

**EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NOTES OF A MEETING OF CRIME AND DISORDER TASK AND FINISH SCRUTINY
PANEL
HELD ON THURSDAY, 15 MARCH 2007
IN COMMITTEE ROOM 2, CIVIC OFFICES, HIGH STREET, EPPING
AT 7.00 - 8.40 PM**

Members Present: M Cohen (Chairman), M Woollard (Vice-Chairman), D Bateman, Mrs A Grigg, D Jacobs, Mrs C Pond, P Spencer, D Stallan and J Wyatt

Other members present:

Apologies for Absence: R Law and R Morgan

Officers Present J Scott (Joint Chief Executive), C Wiggins and A Hendry (Democratic Services Officer)

Also in attendance: Paulett Burrell (Essex Youth Offending Team) and Richards Meads (Essex Probation Service)

22. SUBSITUTE MEMBERS (COUNCIL MINUTE 39 - 23.7.02)

No substitute Members were reported.

23. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct, Councillor M Cohen declared a general personal interest by virtue of being a Criminal Defence Lawyer. He declared that his interest was not prejudicial and he would remain in the meeting.

24. MINUTES - 23 NOVEMBER 2006

The minutes of 23 November 2006 were agreed.

25. TERMS OF REFERENCE/ WORK PROGRAMME

The Panel noted that the Police and Justice Act 2006 had now been passed, but had not yet come into force. It is to be phased in from April this year and over the next few years. This would mean the Panel's terms of reference had shifted to looking at something that was already in force and the Panel were now influencing how it operates as opposed to how it was implemented.

Paul Gardner could give a presentation at the next meeting on the National Intelligence Model and the Police asked to attend the meeting after. The Panel could then look at and understand how CDRP works in the district.

The Chairman expressed his concern that if a final report could not be produced, the Panel may have to submit an interim report to O&S saying that a further Panel may have to be set up in the new year to continue the work of this Panel.

26. PRESENTATION ON THE YOUTH OFFENDING TEAM

The Chairman welcomed Paulette Burrell the West Essex Youth Offending Team Manager, who was attending the meeting to give a flavour of the work of the Youth Offending Team as a partner of the Crime and Disorder Network.

This is a service that exists to work with kids from Ten to Seventeen years old. Ten is when you are legally considered liable for your actions. Seventeen is the cut off point as you are deemed to have reached adulthood at eighteen. They link into to the Youth Justice Board and work with the local Criminal Justice Board. They carry out the orders of Magistrates and Judges and work closely with the Police, Probation, Education, Social and Health Services.

Her team is a small team that covers a big area. On the team are a Police Officer, Welfare Worker, Social Officer and a Probation officer who monitors young offenders and help reduce offending.

The team report through their Local Area Board and link into ASBO Coordinators for the local areas, they also link into the prolific and priority offender strategy.

They have the use of a lot of different orders that they can use, such as a supervision order or a child safety order (for under 10's). They can also reprimand a child who has admitted an offence but not been taken to court, depending on how serious the offence is. A Panel would decide on the seriousness of the offence, they would also look at the history and background of the child. The child would then get a final warning.

If charged and taken to court, and they plead guilty and custody is not warranted they could impose a referral order (the length of the order would be set by a magistrate). A Community Volunteer would sit with the young person and any other agency necessary and draw up a contract. They would have 20 days to do this. Once completed successfully, it would be a spent offence. If not, a youth panel would have discretion to continue with the contract or send them back to court.

Asked by Councillor Cohen if parents, teachers and youths could refer themselves to her team before any crime has been committed, Paulette said that was the case. They have a legal mandate to carry out these services, but have limited resources. The team also work with parents under parenting orders, which courts could make.

She was then asked by Councillor Spencer, if her team was fully staffed. She replied that she would have replied "no" last week, as some of her staff are seconded Social Workers, and if they are needed elsewhere then her team would lose out. They had peaks and troughs in their staffing.

Councillor Stallan asked her if she had any targets. Paulette replied that they had Key Performance Indicators that were set by the Youth Justice Board to whom they provide quarterly figures. They measure their successes by the number not re-offending. Presently they have about a 79% success rate.

Councillor Bateman asked if she could provide leaflets or articles that they could supply to troubled communities. She said they had and they were working with Essex County Council to publicise them down to District level.

Asked how they link into the work of the CDRP by Councillor Mrs Pond, she was told that they link into that part of the CDRP that reduces offending. She attends the CDRP Panels to update them on their part in the overall reduction.

The Chairman thanked Mrs Burrell for her informative and interesting presentation.

27. PRESENTATION FROM THE PROBATION SERVICE

The Chairman welcomed Richard Meads from the Essex Probation Service, another one of the responsible authorities and partners in the Crime and Disorder Network.

Mr Meads introduced the probation service by saying that it was split into 42 areas in England and Wales. They work with adults only but have similar terms of reference to the Youth Offending Team. They work out risks and make proposals to the court, who are not bound to accept them.

They no longer have probation orders but community orders and a community order with supervision could last anywhere from three months to three years. Part of community service could be 'unpaid work' which used to be called community service and this could be served between forty to three hundred hours.

Mr Meads is the unpaid work manager for Essex and has been since January. They have around 6,000 offenders per year and each officer can have anywhere from 60 to 90 cases each. About 2,000 of the 6,000 undertake work in the community and last year they averaged about 80 hours per offender. Individual placements could range from charity shops and churches, to working in groups in hospitals, schools and building projects and also workshops for building garden furniture etc. which could be sold with any profits going to charity.

It was noted that unpaid work was a political football, it being popular with the courts, public and politicians. It is more than just punishment as about 65% of offenders have employment and training needs, the type of work undertaken is key to the value it imparts along with the supervisor's role. It is also an effective way to stop re-offending and to teach offenders useful skills.

Councillor Wyatt asked what sort of criteria do they apply to employers. Mr Meads replied that they are put through CRB checks. The beneficiary has a clear list of rules that they must enforce, one of the strictest being attendance. Two unacceptable absences can return the offender to court. Nationally, around 15% of orders are breached.

Councillor Woollard asked what benefit does the community get. He was told that the employers do not pay for getting these people as they are usually from voluntary organisations (charity shops or hospices). They would not use private industry as they are not allowed to replace paid workers.

Asked by Councillor Stallan how do the organisations know what is available and on the education side how do they ascertain that the offender has an educational need, Mr Meads replied that they presently do not have much community interactivity, but have just set up a website with relevant information on at:
www.essexprobation.org.uk/communitypaybackgeneral.htm.

As for their educational needs these are assessed at the pre-report stage, it is compulsory and if it is added as a requirement by a court the offender will have to take it up or they would be in breach of the court order. Tutors are brought to the offenders, they do not get out to colleges.

The Chairman thanked Mr Meads for his presentation and help with the Panel's questions.

28. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No new business was raised.

29. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Agreed that a new meeting be arranged for 10 or 23 April 2007.