

POLICY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
08/11/2022 at 6.00 pm



Present: Councillor McLaren (in the Chair)
Councillors Dean, Harrison and Williamson

Also in attendance:

Gerard Jones – Managing Director of Children’s Services

Paul Axon – Service Manager (Positive Steps)

Peter Thompson – Constitutional Services

1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Alyas, Barnes, C. Phythian and Wilkinson.

2 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Williamson declared a personal interest in agenda item 6 (Youth Justice Plan 2022/23) insofar that she was a Council appointed Director of Positive Steps.

3 **URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of urgent business received.

4 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions for this meeting of the Committee to consider.

5 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 20th September 2022, be approved as a correct record.

6 **YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN 2022/23**

The Committee scrutinised a report which informed Members of the responsibilities of the Youth Justice Service and its priorities for 2022/23. Members of the Committee were also advised of the financial arrangements and performance for the previous year.

The appendix to the report detailed the Annual Youth justice Plan, which had already been subject to review via both the Youth justice Management Board and the Youth Justice Board. For this report the Youth Justice Board had changed the report’s request, with the inclusion of a more extensive plan in line with a prescribed format. The plan’s main themes included:

- Introduction, Vision and Strategy
- Local Context
- Child First
- Voice of the Child
- Governance, Leadership and Partnership
- Resources and Services
- Progress on Previous Plan

- Performance and priorities
- National Standards
- Challenges, Risks and Issues
- Service Improvement Plan
- Evidence Based Practice and Innovation
- Looking Forwards

The Youth Justice Management Board Annual plan was a requirement of grant allocation for Oldham's Youth Justice Service and was overseen by the Youth Justice Board nationally. The Plan had been developed and approved at Strategic level through the Youth Justice Management Board and nationally via the Youth Justice Board.

In considering the report, members recognised the successful outcomes for the service, noting that within the reporting period Oldham has some of the lowest rates of reoffending in England, despite the very real socio-economic challenges faced across the Borough. The report was subject to grading from the Youth Justice Board and Oldham's Plan was awarded an 'Outstanding' rating for 2022/23.

The Committee were advised that teams across Oldham were working hard to ensure that young people at risk of or involved in offending were given the best opportunities to engage in positive activities and move away from decisions that put themselves and communities at risk. This was clear within 2018's HMIP inspection which found many areas of outstanding practice and noted 'children and young people are at the heart of everything this service does'. The aim was to ensure that the community is safe, and that victims of youth crime and disorder are given a strong voice within the system that can be a central part of diversion and rehabilitation. The agenda has been set for 'child first' approaches to youth justice and recent projects and practice in trauma and contextual safeguarding to support diversion and rehabilitation were strong evidence of this work. The vision of child first youth justice was based on a strong partnership approach that reduces contact with the criminal justice system, wherever possible. Where not, young people should receive interventions that reduce their likelihood to develop a criminal identity and promotes the safety of the community they live within. This included an overall approach that includes trauma informed and strengths-based practice. Youth violence had become a key factor in shaping service delivery in Oldham.

Across the community and partnership, the impact of serious violence has been felt over recent years with serious and multi-agency case reviews highlighting the damage caused and the need to take new approaches. We recognise that those involved in youth violence are often not those that are familiar to the justice system and therefore need an improved partnership approach to intelligence sharing and identification of need. Oldham's 'diversion and prevention panel is a significant step in attempting to resolve this issue. The development of this approach and associated improvements in directing and

targeting resources will be key to an overall strategy for success in incidents of youth violence and general diversion and prevention of offending. The Service is not only responsible for the management of young people in the justice system; we also hold responsibility for both victims of crime and ensuring that families and communities needs are heard and met through our service offer. We have strengthened our approach to victims in recent years through the development of a specific role meeting these needs and aim to continue to grow that offer in 2022/23. It was vital that victim's needs are heard and responded to effectively rehabilitate and prevent further harm.

The Committee considered the report in detail and asked numerous question and points of clarification relating to the submitted report, with regard to prevention and reoffending, local priorities, diversity and equalities issues and the impact of Covid-19. The Committee welcomed the report and the positive messages, regarding the low levels of reoffending in Oldham that were presented.

The Committee noted that the report's author, Mr Paul Axon had recently been appointed as Chief Executive of Positive Steps and that he was due to take up his post in March 2023.

Resolved:

1. That the report be note and welcomed.
2. The Committee congratulates Mr paul Axon on his promotion to Chief Executive of Positive Steps.

7 **OLDHAM ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting of the Oldham Engagement Task and Finish Group held on 18th October 2022.

Resolved

That the Minutes be noted.

8 **POLICY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23**

The Committee considered its Work Programme for 2022/23..

Resolved:

That the Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme 2022/23, be noted.

9 **KEY DECISION NOTICE**

The Committee reviewed the Key Decision Notice which provided an opportunity for the identification of items or policy or service development, not otherwise listed on the Committee Work Programme.

Resolved:

That the report and the Key Decision Notice be noted.

The meeting started at 6.00pm and ended at 7.05pm



Oldham
Council