authorities had been initiated with a view to discussing joint working;
- the volunteer base needed to be expanded and more group work was essential;
- it was important to that the education status of young people was identified.

The Portfolio Holder commended the report to Cabinet and, together with the Corporate Director of Children and Families, responded to a number of questions from the non-voting non-Executive Cabinet Members, who welcomed the positive aspects of the report given the challenges facing the Council and its partners, as follows:

- the Youth Justice Board had set out the parameters for keeping records on how the grant was spent. Upon additional questions from a non-voting non-Executive Cabinet Member, the Corporate Director explained the meaning of 'in kind' and offered to take the Member through the budget in detail. Additionally, a typographical error was noted;
- best practice in other local authorities was being looked at with a view to dealing with the challenges facing young people in their transition to adulthood, including the challenges facing young offenders with speech and language learning difficulties. The sharing of resources amongst authorities was being explored. The Portfolio Holder added that one of the issues that had been flagged up was that over half of the number of young people in Harrow did not have English as their first language which required interpreters thereby impacting on the available resources. The Portfolio Holder for Adults and Housing encouraged work across Directorates and partners thereby breaking down silos with a view to ensuring that young adults were independent before reaching adulthood to help improve their lives;
- an additional sum of money, £0.5m, had been made available for Children Services in order to allow more social workers to be appointed and to reduce the burden of the case load on individual officers. In relation to the issues around recruitment for child and adolescent mental health worker post, and in recognition of the importance of addressing mental health, the administration was in discussion with CAHMS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) with a view to finding capacity within existing resources;
- mental health and the troubled behaviour of young people were key issues and in order to strengthen the relationship between the two agencies - CAHMS and Youth Offending Team - it was important to have a hands on approach of which field visits and networking were key ingredients. The Portfolio Holder added that she would be visiting the agencies which was one of her key priorities;
- the administration appreciated that the police too faced budget pressures but it was expected that the strong relationship between the administration and the police, which had been established over a number of years would help ensure that the partnership work in this area continued to bring positive outcomes for children and young people. Prevention was better than cure and the joint working would assist.

The Portfolio Holder thanked the Corporate Director of Children and Families and her staff for their work and it was

Resolved to RECOMMEND: (to Council)

That the Youth Justice Plan 2013-14 be approved and submitted to the Youth Justice Board, as part of the Youth Justice Board grant conditions for 2013/14.

Reason for Recommendation: To meet the requirements of the Youth Justice Board (YJB), the body responsible for monitoring youth justice services in England. Every authority was required by the YJB to produce a Plan setting out how it would meet the key objective of reducing youth offending. The YJP is a Statutory Plan and requires the approval of Council.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: As set out in the Youth Justice Plan.

Conflict of Interest relating to the matter declared by Cabinet Member / Dispensation Granted: None.

[Call-in does not apply to this recommendation as the decision is reserved to Council.]