STRATEGIC YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN 2019-20

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To recommend that St Helens Council approves the St Helens Strategic Youth Justice Plan 2019-20, attached at Appendix 1.

2. JUSTIFICATION FOR THE DECISION

2.1 Since their creation in 1998, Youth Offending Service (YOS) or (YJS) in St Helens, have been required to bring forward an annual Youth Justice Plan. Although the format for the annual planning and delivery cycle has changed over recent years, the current plan conforms to general guidance provided by the Youth Justice Board (YJB). St Helens YJS sits within the Place Services Portfolio under the Senior Assistant Director, Housing, Safer Communities, Recreation and Libraries, supported by the Assistant Director, Community and School Support Services.

2.2 YJB guidance requires the plan to cover a number of key areas as follows:

   - Key Achievements for 2018/19
   - Review of Performance 2018/19
   - Priorities for 2019-20
   - Risks to future service delivery against key outcome measures
   - What do children say about the service

2.3 In recent years St Helens YJS has worked flexibly to align practitioner resources against a backcloth of continuing reduction in funding and a changing service user profile characterised by an increased level of risk. Good progress has been maintained to reduce the use of custody. The number of first time entrants has continued to fall slightly and is now showing signs of plateau. However, although recognising the new methodology applied to measuring re-offending rates will present a challenge; in recent years a reduction in re-offending rates has been achieved. The Strategic Youth Justice Plan sets out how the delivery of an integrated approach can continue to develop improved outcomes for a group of children with a range of vulnerability and risk issues as well as providing support to victims and the wider community.

2.4 Over recent years the financial resources available to St Helens YJS have reduced quite significantly. Whilst cash contributions have remained largely static. All of the above has required the service to make efficiencies in recent years; with further financial risks brought about by the majority of any remand costs having to be absorbed by the already significantly overspent budget for Looked After Children (LAC).

2.5 The Council’s constitution requires the Youth Justice Plan to be approved by full Council.
3. FACTS SUPPORTING THE DECISION

3.1 The requirement to produce an annual Youth Justice Plan has been in place since 1998. The current plan represents the continued development of service arrangements with a particular emphasis on areas for development identified as being a priority due to performance pressures, legislative requirements developments in effective practice or responses to financial pressures.

3.2 The YJB sets the strategic direction of the service which are contained within the 2019-20 YJS Plan:

- Prevent offending
- Reduce re-offending
- Protect the public and support victims
- Provide the safety and welfare of children and young people in the Criminal Justice System

3.3 Working within the strategic priorities utilised by the YJB, St Helens YJS is committed to through the delivery of an integrated approach with partners to achieve the following outcomes:

- Young people are appropriately diverted from YJS
- The offending of children and young people is prevented
- The delivery of quality and effective services to young people, parent/carers, victims and partner agencies
- the improvement of practice and achievement of positive outcome for service users
- that young people are safeguarded and risk to the public is managed
- that the service provides value for money
- that restorative justice underpins our practices

3.4 In addition to those actions aimed directly at YJB determined strategic priorities, the Strategic Youth Justice Plan 2019/20 identifies a range of additional actions including:

- Further reduce First Time Entrants to the Criminal Justice Systems
- Reduce reoffending particularly amongst children we look after
- Reduce the use of custody
- Embed the recent service restructure
- Improve leadership and governance
- Improve service for SEND
- Developed an increased understanding of the demographic of the Youth Justice Service Children We Look After population to improve local responses and outcomes.
- Improve the health offer available to children open to YJS

3.5 The Strategic Youth Justice Plan 2019/20 will form a key element of delivering an integrated way of working to not just reduce re-offending but deliver improved outcomes in terms of health, education and social care.

4. RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH THE PROPOSED DECISION

4.1 Youth offending and re-offending are significant issues for St Helens Council and its strategic partners. Without an effective Youth Justice Plan that balances those potentially competing priorities there is a risk that service outcomes will decline,
resulting in poor outcomes for young people, their families, victims and the wider community.

4.2 Failure to produce an effective plan that meets the sufficiency test of the Youth Justice Board will adversely impact on the future funding for St Helens YJS and its ability to tackle youth offending.

4.3 The YJB allocate a small percentage on a contribution to the management of remand costs. This is based on historical frequency of remands to secure accommodation or youth custody and will exceed funding should the service be faced with a number of serious offences.

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Legal – None

Financial – None

Human Resources – None

Land and Property (Asset) – None

Anti-Poverty – None

Effects on other Council Activities – None

Effects on existing Council Policy – the Youth Justice Plan contributes towards outcomes in the St Helens Plan and the vision set out for 2020 and the development of a Local Care System.

Human Rights – None

Equalities – An Equality Impact Assessment has been

Asset Management – None

Health – Young offenders often disengage from primary care services with an adverse impact on their health and wellbeing. The Youth Justice Plan encompasses work with Public Health and CCG colleagues to increase engagement and enhance the offer for young people who have committed offences.

6. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Strategic Youth Justice Plan 2019/20

LEAD OFFICER FOR THIS REPORT
Jason Pickett
Assistant Director, Community and School Support Services
BACKGROUND PAPERS – None