

MINUTES OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 10 November 2021
(7:00 - 9:10 pm)

Present: Cllr Jane Jones (Chair), Cllr Dorothy Akwaboah (Deputy Chair), Cllr Olawale Martins, Cllr Fatuma Nalule, Cllr Simon Perry, Cllr Ingrid Robinson, Cllr Paul Robinson and Cllr Phil Waker

Also Present: Cllr Syed Ghani

Apologies: Cllr Toni Bankole and Cllr Donna Lumsden

26. Declaration of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

27. Minutes - To confirm as correct the minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 October were agreed.

28. Reunification of Probation Services

The Head of the Probation Delivery Unit (HP) for Barking, Dagenham and Havering (BDH) delivered a presentation on the reunification of probation services, detailing the purpose and recent history of these, the reasons behind the reunification, the new structure, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and measures to mitigate this, future plans and key priorities.

- When the Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) contracts ended, the contracts for the services that had been commissioned by them also terminated; however, the Commissioned Rehabilitative Services (CRS) listed on page 13 of the agenda pack, were still being delivered from the first day of the reunification. Whilst some services had not been recommissioned, the Probation Delivery Unit (PDU) had the opportunity to commission new bespoke services through the Regional Outcomes and Innovations Fund (ROIF) and it would undertake this recommissioning work with partners through the Reducing Reoffending Group.
- In terms of the transfer of staff from the former CRCs to the reunified National Probation Service (NPS), this was made easier as the skillsets and training for both CRC and NPS staff were the same. BDH were also fortunate to have lots of long-term staff. As some staff had previously only worked with medium-low risk offenders, and some with solely high-risk offenders, there was a programme of training pre-reunification to refresh staff skills, to enable all staff to take on a fully blended caseload.
- A working group had been established to review the processes and Terms of Reference behind the Reducing Reoffending Group, comprised of members of the Community Safety Partnership for BDH. Part of this review would enable the group to revitalise the data sets used to track its

performance. Current data used was also quite backwards looking, meaning that it could be difficult to gain an understanding of what was currently happening in BDH.

- Employment could be a big issue for previous offenders, especially as past criminal convictions had to be declared, and many people ended up in construction-type jobs. There was also a real drive by the NPS in engaging employers to actively seek out and employ people with criminal convictions. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) was a partner on various boards; as such, the NPS could work with and hold the DWP to account. There were also CRSs to assist previous offenders with education and employment.
- Maximus was the commissioned provider that could signpost and assist offenders into education. The NPS did not physically provide this resource.
- Historically, the NPS had a very diverse workforce; however, it tended to have higher levels of female staff than male. There was also a challenge in ensuring that diversity moved up within the ranks of the service. Interpreter services were also employed both via phone and in-person.
- During the pandemic, the NPS had to divert to telephone and video appointments; however, the highest risk individuals were still seen face-to-face. As the NDU moved to new national standards, all previous offenders had to have a minimum of one face-to-face appointment. The pandemic had highlighted the need for flexibility, with a key learning being the usefulness of a blended telephone/video/in-person approach, especially around those at lower risk. Some of this learning would be employed going forward.
- In terms of the low figures for offenders in employment and in accommodation, whilst this was partly due to the lack of employment and housing, this was also owing to the complexity of needs of some, who may need additional support to maintain their tenancies due to challenges with mental health, drugs or alcohol. If an offender had been in custody for a significant period of time, there was time for pre-release work; however, this was not so much the case with 'revolving door' cohorts that persistently and rapidly entered and exited prison services. It was difficult for this cohort to maintain their accommodation or employment, and for services to plan for their re-release. This cohort were generally deferred into integrated offender management, with wraparound services to support them. Nevertheless, there were also some data recording issues that the NDU was resolving.
- Unpaid work (known as community payback) was a court-ordered sanction and was a sentence in itself. Nevertheless, conversations needed to be had around community payback and how the vision for this could grow to address skills, improve outcomes and reduce offending. The NDU was working with the Council to explore which programmes it could develop to encourage skills development through community work, separately to community payback.
- The SL029 indicator related to unpaid work completed within 12 months. This was currently at 0% because unpaid work had ceased during the pandemic, and it would take a while for this indicator to improve.
- The retention rate for trainees across the country was 95%, so it was hoped that new trainees gained as part of the reunification would stay with the NDU. However, the Civil Service often had challenges with individuals

moving into other roles within it, which may not be included in NDU retention rates.

