

CARE SERVICES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 7.00 pm on 22 July 2015

Present:

Councillor Judi Ellis (Chairman)
Councillor Pauline Tunncliffe (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Ruth Bennett, Kevin Brooks, Hannah Gray,
David Jefferys, Terence Nathan, Charles Rideout and
Tim Stevens

Rosalind Luff

Also Present:

Councillor Stephen Carr, Leader of the Council
Councillor Robert Evans, Portfolio Holder for Care Services
Councillor Peter Fortune, Portfolio Holder for Education
Councillor Tom Philpott, Executive Support Assistant to the Portfolio
Holder for Education

18 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Diane Smith and Councillor Stephen Wells. Apologies were also received from Mary Cooke and Councillor Tim Stevens JP attended as her substitute.

Apologies were received from Linda Gabriel. Apologies were also received from Catherine Osborn and Rosalind Luff attended as her substitute.

19 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Pauline Tunncliffe declared that she was a foster carer of two young people accessing the Youth Offending Service.

20 QUESTIONS TO THE CARE SERVICES PDS CHAIRMAN FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS ATTENDING THE MEETING

No questions had been received.

21 QUESTIONS TO THE CARE SERVICES PORTFOLIO HOLDER FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS ATTENDING THE MEETING

No questions had been received.

22 FINDINGS OF THE FULL JOINT INSPECTION OF YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICES WORK IN BROMLEY 2015 AND POST INSPECTION IMPROVEMENT PLAN

This item was held in joint session with the Education PDS Committee and the Public Protection and Safety PDS Committee and with the agreement of Members, Councillor Nicholas Bennett JP was appointed Chairman for the joint session.

Report ED15104

The Chairman was pleased to welcome the Chief Executive, the Assistant Director: Safeguarding and Social Care and the Interim Head of the Youth Offending Service to the meeting to support the Care Services, Education and Public Protection and Safety PDS Committees in considering the findings of the Full Joint Inspection of Youth Offending Services work in Bromley 2015 and post-Inspection Improvement Plan.

The Chief Executive gave a presentation providing a brief outline of the history and work of the Youth Offending Service and outlining the key recommendations from the Full Joint Inspection.

The Youth Offending Service had been judged as 'Failed/Inadequate' following an HM Inspectorate of Probation Inspection in November 2006. A range of service improvements were implemented and the service was judged as 'Improving' following a re-Inspection in January 2008, and as 'Minimum Improvement required' following a full HM Inspectorate of Probation Inspection in November 2011. The Care Quality Commission inspected the service in November 2011 and rated it 'Good'.

The Local Authority was notified in early January 2015 that an inspection of the Youth Offending Service would take place from 19th January 2015, as a result of a number of concerns being identified around the Local Authority's performance in certain key areas. Four HM Inspectorate of Probation Inspectors worked with Youth Offending Service Officers during the first week of the inspection to review a short list of 34 cases out of a cohort of approximately 60 young people. The Inspectors then returned to the Local Authority for a further week from 2nd February 2015 to review the partnership arrangements in place to support young offenders, after which the Local Authority had been advised that the outcome of the inspection was poor and that there were a number of areas for improvement, including a more robust Quality Assessment Framework and improved performance management and data reporting processes.

The Chief Executive acknowledged that he had "taken his eye off the ball" as a number of issues affecting the Youth Offending Service had not been identified prior to the Full Joint Inspection, and there had been no indication that the Local Authority should be concerned. It was now recognised that there had been a lack of adequate data provided to the Youth Offending

Service Operational Board, which had meant that a range of issues with the Youth Offending Service had not been identified, and a meeting of the Youth Offending Service Strategic Board had not been convened. Following publication of the final report of the inspection, a number of actions had been taken by the Local Authority to deliver the required service improvement. This included the creation of a single, strengthened Youth Offending Service Management Board with senior representation which combined the Youth Offending Service Strategic and Operational Boards, and the development of an Improvement Plan which incorporated the outcomes of 'Leadership and Partnership', 'Quality', 'Looked After Children' and 'The Voice of the Young Person'. The Local Authority was working closely with the Youth Justice Board to implement the Youth Offending Service Improvement Plan and improve quality assurance and data processes, and an Improvement Board which met on a monthly basis and reported to the Youth Offending Service Management Board had been established to monitor progress. The Local Authority was participating in a Youth Justice Board pilot scheme for live data tracking, and could now access up-to-date information on service users. A mock inspection would be undertaken by the Youth Justice Board in January 2016 to assess the impact of these changes in preparation for a re-inspection by HM Inspectorate of Probation, which would take place a minimum of one year from the publication of the final report of the inspection.

