

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting4th September 2013

1. Title of Item/Report

'Transforming Rehabilitation: A Strategy for Reform'

2. Record of the Decision

Members were reminded of the Government's plans set out in January this year for radical change to Probation Services in England and Wales via their publication 'Transforming Rehabilitation: A Strategy for Reform'. In summary, these plans proposed the abolition of the current Probation Trusts and their replacement by a new National Probation Service (NPS), which would carry out initial assessments and pre-sentence work with offenders, and would manage those offenders assessed as representing high risk, and a series of new companies would manage medium and low risk offenders. The original estimate was that 30% of the current workload would go to the NPS and the other 70% to the new companies. This Council had responded to the consultation process via the Safer Stockton Partnership.

Despite receiving many adverse responses to consultation, the Government had now decided to press on with its plans. One minor change, but a significant one for Stockton, was an increase in the number of the proposed new companies from the original proposal of 16, (which would probably have seen a single company covering the whole of the North East region), to 21, which allowed for 2 companies, one of which would cover the current Durham Tees Valley Probation Trust area.

It was noted that many of the most important details about the competition process remained unclear at present. It was however known that competition would be for ownership of a shareholding in one of the new companies, and that the Government would retain a share in each company. It was also known that the payments system would be based, in part, on results achieved in relation to reducing reoffending. It was believed that tenders would be evaluated on a basis of 50% quality, 50% price.

The current Trusts were to be abolished by April 2014 and the staff sorted into two groups, ie those who would transfer to the NPS and those who would transfer to the new companies. Trusts were required to put in

place so called 'ethical walls' to start to separate these two groups in advance of April.

Cabinet noted that the current Durham Tees Valley Trust was one of the top three nationally in terms of reducing reoffending and had some of the lowest unit costs. On five key measures of unit costs compared to the other 34 Trusts, its ranking positions are 35th (ie best), 34th, 31st, 21st and 16th.

A series of discussions had taken place to establish the level of interest in establishing a public and third sector consortium to bid for the work, in order to try to ensure that the levels of public service currently provided were maintained. Representatives of the Council had indicated its interest in participating in such a consortium, and four other potential partners had also been identified, ie another Local Authority, a local NHS Trust, a major local housing provider, and a sub-regional voluntary organisation. The most probable way forward would be the establishment of a Community Interest Company or similar vehicle, with shareholding and governance arrangements to be designed to reflect shares of any risk. Two directors from the current Probation Trust had volunteered to work on this project.

The timetable was not yet fully clear but it was anticipated that the Pre Quality Questionnaire process for getting onto a tender list would begin shortly, with full tendering to take place in 2014 and contracts to now start from April 2015 (rather than Autumn 2014, as originally suggested by the Ministry of Justice).

RESOLVED that:-

1. The action taken to date be endorsed.
2. Council continues to support the proposed consortium bid.
3. Up to £6,000 be utilised from existing budget provision to support the Pre-Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) process.
4. Further reports be presented to Cabinet as more detail becomes available.

3. Reasons for the Decision

1. To clarify that the response to date is agreed.
2. In order to reduce the risks associated with an unconstrained

commercial approach.

3. To ensure the viability of the next stage of work.

4. To continue to ensure that the Council's approach has been properly approved.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

None

6. Details of any Dispensations

N/A

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

Midnight on Friday, 13th September 2013

Proper Officer
09 October 2013