

REDUCING REOFFENDING PROPOSAL

To: **Economy and Environment Committee**

Meeting Date: **25th November 2014**

From: **Executive Director Economy Transport and Environment**

Electoral division(s): **All**

Forward Plan ref: **Not applicable** *Key decision:* **No**

Purpose:

To consider the outcomes of Cambridgeshire County Council's overview and scrutiny of its role in supporting reducing reoffending.

In line with the decisions made at Cabinet, to consider taking forward recommendations from the review to ensure that Cambridgeshire County Council has a leading role in reducing reoffending, as set out in the Terms of Reference.

Recommendation: **The Committee is asked to:**

- a) Consider setting up of a small cross party working group comprising of one or two representatives from all political parties take forward recommendations from the review to aim to ensure that Cambridgeshire County Council has a leading role in reducing reoffending in line with the Terms of Reference.**
- b) Consider nominating representatives.**
- c) Agree the proposed Terms of Reference set out in appendix 3.**

<i>Officer contact:</i>

Name:	Lynsi Hayward-Smith
Post:	Head of Adult Learning and Skills
Email:	Lynsi.hayward-smith@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Tel:	01223 715998

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In 2012/13 Councillor Cearn's led an Overview & Scrutiny review on positive steps to reduce reoffending rates in Cambridgeshire. The review worked with a wide variety of partners including; County Council youth offending teams, the probation service, the Independent Prison Board and Timpson. The review recognised that there are many factors that affect reducing reoffending rates. Interviews with key partners and others working in the criminal justice field also identified that a major factor is the opportunity of employment and training.

2. MAIN ISSUES

- 2.1 The review resulted in a number of recommendations set out below to deliver a reduction in re-offending rates in Cambridgeshire:

- **Recommendation 1:** The Council, and its partners, should positively consider:
 - a) Opportunities to engage prisoners to complete work where they have the facilities to do this (e.g. printing)
 - b) Opportunities to work with relevant contractors who are willing to sub contract some of their activities to the Prison: this could be indicated in tender documentation to show that the Council welcomes partners who have a positive approach to reoffending.
- **Recommendation 2:** Share and promote Timpson's experiences with businesses and key stakeholders (such as Littlehey Prison) in Cambridgeshire, through facilitating a County wide summit to promote opportunities for employing offenders/ ex-offenders
- **Recommendation 3:** The Council should work with HMP Littlehey to facilitate an expansion of the number of employer visits to HMP Littlehey (possibly through expansion of the existing employer forums). If possible, Timpson's could be encouraged to extend their involvement to HMP/YOI Littlehey.
- **Recommendation 4:** Give support to Littlehey Prison in ensuring that training providers/contractors deliver on their obligations.
- **Recommendation 5:** The Council, and its partners, should sign up to the 'ban the box' campaign. *
- **Recommendation 6:** The Council proposes to the Ministry of Justice that they maintain funding for the provision of Prison libraries. The Council also proposes to the Department of Health to maintain funding for Substance

Misuse services and include such provision in the tendering of contracts under the probation service reform

**As part of the review the working group consulted with Human Resources at the County and they advised that they were reviewing the corporate policy. In developing this paper they have been re-consulted and they provided this update:*

“...the requirement for people to disclose any conviction has been removed unless they are in a post that requires it for safeguarding purposes, and crucially for these purposes, not until they are the preferred candidate.

The application form currently says that they will be required to provide information on any criminal convictions at the time of shortlisting but this is not being put into practice and the application form is currently under review and this will be removed to make it clearer that they will only be required to disclose the information if they are the preferred candidate i.e. after they have demonstrated that they are the best candidate for the job.

The Council then has a well-established objective assessment process in place for when a candidate's Disclosure and Barring (DBS) check shows a record of convictions, or indeed an existing member of staff acquires a conviction whilst in our employment.

- 2.2. Cabinet received the overview and scrutiny report at their meeting on 15th April 2014 with the recommendations being largely accepted, the exceptions relating to areas in which the Council had no direct influence or could not depart from its legal obligations, for example to avoid positive discrimination. The relevant Cabinet Minute is attached as Appendix 1 and the full Cabinet response as Appendix 2.
- 2.3. Since the review, ways of taking some of these recommendations forward have been sought. Councillor Cearns has discussed the possibility of hosting an event with Lynsi Hayward Smith, Head of Adult Learning & Skills, who has suggested that the summit could be broadened out to include other marginalised and hard to reach groups. In addition, interest in setting up an action group has been gathered from the Michael House centre in Cambridge who earlier this year ran a series of talks on offender management and rehabilitation. The full cost of the event and finance to undertake it would need to be identified in advance.

3. ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES

3.1 Developing the local economy for the benefit of all

This work aligns with the Council's objective of developing the local economy for the benefit of all through the Council leading the way as an example to other organisations and businesses regarding reducing reoffending.

3.2 Helping people live healthy and independent lives

The recommendations set out have the potential to have a significant impact on offenders/ ex-offenders wishing to change their lives.

3.3 Supporting and protecting vulnerable people

Some ex-offenders have complex needs and are themselves vulnerable. That of course does not excuse such behavior, but it can help to explain and understand it. By providing opportunities for them, both breaks that cycle of reoffending and makes for a safer community for all.

4. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Resource Implications

This would be a member led working group with no significant implications within this category. However Officer time would require to be identified and costed.

4.2 Statutory, Risk and Legal Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.3 Equality and Diversity Implications

Involvement from The council's HR colleagues would be sought initially regarding the impact of Equality and Diversity following the implementation of any of the recommendations.

4.4 Engagement and Consultation Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.5 Localism and Local Member Involvement

The proposal has the potential to empower local organisations and communities to change attitudes towards offenders/ re-offenders and to enable ex-offenders to transist to positive members of the community

4.6 Public Health Implications

There are no significant implications within this category. Though it should be noted that good public health is a key factor in reoffending

SOURCE DOCUMENTS GUIDANCE

Source Documents	Location
Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee 6th February 2014 : Overview and Scrutiny Report and Minutes	Democratic Services Link to County Council website: http://www2.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/CommitteeMinutes/Committees/Meeting.aspx?meetingID=700
15th April Cabinet Report and Minutes	attached as appendices 1 and 2

Appendix 1

Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Reducing Reoffending Member-Led Review Extract Minutes 15th April Cabinet

The Chairman of the review group, Councillor Cearn, presented findings and recommendations from the Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee's member-led review of reducing reoffending. He drew attention to the high cost of offending both to individuals and to society and suggested that in considering best value in measures to reduce reoffending, both financial and social benefits should be taken into account.

As the Chairman for the meeting, Councillor McGuire thanked the review group for its work and presented the Cabinet's response. He proposed that the recommendations largely be accepted, the exceptions relating to areas in which the Council had no direct influence or could not depart from its legal obligations, for example to avoid positive discrimination.

It was resolved:

To agree the responses to the recommendations as set out in section 2 of the Cabinet response.

The full Cabinet response report is attached as appendix 2.