A Member noted that the inspection had identified the need for the Head of Youth Support to ensure that management oversight was effective. Members were very concerned that the Youth Offending Service Strategic Board had not been convened for over a year prior to the Inspection, and underlined the need to involve Members in monitoring and improvement processes and in providing challenge through both the Youth Offending Service Management Board and committee scrutiny. A Co-opted Member noted the introduction of the Children and Families Act in September 2014 and was concerned that a meeting of the Youth Offending Service Strategic Board had not been convened at this time to consider the implications this would have for young people accessing youth offending services. The Chief Executive confirmed that a range of reporting mechanisms were now in place including the strengthened Youth Offending Service Management Board which met on a monthly basis. Regular reports were made to the internal Children's Board forum, which was chaired by the Leader of the Council with representation from senior Members, and reports would also be made to Education, Care Services and Public Protection and Safety PDS Committees and other committees where appropriate. Members generally agreed that the Portfolio Holder for Education should represent Members on the Youth Offending Service Management Board, and that an update on the Youth Offending Service Improvement Plan be included as a standing item on the agenda for all future meetings of the Education PDS Committee.

The interim Head of the Youth Offending Service confirmed that there had been a staffing review of the Youth Offending Service following the Inspection, after which a number of staff had chosen to leave the Local Authority. A process had been undertaken to recruit permanent staff to the Youth Offending Service under the proposed new Departmental structure, and all

posts, with the exception of one, had now been appointed to, with the newly recruited staff members due to start in post in July to September 2015. A robust training package had been developed in partnership with the Youth Justice Board to support both new and existing members of staff to deliver consistent service provision across the Youth Offending Service, which would include the necessary skills to deliver strong case working, and high quality supervision and front-line management support. There was currently a vacancy for a Parenting Officer, and the Assistant Director: Safeguarding and Social Care reported that consideration was being given to whether to appoint a single Parenting Officer or if the service could be commissioned more effectively through the Bromley Children Project or delivered through links to the Tackling Troubled Families programme. Very few Parenting Orders had been issued to families and carers of young people currently accessing the Youth Offending Service, and this had been raised as a concern with the Courts.

In considering the proposed new Departmental structure for the Youth Offending Service, a Member noted the need to ensure that health workers shared key information about young people with case managers, including misuse of Class A drugs and low level self-harm. The Interim Head of the Youth Offending Service confirmed that health workers had a duty to share information which affected service users and might prevent offending or re-offending, and that further information on this process would be provided to Members following the meeting. A Member highlighted issues around the way the Police operated within the Youth Offending Service, as there was still no on-site access to the Police National Computer, and another Member was concerned at the lack of joined-up working between the Youth Offending Service and other services and partners. The Assistant Director: Safeguarding and Social Care confirmed that work was being undertaken to support services to work more closely together to ensure the needs of young people were met in an holistic way. This included the development of links with the Tackling Troubled Families programme, through which families could access a wide range of support, such as parenting advice. Members generally agreed that there should be a policy outlining the responsibilities of partners contributing to the Youth Offending Service provision to share information and work together, and that this should be taken forward as a priority.

In response to a question from a Member, the Assistant Director: Safeguarding and Social Care emphasised that the level of reoffending by Looked After Children had reduced since 2013, but that it was not possible to attribute this reduction to any targeted work streams across the Youth Offending Service or Children's Social Care services due to poor evidence around the interventions taken. There was a dedicated section of the Improvement Plan relating to the needs of Looked After Children, and the Independent Reviewing Officer service had responsibility for scrutinising casework pertaining to Looked After Children who were accessing the Youth Offending Service to ensure that appropriate actions to reduce reoffending were reflected in each Looked After Child's care plan.

A Member underlined the role of identifying key performance indicators in supporting performance monitoring and delivering sustained service improvement. The Chief Executive reported that a range of actions had been taken to support sustained service improvement. The draft Improvement Plan had been developed in consultation with a range of key stakeholders to include measurable outcomes. A performance score card for the Youth Offending Service was also being developed in partnership with the Youth Justice Board, and the Improvement Board met on a monthly basis to review performance data gathered through the Youth Justice Board audit tool. The learning from the recent Inspection had been applied to other services to support continuous improvement across the Local Authority.

In discussion, Members generally endorsed the Improvement Plan, which was a 'live' document and would continue to be updated.

The Chairman led Members in thanking Officers for the excellent work that had been undertaken to develop the Youth Offending Service Improvement Plan in response to the issues raised by the Full Joint Inspection of Youth Offending Services.

RESOLVED that Members comments on the Full Joint Inspection of Bromley Youth Offending Service be noted and the Improvement Plan be endorsed.

The Meeting ended at 9.10 pm

Chairman