

LONDON BOROUGH OF HARROW

CABINET – 17 SEPTEMBER 2015

REFERENCE FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 16 SEPTEMBER 2015

HARROW YOUTH OFFENDING PARTNERSHIP YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN 2015-2018

This Committee considered a report which presented the draft Youth Justice Plan (The Plan) 2015-2018 setting out how its outcomes would be delivered and what were its challenges and priorities

The Interim Corporate Director of Children and Families addressed the Committee and explained that the Youth Justice Plan was a 3 year plan and would be submitted to the Youth Justice Board in August 2015 prior to Full Council approval in December 2015.

The Head of Service – Youth Offending also addressed the Committee and made the following points:

- The three Key Performance Indicators for the Youth Offending Team, as set by the Youth Justice Board were reducing first time entrants; reducing re-offending and reducing the use of custody. Performance against these targets was good;
- There was a decrease in the number of young people being found guilty of a crime in 2014-15;
- The Harrow Youth Offending Team Annual Report fed into this Plan;
- The financial grant which was provided and associated with the work set out in the Plan would only be provided once the Plan had been finalised and agreed;
- The Plan addressed a number of key issues. These included structure and governance, partnership arrangements, use of resources, value for money and performance. It also reported on the key achievements and challenges.
- There had been a decrease in the number of youth remanded into custody. However those who had been remanded into custody were now being sentenced for longer periods for more serious crimes;
- There was increased compliance with national standards;
- The Youth Offending Service had been re-structured. There were now permanent members of staff as opposed to temporary members of staff. This meant that staff were better able to support young people;

- It was acknowledged that there were still some challenges in relation to assessments conducted and consistency.

The Portfolio Holder Assistant for Childrens' Health and Social Care addressed the Committee and reported that in her view the report was excellent and provided a good account of the issues in Harrow.

The following questions were made by Members and responded to accordingly:

- How was radicalisation of young people being addressed?

This was a very important issue. The Council had a bespoke officer who dealt with this issue. Training was also provided to members of the Youth Offending Team. If anyone was suspected of being radicalised they were referred to the appropriate Panel who could signpost them to the relevant support networks and to gather soft intelligence. There was a comprehensive Council approach and the Youth Offending Team played an important role in delivering this broader strategy.

- The number of female youths committing crimes in Harrow appeared to be higher than the national average. Was this significant?

It was believed that more young females were becoming involved in gangs in Harrow. There would be a peer review taking place on gangs in Harrow and it was expected that this issue would be reviewed in more depth to understand the issues.

- How would the issues surrounding the core group of youths who committed crime be tackled? Was it a case of youths copying parents' behavior particularly where parents had been remanded in custody for offences?

The Council would utilise a re-offending toolkit which would provide up to date data which the Council could use to address these issues. It was a fair comment to say that re-offending involved complex issues and there were multiple factors which impacted upon this.

- The re-offending rates were going up although the cohort was going down. Did this indicate that the situation was getting worse?

Whilst the re-offending rate had increased the cohort had decreased. This meant that the data provided was disproportionate and had to be viewed in this context.

- How representative were the quotes which had been utilised about the Youth Offending Team in the Youth Justice Plan.

The quotes were reflective of random feedback obtained from the Council's partners and from young people. The quality of survey responses did differ. It was important to remember that it was difficult for young people to articulate their responses particularly when they had faced immense challenges.

- Did the report reflect how self-aware the Council was on this issue?

It was believed that the Council was very self-aware of its performance in this area. Whilst the Council was not perfect the Youth Offending Services Team had improved considerably although it was recognised that there would still be challenges in the future.

- What was the relationship between the Youth Offending Team and the Youth Offending Management Board?

The Youth Offending Management Team was made up of managers and deputy managers. This Team was accountable to the Youth Offending Management Board who reported to the Youth Justice Board. The Youth Justice Board was a national organisation overseeing all Youth Offending Management Teams across the country.

Resolved to RECOMMEND: (to Cabinet)

That the Harrow Youth Offending Partnership Youth Justice Plan 2015-2018 be approved.

Background Documents:

None

Contact Officer:

Vishal Seegoolam, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Tel: 020 8424 1883

Email: vishal.seegoolam@harrow.gov.uk