

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Commission held at County Hall, Glenfield on Wednesday, 12 April 2023.

PRESENT

Mr M. T. Mullaney CC (in the Chair)

Mr. T. Barkley CC
Mr. S. J. Galton CC
Mr. T. Gillard CC
Mrs. A. J. Hack CC
Mr. R. Hills CC

Mr. J. Morgan CC
Mrs. R. Page CC
Mr. T. J. Pendleton CC
Mr J. Poland CC
Mr. T. J. Richardson CC

69. Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2023 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

70. Question Time.

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 34.

71. Questions asked by members under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).

72. Urgent Items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

73. Declarations of interest in respect of items on the agenda.

The Chairman invited members who wished to do so to declare any interest in respect of items on the agenda for the meeting.

No declarations were made.

74. Declarations of the Party Whip in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 16.

There were no declarations of the party whip.

75. Presentation of Petitions under Standing Order 35.

The Chief Executive reported that no petitions had been received under Standing Order 35.

76. Youth Justice Plan 2023 - 2026

The Commission considered a report of the Director of Children and Family Services which presented the draft Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2023 – 2026 for comment prior to it being presented to Cabinet and thereafter full Council for approval in May. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 8' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- (i) The Plan which clearly set out the strategic direction of the County Council for youth justice services was welcomed. Members also welcomed the resources invested into the Service which were not entirely financial but involved the sharing of personnel amongst partner agencies which supported a more joined up approach.
- (ii) Members raised concerns regarding the impact on the Service of supporting children in private children's homes located in the area and the limits on the Council's ability to plan for and manage this at a strategic level, there being no requirement for the County Council to be notified when a new children's home was being established in the area. It was noted that the Service had regular contact with those homes it commissioned which included quality assurance visits and providing support around managing child exploitation.
- (iii) Members were pleased to see the continued emphasis on prevention, but it was questioned how this had been affected given the reduction in a range of youth support services over the last decade. It was noted that the change in approach by the Council to bring together early help and children's social care services had meant resources could be better targeted. A triage process had been adopted which meant all support options could be considered in a more co-ordinated and consolidated way. Support might be provided by the County Council's Youth Justice Services (YJS), or by a partner or within the community. This provided for a more creative and individual approach to meet a young person's needs. Merging these services had also meant a wider approach could be taken to not only supporting young offenders or those at risk of offending but their families too.
- (iv) There had been a national increase in serious youth violent crime and the National Audit Office had predicted a doubling of the number of young people in custody as a result. Members were pleased to note that numbers in Leicestershire remained low with 3 young offenders now being in custody in the area, but that this was the highest it had been in several years. Members noted that much work was being done through the violence reduction network to tackle the issue, particularly around knife crime, and to ensure the safety of staff. The Lead Member emphasised that the Service not only worked with young offenders and their families, but also reached out to work with families across neighbourhoods to take preventative action and reduce the risk of wider escalation across communities.
- (v) A Member commented that the extent of support available to young offenders and the preventative work taking place was to be commended but suggested there was a need to improve the focus given to victims to ensure

though the process their voice was still heard, as the impact of youth crime could still be severe.

- (vi) A Member suggested that it would be helpful for the YJS to share more information about the work it undertook in practice to deliver the Plans objectives. It was recognised that communities often saw the immediate response of the police to incidents (for example in response to cases of anti-social behaviour), but work taking place with those young people and their families behind the scenes was less well known. There was therefore the potential misconception that little, or nothing was being done by the Authority to address such issues.
- (vii) Young people being supported by the Service and its partners often had complex needs that were neither quick nor easy to resolve. Managing the public's expectations where individuals were involved in cases of ASB was therefore an important part of the process. Members acknowledged that an immediate resolution was not always possible.
- (viii) In response to questions raised, the Director confirmed that the County Council's YJS had long standing robust relations with the City Council's YJS which ensured good cross boundary arrangements were in place. Links through the Youth Justice Board (YJB) and other partners, such as the Police and health were also well established. It was recognised that schools continued to provide the highest number of referrals to the Service and therefore relationships with both maintained and academy schools remained a priority. There was also contact with Multi Academy Trusts, some of whom had shown a keen interest in building links with the YJS at a strategic level.
- (ix) Whilst there were some parents that chose not to engage with the Service this did not mean they were not receiving support from a partner agency. Members commented on the number of agencies that could be involved in supporting an individual that could sometimes be overwhelming and confusing. Members were reassured that working in partnership the Service sought to identify with whom and with which agency a trusted relationship had already been established and to utilise and build on that, rather than seek to always bring in new persons from other services. This was better for individuals and ensured the greatest impact in the support provided.
- (x) Members challenged what information was provided about what support was available through the YJS. It was noted that the Youth Justice self-service website had been updated to make this more accessible to both parents and young people. This had been well tested to ensure it was easy to navigate. The support available had also been promoted in several ways through partner contacts, through workshops held with district councils within communities, and on social media.
- (xi) Data sharing amongst partners helped to ensure duplication of effort was minimised. As partners in the police, probation and health were co-located in County Hall, this enabled regular discussions around individual cases to be held.

