

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL
EDUCATION, CHILDREN AND ADULT SERVICES COMMITTEE
CRIMINAL JUSTICE SUB COMMITTEE

Minutes of Meeting of the Criminal Justice Sub-Committee held Committee Room 1 in Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Wednesday 4 March, 2015 at 2pm.

PRESENT

Mr A Christie
Mr K Gowans (substitute)
Mr M Green
Mrs M Paterson

Mr G Ross
Ms J Slater
Ms M Smith
Ms K Stephen (substitute)

Officials in attendance:-

Ms F Palin, Head of Adult Services, Care and Learning Service
Mr J Maybee, Principal Officer, Criminal Justice, Care and Learning Service
Ms S Macdonald, Criminal Justice QA, Research and Information Officer, Care and Learning Service
Ms A Macrae, Committee Administrator, Corporate Development Service

1. Appointment of Chair

On the motion of Mrs M Paterson seconded by Ms M Smith, the Sub Committee **AGREED** to appoint Mr A Christie as Chair for the meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mrs M Davidson, Ms J Douglas, Mrs D Mackay, Ms L Munro, and Ms G Ross.

3. Declarations of Interest

Item 5: Mr A Christie and Mrs M Paterson (non-financial)

4. Performance Report – Quarter 2 2014/15 Northern Community Justice Authority & Quarter 3 The Highland Council 2014/15

There had been circulated Report CJ/01/15 dated 25 February 2015 by the Director of Care and Learning which provided the most recently available performance and monitoring information for Criminal Justice Services. The report covered Quarter 2 as reported to the Northern Community Justice Authority and Quarter 3 as reported to the Chief Executive, Highland Council respectively.

Arising from the report, it was noted that the return rate in Highland for the exit questionnaires given to offenders at the end of their Community Payback Orders (CPOs) with supervision was relatively low in common with other local authorities in Scotland.

It was explained that the questionnaire generated important qualitative information and therefore further consideration was required as to how to improve the response rate to

the above including identifying any barriers which may exist in this regard.

In regard to the above it was proposed that the potential for partner agencies such as Highland Homeless Trust, Citizens Advice Bureau, Apex, and Advocacy Highland to engage with offenders be investigated with a view to improving the response rates. Reference was also made to proposals to set up focus groups with a view to having direct engagement with offenders as an alternative means of gathering information and discussion followed on the difficulties associated with providing incentives to encourage offenders to attend these sessions.

Following further discussion, the Sub-Committee **NOTED** the performance report and **AGREED** that an update be provided to the next meeting on the opportunities to engage with partner organisations with a view to generating additional feedback from offenders.

5. Women Offenders

Declarations of Interest - Mr A Christie declared a non-financial interest in this item as General Manager and Company Secretary of Inverness, Badenoch & Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau and Mrs M Paterson declared a non-financial interest in this item as a member of both the Inverness and Grampian Prison Visiting Committees, but having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that their interests did not preclude them from taking part in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No CJ/02/15 dated 16 February 2015 by the Director of Care and Learning which provided an update on the Criminal Justice Service women's programme and developments regarding women sent to custody.

During discussion, Members raised the following points:-

- that the outcome of the ongoing evaluation of the Criminal Justice Service's women's programme be reported to a future meeting of the Sub-Committee;
- it was suggested that the above evaluation would provide important evidence to support and sustain the programme going forward into the future;
- it would also be helpful for the Sub-Committee to receive a presentation in regard to the women's programme with the emphasis on its interventions and outcomes;
- that the Scottish Government's decision not to proceed with the development of a new women's prison at Inverclyde and to instead to consult on a three tier model to provide smaller regional and community-based facilities should be welcomed;
- in terms of numbers of women in prison in Grampian and Highland as at 26 January 2015 as set out in section 3.5 of the report, it was suggested that the figures may be misleading in that only 3 of the 52 offenders referred to were accommodated in HMP Inverness; discussion followed on the issues associated with female prisoners being located outwith the Highland area and away from their families and children;
- in regard to the above it was noted that currently the only women offenders accommodated in HMP Inverness were those due for release and therefore representations should continue to be made to increase the number of women offenders that could be accommodated at HMP Inverness; and
- there was a need to be innovative in regard to the type of interventions and initiatives developed with a view to breaking the cycle of reoffending for those

persistent women offenders in Highland and which potentially could secure a share of the additional £1.5m funding announced by the Scottish Government which it had been made clear could not be used to sustain existing projects.

Thereafter, the Sub-Committee **NOTED** the developments in respect of women offenders, and **AGREED** that the outcome of the evaluation of the women's programme be reported to a future meeting, and a relevant presentation on the programme be arranged in this regard.

6. Redesigning the Community Justice System across the Criminal Justice Service in Highland.

There had been circulated Report No CJ/03/15 dated 17 February 2015 by the Director of Care and Learning which updated Members on progress in relation to the redesign of Community Justice in Scotland and the transition arrangements.

It was explained that the Community Justice Authorities (CJA) would cease to exist with Community Justice being delivered locally through Community Planning Partnerships (CPP). Further to this the Scottish Government had published its latest consultation document on the redesign, Future Model for Community Justice in Scotland, seeking further responses to specific aspects of the new model.

The key elements of the future model were:

- local strategic planning and delivery of community justice services through CPPs;
- duties on a defined set of partner bodies (including local authorities, NHS boards and Police Scotland) to engage in this local strategic planning and delivery with accountability for planning and performance residing at this level;
- the creation of a national body, Community Justice Scotland, to provide leadership for the sector, opportunities for innovation, learning and development and independent professional assurance to Scottish Ministers on the collective achievement of community justice outcomes across Scotland; and
- a focus on collaboration, including the opportunity to commission, manage or deliver services nationally where appropriate.

During discussion Members raised the following issues:-

- clarification was sought on the implications associated with any changes to Community Justice Authority funding in respect of the grants awarded to third sector organisations;
- discussion around the next steps and the need to consider how the Sub-Committee would link with in with the partner bodies involved in the local planning of community justice services and also the CPP;
- issues around the potential role of the District Partnerships and also the Community Safety Partnership in regard to the new arrangements;
- clarification as to what services were to be delivered at a national and a local level reference being made to potential local impacts associated with this issue in terms funding and in regard to the delivery of services on the ground;
- issues around progress with the development of a national performance framework; and,
- it was noted that a further report would be submitted to the main Education, Children and Adult Services Committee on this matter and it was suggested that it would be helpful if that report explored the issues raised by Members in more

detail.

The Sub-Committee **NOTED** the proposed model for the future model of community justice described in the report and the transition arrangements.

The meeting ended at 2.40pm.