

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 24 March 2016

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, People & Economy

PORTFOLIO: Community Safety

SUBJECT: Amalgamation of the Cheshire West, Halton and Warrington Youth Offending Service with Cheshire East's Youth Offending Service from April 2016

WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To advise executive of the developments in the delivery plan for Youth Justice services.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION: That Executive Board approve the decision of the Cheshire West, Halton and Warrington Youth Offending Service (CWHWYOS) to extend the partnership to include Cheshire East Youth Offending Service.**

3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 The 1998 Crime and Disorder Act requires each Local authority to establish a multi-agency partnership to deliver Youth Justice services. The partners include Police, National Probation Service, Health Services via Clinical Commissioning Groups, Education services via Local authority input and other relevant stakeholders. At CWHWYOS this currently includes the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and the Magistracy, as well as 5 Boroughs Mental Health Partnership Trust.

3.2 The current partnership was formed in 2012 following an extensive scoping exercise assisted by the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales. The original plan included the incorporation of Cheshire East services and was approved by both YOS Management Boards and the four Councils. Cheshire East subsequently adopted an alternate strategy and thus the three way CWHWYOS was established.

3.3 The principal motivation for the wider partnership was to further improve quality of delivery from an existing high base whilst increasing resilience to funding restrictions by developing leaner management systems and economies of scale.

- 3.4 The CWHWYOS came into effect on 1 October 2012 and was a result of an amalgamation between Cheshire West and the existing partnership between Halton and Warrington.

The significant reductions in funding from the Youth Justice Board, in the last two years, approximately £300,000 per annum, have been absorbed by the partnership and savings in efficiency have resulted in no redundancies for staff or additional costs for the partners. Additional investment has been attracted, particularly the Divert project, which has improved outcomes for children at the point of arrest and has further improved the reductions in First Time Entrants to the Youth Justice system. The Youth Justice Board has indicated that further reductions in central grants with an additional 25% being cited for 16-17 approximately £170,000 p.a for the current YOS. Due to efficiencies in CWHWYOS, this will not incur additional resourcing from partners.

- 3.5 In terms of quality, the partnership has seen improved outcomes in the primary indicators and CWHWYOS continues to perform better than regional and national averages. In December 2015 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation published a "Short Quality Screening" which praised CWHWYOS for its excellent work with young people, its ability to protect the public and safeguard children to a consistently high standard, across the large 'footprint' of the three local authority area.

- 3.6 In May 2015, the PCC requested the two YOS partnerships in Cheshire to consider again the original proposals for a single YOS across the Cheshire region in order to improve consistency and resilience to potential future changes in both the criminal justice system and Councils. The original design brief for a single YOS had several drivers which remain appropriate still and some that are even more relevant.

We have improved outcomes for children by virtue of the current situation with continued reductions in the three main indicator areas but also improved quality in areas such as restorative justice, work with girls, work with sexually harmful behaviours, child sexual exploitation and the emerging radicalisation agenda. We have improved the service to and with volunteers and these are all areas where a larger more collaborative footprint will yield even more economies of scale but also ability to have a wider resource base. This is particularly important in the highly specialised areas of restorative justice conferencing, work with sexually harmful behaviours and the majority of work which we undertake through the divert system.

Ability to negotiate with key partners such as Police, PCC office and to some extent the YJB will improve as single system of operations will apply across the footprint. This will significantly assist the ability

to influence further development of Divert funding from NHS England who have been unhappy with the disparate nature of the current service between the two YOTs

The recent Inspection outcome for CWHWYOS indicates that our initial remit for the three way local authority has been achieved and we have increased resilience despite severe funding reductions. The YJB are advising we plan for further cuts to 16-17 budget in the region of 25% which equates to approximately £250,000 across the two organisations. A much streamlined senior management team will achieve the majority of the savings required whilst still allowing sufficient capacity to operate and implement further improvements. However- if each YOS has to independently achieve the required cut I would assess the capacity to develop would be restricted and a risk to existing services would be present and our ability to retain an independence of funding would be curtailed with a commensurate risk to partners to cover any shortfalls that may accrue in terms of finance or quality.

The Taylor review interim findings also indicate the potential for further devolution of central funds and responsibilities regarding youth justice and a single larger YOS would be better placed to maximise potential opportunities this may bring.

3.7 In the summer of 2015, the new Minister for Justice announced a national review of the Youth Justice System, which is to report in June 2016 with an interim report published in February 2016. Indications from the Government suggest an increased devolvement of budgets and responsibility to the local area with a possibility that this may occur by PCC area. Increased and creative collaborations, such as in Cheshire are noted in the interim report. The author of the review, Charlie Taylor, has had a meeting with the current YOS Head of Service-Gareth Jones- and discussed the potential for further collaborations such as the one proposed. Mr Taylor has accepted an invitation to visit the YOS to understand more how a multi-agency and multi Local Authority Youth Offending service not only works but has improved performance against the indicators as well as attaining excellent quality standards within an overall backdrop of diminishing resources and increasing challenges. We are awaiting confirmation of the date of the visit.

3.8 Both YOS Boards have agreed the principle of amalgamation in line with the scoping exercise conducted in 2010-12 and formal agreement was expected at the CWHWYOS Management Board on 18 March 2016. The Chair is the Strategic Director for Cheshire West and Chester and Halton Borough Council.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are no formal policy implications as this is an extension of the partnership delivering Youth Justice services as already approved in the existing service and formal partnership agreement.

4.2 The new Youth Offending Service (YOS) will be amalgamated from April 2016. A full review of its operational structure will then take place with any new proposals implemented from April 2017.

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The extension of the service will be achieved within existing budgets and is anticipated to ensure that further reductions in external funding does not negatively impact in terms of quality of outcomes in Halton both financial and social.

6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

6.1 **Children and Young People in Halton**

The new partnership will improve service to children and young people from the YOS in terms of ability to respond and resilience of service.

6.2 **Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

None identified.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

None identified.

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

The extended YOS will allow for an improved service, particularly in the way in which Police resources within the YOS can be utilised. The Divert programme will also be more able to respond to demand peaks across the larger footprint.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

None identified.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 No risks were identified in extending the partnership in line with the Partnership agreement already in existence.

7.2 If the proposal does not go ahead, a small risk exists that should further cuts from partners will be unsustainable in terms of

performance and quality of delivery.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 Ability to deliver services to emerging communities will be improved through the expanded skill base of the larger YOS ie work with girls, travellers etc.

9.0 **REASON(S) FOR DECISION**

To formally validate the decision by the current CWHWYOS partnership to extend its agreement to include Cheshire East.

10.0 **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

To remain as two separate Youth Offending Services.

11.0 **IMPLEMENTATION DATE**

1 April 2016 for formal amalgamation of the two YOS Management Boards who will then oversee a review of service with an action plan being identified by 1 October and implemented by 31 March 2017 following any necessary consultations with partners, stakeholders and staff.

12.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

None.