- (xii) Recruitment and retention were an issue for the service, and much was being done to make positions attractive to applicants. This was a national issue that affected a number of service areas.
- (xiii) Concerns were raised regarding Government grant funding and Members noted that this had still not yet been confirmed for the current financial year. Whilst it had been confirmed that this would not be less than the amount received in 2022/23, members suggested this made planning difficult and raised concerns about the lack of certainty for the future which impacted longer term planning.
- (xiv) Members commented that attendance by all partners at Youth and Justice Management Board meetings was vital and were pleased to hear that attendance data was now being collected and reported to the YJB as a key performance indicator. A member requested that an overview of attendance performance be including in the next report to the Commission.

RESOLVED:

That the comments now made be presented to the Cabinet for consideration at its meeting on 24th April 2023.

77. Corporate Ways of Working Programme Update

The Commission considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which provided an update on the delivery of the Council's Ways of Working programme following a request made by the Commission at its meeting in November 2022. The report set out progress made against the recommendations of the informal scrutiny task and finish group which reported to the Commission in March 2022, and the impact of the Programme on the Council's property assets.

Arising from discussion the following points were made:

- (i) Members commented on the benefits of the Ways of Working (WOW) Programme which provided greater flexibility for staff and which it was recognised would be beneficial in addressing recruitment and retention pressures across all service areas. Many organisations were now adopting a hybrid approach to where people work and a Member commented that it would no longer be possible, or desirable, to return to a full time office based approach.
- (ii) In response to questions raised, Members noted that the floor space calculated as being necessary for County Hall staff within the original WOW business case had been between 5,000 and 7,500 square metres. A Member commented that this was significantly less than what the current County Hall campus provided and queried what was taken into account in making this assessment. The Director undertook to provide more information after the meeting.
- (iii) It was noted that floor space requirements were evolving and being reviewed as the programme was rolled out service area by service area. Members acknowledged that time was needed to allow staff to adapt and determine what space was necessary to support future working practices.

Some teams were being brought into new collaborative work space for the first time and they would require a period of adjustment.

- (iv) The Lead Member commented that a balance needed to be struck between letting parts of County Hall that had been identified as not being needed and ensuring some space was retained to meet future requirements. He also emphasised the need to allow managers time to work with their teams to ensure the best service delivery model was adopted.
- (v) A Member suggested that entrance numbers to the County Hall campus did not help in determining the extent to which the building was still being used by County Council staff, given that large sections had now been let to external partners. A Member requested that the entrance numbers be broken down to provide a clearer picture of how the Council's staff were working.
- (vi) In response to a question regarding the retention of space to accommodate the collections hub, Members noted that a holistic approach had been taken regarding the use of County Hall when developing the WOW programme. Other projects, including the collections hub, had therefore been taken into account when considering campus requirements. This would continue as the programme was rolled out as, whilst separate projects that needed to be assessed individually, there were obvious overlaps and every effort would be made to ensure future need as well as current need for Council business would be accommodated. The Director undertook to re-circulate the slides from a presentation provided to all Members in December 2022 on the MTFs and the Council's Property Assets which included details of the County Hall Campus Strategy linked to the WOW programme.
- (vii) In response to questions raised, the Director confirmed that generic office space was being let (with no tailoring to meeting particular organisations' needs), and that this was generally on a 3 to 5 year lease and so there was flexibility for long term changes to meet future Council requirements if that proved necessary. Members noted there were currently 6 tenants now located within County Hall and each were charged a proportionate sum to cover costs for repair and maintenance of common areas and day to day running costs.
- (viii) Leicestershire residents and specifically the Council's customers were at the heart of the development of the WOW programme. Engagement with managers from the outset had been based around what services might look like in future to meet their needs. This process had gone well, and managers were regularly reviewing this to ensure office adaptations accommodated this.
- (ix) A Member commented that the report did not provide clarity around timescales for the delivery of the WOW programme, and it was requested that further detail on this be provided in a future report to the Commission.
- (x) Ensuring that the programme was inclusive of all Council staff had been identified as a key risk at the outset. Efforts had therefore been made to ensure communication was wide, involving the Council's various worker groups (e.g. the disability LGBT+ and BAME workers' groups) and also

those staff not traditionally office based. The breadth of services provided by the County Council meant that some would inevitable more affected by the changes than others.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the update now provided be noted;
- (b) That more information be provided to Commission Members after the meeting on the current identified floor space requirement for County Council staff and how this was calculated.
- (c) That in the next update to the Commission, County Hall entrance numbers be broken down to provide a clearer picture of how the Council's own staff were working.
- (d) That a copy of the slides from the presentation provided to all Members in December 2022 on the MTFs and the Council's Property Assets which included details of the County Hall Campus Strategy linked to the WOW programme be re-circulated to Members of the Commission;
- (e) That a further update on the delivery of Ways of Working Programme be presented to the Commission in approximately 12 months' time.

78. Date of next meeting.

RESOLVED:

It was noted that the next meeting of the Commission would be held on 12th June 2023 at 10.00 am.

10.00 am - 12.06 pm
12 April 2023

CHAIRMAN