- The NDU tried to place offenders in local accommodation; however, around 35% of the cohort were between 18 and 25 years old, were unemployed and would not have access to higher levels of housing benefits. As most did not have critical needs, they would need to rent privately, and it could be difficult to locate suitable accommodation.
- The partnership with the commissioned drugs and alcohol service in Barking and Dagenham was particularly effective and had very close links to senior NPS officers.
- The role of the NPS was to 'assess, protect and change'. Assessments were completed with the Offender Assessment System (OASys) tool, which looked at various criminogenic needs such as accommodation, relationships, and thinking and behaviour, to formulate a plan based on the risks of an individual. Whilst this would ideally be done in unison with the offender, it was based on the practitioner's skills and knowledge. Other bespoke assessment tools were also used dependent on the offense type, such as for sex offenses and domestic abuse. 'Protect' was based on the enforcement of court orders through breaches, failures to comply, or reoffending, such as through licence conditions for those on release, exclusion zones and GPS tagging for Domestic Abuse and prolific offenders. 'Change' was based on providing those opportunities for change through offending behaviour programmes and structured interventions to work with individuals on their criminogenic needs.
- Skillsets were needed by practitioners to deal with challenging offenders. This included building rapport, de-escalating situations, building balanced relationships with individuals, and laying out clear boundaries and expectations. Nevertheless, offenders had to choose to engage and change.
- CRCs had different data measures and were not subject to service levels, meaning it could be difficult to track certain service improvements. However, there had been a dramatic improvement from June 2021 around assessments, which had been at 45% in July and was now at around 93%. There was a difference in record keeping and data quality. Outcomes resulting from a supervision session had to be recorded within 24 hours and the NDU was working to ensure that recording was accurate through additional checks and providing administrative support to officers. Record keeping was based on managing risk for offenders and supporting their outcomes, whereas data quality was more about driving resources and informing commissioning decisions, services and wrap-around support.

In response to a question, the Operational Director for Enforcement Services stated that his team was working with the Council's Housing team and other parts of the organisation to try to encourage more projects to support offenders, to come through the system.

The Chair suggested that additional work be undertaken between the NDU, the Council and its partners to develop the skills of previous offenders and improve their access to learning and voluntary opportunities, especially in regards to

'revolving door' offenders who repeatedly and rapidly entered and exited prison.

29. General Progress Update Regarding "Improving Household Waste, Recycling, and Street Cleansing" Scrutiny Review

The Strategic Director My Place (SDMP), Operational Director Enforcement Services (ODES) and Head of Regulatory Services (HRS) delivered a presentation on progress made as part of the "Improving Household Waste, Recycling, and Street Cleansing" scrutiny review, which included projects and work being undertaken as a result of the ten recommendations made by the Committee.

In response to questions from Members, the SDMP, ODES and HRS stated that:

- The Council needed to use more communications around the contamination of waste bins. It currently placed stickers on the bins of those households where contamination was a particular problem; however, this method did not always help to prevent contamination. A number of initiatives would be used to try to reduce contamination over the next few months, such as the use of in-cab technology in waste trucks from April/May 2022 onwards. This technology would enable waste crews to input collection information and update the Council website in real-time, for example, inputting the location of contaminated bins and flagging these immediately. This would mean that the Council could also respond to any resident complaints much more efficiently. After three to six months of data, the Council would be able to better identify 'problem areas' and target particular blocks or streets through campaigns. The in-cab technology would also help with route optimisation, with the Council working with the developer within the first three months to also identify areas where residents were not recycling.
- The Council hoped to better encourage residents living in flats to recycle their waste; however, this often proved challenging and it was looking to bring in more waste facilities on estates through spaces such as disused garages and large recycling banks. Funding had been identified and the Council was to undertake some pilots to identify the best locations for these facilities.
- The Council was challenging caretakers and waste collection teams in relation to complaints that had been received that they had left waste in roads from which they had collected. The Council was aware of which teams were leaving waste regularly, via means such as pictures sent in by residents and telephone complaints. It had a high turnover of staff and employees were disciplined if they did not do their job properly. The Council had also done lots of recruitment around caretakers and were currently running inductions, instilling the correct behaviours as part of these.
- Under the Housing Act 2004, local authorities were exempt from licensing homelessness properties where tenants were placed into this accommodation; however, they were not exempt from other enforcement action, such as around the environment. The Council investigated any complaints of disrepair, anti-social behaviour and eyesore gardens within those particular properties. It was working closely with authorities in terms of the residents that they were placing there, as well as on being notified of their placement so that it had a record of who was living in private rented accommodation.

