

## **Criminal Justice in Action**

### **Summary**

The Board's representative on the Criminal Justice Council, Cllr Smith, arranged a visit of Council members to Lichfield to meet local agencies involved in preventing offending and reoffending. This paper provides members with a report on the event and attaches a copy of the report prepared by Lichfield District Council for the Criminal Justice Council setting out the key issues identified during the visit.

### **Recommendations**

Members are asked to note the paper and report from Lichfield District Council to the Criminal Justice Council.

### **Action**

LGA officers to action as required.

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## **Criminal Justice in Action**

### **Background**

1. Cllr David Smith is the Board's representative on the Criminal Justice Council, which is chaired by Lord Justice Leveson. The Criminal Justice Council discusses issues and initiatives across the criminal justice system, with the intention of reviewing it under review and making proposals for reform of the criminal justice system, as well as advising the government on implanting reforms to the criminal justice system. The Council is made up of representatives from various Whitehall departments, as well as professional bodies and organisations with interests in the criminal justice system such as the Crown Prosecution Service, Victim Support, the Law Society and NACRO.
2. Having attended the Council on a number of occasions Cllr Smith thought it would be helpful for members of the Council to learn about the issues facing the criminal justice system and other key agencies on the ground. Members of the Council and other agencies were therefore invited to an event at Lichfield District Council on 2 December 2009 to discuss what needed to be done to prevent offending and reoffending.

### **Criminal Justice in Action**

3. The event, called Criminal Justice in Action, was very well attended with a range of organisations in attendance from Staffordshire and with a national focus. A copy of the report of the meeting to the Criminal Justice Council is attached at **Appendix A**, and the list of attendees is set out in Appendix 2 to the Lichfield report.
4. As members will see from the Lichfield report a wide range of issues were raised at the event. Some of the key points from the discussion from the Board's perspective were:
  - Reducing the fear of crime. Staffordshire Police noted that they have high satisfaction rates (88% are satisfied or very satisfied with the police) with those members of the public they come into contact with, but this is only around 20% of the population. Confidence in the police as measured against the police confidence target is only around 48-49%. As a means of addressing this the police are looking to access information from the criminal justice system so they have general information on the outcome of court cases, while the courts service in Staffordshire has been talking to the local newspaper and agreed a package of information they will receive about court cases, so the journalists have more than just the overall result.
  - Out of court disposals. The Staffordshire court service raised the issue of out of court disposals including the number of cautions and penalty notices used.

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The court service felt this had an impact on public confidence as the public did not hear of them, and did not know that action had been taken. The meeting felt that this had to be balanced against the need to avoid criminalising young people, and the Youth Offending Team explained that visible action outside the court was often as effective at preventing further crime and satisfied local people. An incident involving 16 and 17 year olds in one village had not been dealt with by a caution but by getting them to clear up the village which had satisfied the villagers and ensured that sort of incident was not repeated.

- Substance misuse. It was clear from a range of organisations at the meeting that a considerable amount of local crime was related to substance misuse. As a result Staffordshire is establishing a specialist drugs court which would look to address offenders' drugs habits, with there being regular reviews of offenders' progress. It was noted however that while there was considerable funding directed at drugs misuse there were far fewer interventions around alcohol misuse.
- Funding for local services. A number of organisations at the meeting outlined budgetary pressures including a reduction in funding for drugs and alcohol schemes for young people, and the possibility that the number of local courts might have to be reduced with the implications this would have for progressing cases, but also for victims and witnesses. The Total Place programme was noted and it was felt that the freedom to draw budgets together locally and align resources around local priorities was important.

## **Financial Implications**

5. There are no financial implications for the LGA arising from this report.

## **Implications for Wales**

6. There are no separate implications for Wales arising from this report.

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