

SCRUTINY COMMISSION 28 MARCH 2012

DRAFT YOUTH JUSTICE STRATEGIC PLAN 2012/13

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek the views of the Scrutiny Commission on the Draft Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2012/13, attached as an Appendix. The draft Plan will be presented to the Cabinet on 3rd April 2012 along with any comments from the Commission.

Policy Framework and Previous Decision(s)

2. There is a statutory requirement in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to produce an annual youth justice plan.

Background

3. In past years, the Youth Justice Board (YJB) provided the framework for the Plan, along with considerable scrutiny and oversight. Last year, in line with the Government's agenda to reduce the burden, Youth Offending Services were given the freedom and flexibility to produce a Youth Justice Strategic Plan to their own timetable and format. The plan still has to be submitted to the YJB, but there is no deadline or additional YJB scrutiny.
4. The Youth Offending Service Management Board (YOSMB) agreed that, for 2012/13, the annual Youth Justice Strategic Plan should be completed using a slightly modified version of last year's plan format.

Consultations

5. There is a requirement for the Plan to be approved by the statutory partners that make up the Youth Offending Service partnership. The draft Plan has therefore been submitted to the YOSMB which considered the matter on 24th February 2012. It has also been submitted to the Children and Young People's Executive on 9th March 2102.

Resource Implications

6. Section 5 of the plan (pages 9 - 12) sets out the resourcing and funding arrangements for the Youth Offending Service. The County Council remains the major funding partner via the Chief Executive's and the Children and Young People's Service.
7. In 2011/12, there was a 21% reduction in the Youth Justice grant. The Youth Justice grant allocation for 2012/13 has not yet been finally confirmed, but the indicative figure for the funding to be received is £727,242, a further reduction of £42,825 against the 2011/12 contribution.
8. An additional £39,845, part of the Home Office contribution to the Youth Justice grant to support prevention and substance misuse activities, has been transferred by the Home Office to Police Authorities in 2012/13 in preparation for the transfer of the full amount of the Home Office contribution to the Youth Justice grant (about £100k for Leicestershire) to the Police and Crime Commissioners in 2013/14. However, a condition of this year's funding is that it should be spent on tackling youth offending and substance misuse. We are in discussions with the Police Authority and we are hopeful that the funding will be passported back to the YOS. The Police Authority will make its decision at its full meeting on the 28th March 2012.
9. Fortunately, partner agencies have largely maintained their current contributions towards YOS funding. In addition, in February 2011, the County Council agreed £500k of transitional funding over two years for Youth Justice and Safer Communities in view of the significant losses in external grant funding. £200k of this funding will be used in 2012/13 to mitigate the reductions in grant funding, enabling a phased reduction in services and maximise the continuation of service delivery.
10. The funding position for 2013/14, however, presents some considerable risks and challenges. The YJB has indicated that there are likely to be significant further reductions in this grant in 2013/14. In addition, the Youth Justice Grant formula will be revised from 2013/14, although the detailed changes have yet to be announced. Bizarrely, this could result either in losses of up to £179k or gains of up to £244k for Leicestershire, although it is likely that the new formula will be phased in over a number of years. There is still an indication that the YJ Grant will include some element of payment by results from 2013/14, but the details of this have yet to be finalised. These potential reductions, in conjunction with the potential loss of £100k through transfer of funding to the Police and Crime Commissioner in 2013/14, present significant funding risks to the YOS.
11. A whole Service review commenced in June 2009 to enable the required savings to be made whilst maintaining service delivery to a high standard. As a result of the first stage of the review, two management posts were removed and the Service was restructured. In addition to this, savings were made by reducing the number of administrative posts.

12. Stage two of the Service review addressed the removal of funding for the Basic Skills team which was part of the additional resources that the County Council has invested in youth justice, in order to achieve the MTFs savings that are required for 2012/13. The loss of the Basic Skills team will impact on the provision of educational interventions and support packages to young people at risk of re-offending. However, a Basic Skills Exit Strategy Board is making arrangements for young people to access mainstream provision where possible and we have recently accessed some two-year European Social Fund resources via Connexions to continue some of the basic skills work.
13. Stage three of the Service review will need to address the likely loss of external grant in 2013/14. Given the significant reductions indicated in paragraph 10, there is likely to be an impact on service delivery, although £200k of the Council's transitional funding will be used in 2013/14 to mitigate these reductions and minimise the impact on service delivery.
14. Corporate HR Services are fully involved in the Service Review and the relevant Trade Unions will be consulted.
15. The Director of Corporate Resources has been consulted and supports the approach set out in section 5 of the Plan.

Timetable for decisions

16. The draft Plan will be considered by the Cabinet on 3rd April 2012, prior to submission to the YJB. The final Plan will be considered by the County Council on 23rd May 2012.

Conclusions

17. The draft Plan highlights the continuing high performance of the YOS in 2011/12 and sets out the key priorities, objectives and outcomes for the work of the Youth Offending Service during 2012/13.

Background papers

Draft Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2012/13.

Circulation under Local Issues Alert Procedure

None.

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Appendices

Appendix: Draft Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2012/13

Relevant Impact Assessments

18. Inequality is inherent within the criminal justice system and an Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) has been completed on the Plan. The EIA indicates that the plan presents no adverse impact to young people at risk of offending and re-offending, but identifies the need to continue to monitor YOS performance in relation to diversity and to continue to take account of the results of the participation survey completed by young people and their parents/carers.

Environmental Implications

19. There are no particular environmental implications arising out of the Plan. However, the YOS has in 2011/12 achieved reductions in mileage through the use of the County Council's Work Well project and the Service's move to County Hall in June 2011.