- If a crew went out, left waste behind them and this was reported, the Council would ask them to return to collect this if the crew was near enough to the location. If not, it could send other teams, such as street cleansers or caretakers, but this meant diverting resources.
- The Council was trying to use its community hubs to advertise waste messages and employ staff within these to speak to residents. It was also starting to think about putting messages on the sides of its waste trucks to reach a wider range of residents, such as those without the internet.
- 24 Landlord Services Officers looked after the Council's tenancy stock and they frequently tackled eyesore gardens. They would issue notices to residents if necessary, as well as assist those who did not have the resources physically or the capability to address their gardens. The officers would try to address private landlords if they were responsible for problem areas, as well as businesses, to encourage accountability.
- The Private Sector Housing team inspected dwellings and was responsible for identifying issues such as eyesore gardens, abandoned vehicles and illegal crossings where there was no dropped curb. It also identified hoarding cases and provided support to these vulnerable tenants. As such, support, education and enforcement means were employed.
- The Council was currently looking into alleyways within the Borough, which had previously been gated and subject to anti-social behaviour.
- Within the past three months, the SDMP had moved the Street Cleansing team under the Head of Parks, to ensure greater collaboration. The Street Cleansing and Parks teams were jointly responsible for keeping streets clean, having joint team meetings and receiving the same communications. So far, there had been good engagement and union support.
- All waste vehicles now had tracking devices to provide the Council with real-time information around where the vehicles had been, how long the routes had taken and what had been collected at which time. On its commercial routes, the Council also knew which bins had been collected from which units, and how much the companies had paid, meaning that it could speak to companies who were disposing of more rubbish than they were paying for.
- The Council had a 25-year waste contract with the East London Waste Authority (ELWA) until 2027 and was working with ELWA to try to get a better deal.
- The Council was having discussions around how it could better support residents who had moved in from other boroughs, to help them to understand what they needed to do to dispose of their waste, as collections were often different elsewhere. Individuals often took their old bins with them when they moved, with some trying to put these into commercial spaces, believing that the Council would collect from these and becoming upset when this wasn't the case. As such, the Council needed to be more proactive in its messaging.

The Cabinet Member for Public Realm (CM) provided a short update, as follows:

- There was a reusable nappy scheme, which was a pilot project. These nappies involved reusable outer parts, to reduce waste;

- The Council would soon roll out brochures for new residents to the Borough, explaining waste collection and recycling;
- The London Waste Authority had provided waste collection symbols for all London boroughs, to standardise these, and the Council would be employing these, as well as more pictures on its website to support residents with their waste;
- The Council had collected 99.2% of bins with 48 hours during the pandemic, which was to be commended, and recycling rates had also improved in the last few months; and
- The Council needed to continue to encourage behaviour change in residents, to support them in recycling and correct waste disposal.

The Committee commended the CM for his assistance in helping Councillors to resolve residents' waste issues during the pandemic.

At this juncture, the Committee resolved to suspend Standing Order 7.1 at Part 2, Chapter 3 of the Council Constitution to allow the meeting to continue beyond the two-hour duration threshold.

In response to further questions, the SDMP stated that:

- The Council aimed to collect bulky waste within 48 hours of a resident paying for this service online.
- The Council had a "no side waste" policy, meaning that waste disposed of around bins was not collected. This often created the wrong behaviour in residents, with more problems for the Council. The Council needed to ensure that residents had the right bins, to speak to residents where their bins were repeatedly overflowing, and to encourage residents to take further steps needed to reduce their waste levels and increase their recycling.

In response to further questions, the CM stated that:

- The AO white goods agreement had ended because of the pandemic. The Council was working with other companies to reinstate this service.
- The Council planned to use other means of communication, such as fridge magnets to encourage residents to recycle. It also wanted to establish a text messaging service, informing residents of their recycling dates.

The Chair expressed her appreciation for the hard work of the Service during the pandemic and for continuing to build on the Committee's recommendations. She suggested that there be continued conversations around improving the messaging on the Council's website. The Committee also suggested utilising space on the sides of waste trucks for local business advertising, to generate more income.

30. Work Programme

The Committee agreed to accept the changes to the Work Programme as outlined in the report.