

**COUNCIL SEMINAR**  
**10th May, 2013**

Present:- Councillor Wyatt (in the Chair); Councillors Beaumont, Buckley, Ellis, The Mayor (Councillor John Foden), Hoddinott, McNeely, Read, G. A. Russell, Sims and Wyatt.

Apologies for absence were received from The Mayor (Councillor Pickering) and from Councillor Jepson.

**SOUTH YORKSHIRE PROBATIONARY TRUST**

Councillor Wyatt introduced Lynda Marginson (Chief Executive of the South Yorkshire Probation Trust) and Sarah Mainwaring (Director of Probation Rotherham) who gave a presentation to Members about the Probation Trusts of England and Wales and especially the South Yorkshire Probation Trust and its role in the Rotherham Borough area.

Members were aware of the announcement by the Justice Minister, Christopher Grayling MP on 8<sup>th</sup> May, 2013 of the coalition Government's intention to reform and privatise the probation service.

The presentation and subsequent discussion included the following salient issues:-

: various facts about the 35 Probation Trusts of England and Wales;

: the South Yorkshire Head Office is located in the Sheffield city centre and the Probation Trust services the four major conurbations of Sheffield, Doncaster, Rotherham and Barnsley through Local Delivery Units (LDU) situated in each area; the Rotherham LDU is situated at Masbrough;

: Probation Trust staff also work on secondment at the four prison establishments situated in South Yorkshire;

: a main priority of the Probation Trust is to reduce re-offending; since 2000, both the re-offender rate and number of crimes committed by re-offenders has fallen for those on community orders and suspended sentence orders; by comparison, the proven re-offending rate for those adults who received short-term custodial sentences of less than 12 months, who do not receive any interaction with probation services, has increased;

: the most dangerous offenders are placed under MAPPA supervision (Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements);

: the South Yorkshire Probation Trust Mission is to "protect the public and make our communities safer by reducing re-offending";

: the South Yorkshire Probation Trust Vision is to “be the best at reducing re-offending”;

: the collective Probation Service (ie: all of the 35 Probation Trusts) was the first ever public service to be awarded the British Quality Foundation's Gold Medal for Excellence; this award is made for continuous and sustained improvement over a number of years;

: in recent years, according to published statistics, the South Yorkshire Probation Trust is one of the best performing Probation Trusts (ie: OMI - Offender Management Institutions) in England and Wales and is the best at reducing re-offending; the Trust has gained the Green 4 PTRS highest performance rating;

: in 2010, Probation became a responsible authority of the Community Safety Partnerships; at the same time, a new duty on the Partnerships was put in place to formulate and implement a strategy to reduce re-offending by adult and young offender; it also placed a duty on local authorities, fire and rescue authorities and police authorities, to consider reducing re-offending in the exercise of all their duties;

: the South Yorkshire Probation Trust works in partnership with numerous key stakeholders including the Ministry of Justice, with other criminal justice agency partners and with organisations such as local authorities and health services;

: details of the Rotherham Local Delivery Unit staffing establishment and the Integrated Offender Management team;

: as at 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2013 there were 6,769 offenders on the South Yorkshire Probation Caseload, of whom 1,072 were managed by the Rotherham Local Delivery Unit; of these 90.95% were male and 9.04% were female;

: whilst re-offending rates reduce, the last few months have seen an increase in the number of burglaries and shoplifting in Rotherham (often, but not always, drug-related crime);

: 50% of the Probation Trust's caseload are people aged 30 years and younger – therefore it is important for the Trust to work closely with the Youth Offending Service;

: the Probation Trust has the aim ensuring offender compliance – which means that an offender reaches the end of the statutory period of time with the Trust without any re-offending and with no breach of the terms of any community order;

: a difficult target for the Probation Trust to achieve is the endeavour to have 36% of offenders in employment of at least 25 hours per week at the end of their community order; it is acknowledged that being in

employment helps prevent re-offending; although the target is currently being exceeded (41% success rate), the future is uncertain because of the difficult economic outlook;

: the Probation Trust is achieving the target of 80% of offenders obtaining suitable living accommodation;

: reference was made to the Business Planning 'Steeple' model now being used by the Probation Trust;

: the achievements the Rotherham Local Delivery Unit include (i) the sustained and continued reduction in re-offending; (ii) improved compliance; (iii) excellent inspection results; and (iv) has developed relationships with the South Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner;

: the Rotherham Local Delivery Unit has a range of priorities for the forthcoming year, which include maintaining the reduction in re-offending rates; the commitment to the protection of the public is paramount.

Questions from Elected Members:-

(1) any local arrangements whereby an offender meets the victim and the offender has to face up to the consequences of the crime?

: there is the system of restorative justice; the Rotherham Local Delivery Unit has a lead role and works with the "Remedy" and Victim Support organisations to deliver post-sentence restorative justice at various levels according to the severity of an offence; a study by Sheffield Hallam University has shown that the pilot system is beneficial; however, sometimes the victims do not like the lengthy time lapse between the offence and the arrangement to meet the offender; funding for the pilot system is provided by the Ministry of Justice and the Police and Crime Commissioner;

(2) has the coalition Government's welfare reform caused an increase in crime ?

: the South Yorkshire Probation Trust makes use of the Business Planning 'Steeple' model to prepare to respond to any increase in offending and to plan ways of helping offenders not to re-offend

(3) reference to the different age groups of offenders;

: the high incidence of offenders aged under 30 years is a source of concern.

(4) a question about the levels of education of offenders;

: it is not unusual for offenders to have difficulty with literacy and numeracy, which are factors limiting their employment prospects; all

offenders are assessed for their risk of re-offending and one of the thirteen categories of the assessment is 'literacy and numeracy'; the post-sentence contract and plan requires an offender to participate in appropriate education courses;

(5) with regard to the reduction in re-offending rates – do the rates of re-offending alter after the time period of the probation order has ended ?

: some 34% of offenders do re-offend and 66% do not; each offender is assessed twelve months and twenty-four months after the end of the probation order;

(6) a question about the progress of the 200 most persistent and repeat offenders;

: approximately 58% of these offenders are achieving compliance with the terms of their probation orders;

(7) offenders do unpaid work and provide a payback to the community – is the system effective enough ?

: yes it is considered to be the jewel in crown and gives offenders the chance to put back something positive into the community; eg: working on such things as housing renovation projects; the Probation Trust undertakes spot checks of the community projects to ascertain that the objectives are being achieved;

(8) is it possible to remove the restrictions and barriers which sometimes prevent these community payback projects from happening ?

: there has to be a thorough risk assessment of any project work-site (eg: to check the provision of basic facilities), but it is always unfortunate if any project of this type cannot be undertaken;

(9) how does the Probation Trust manage people convicted of offences involving sexual exploitation – and prevent re-offending ?

: there is a small number of such offenders and the Probation Trust has to manage them from the moment they are released from prison, utilising a rigorous risk management plan (there is a specific programme for offenders who have used the Internet when committing offences of sexual exploitation); in addition, the wishes of the victim have to be taken into account; some offenders are checked via satellite tracking and there may also be surveillance methods used for a small number of very serious offenders.

Agreed actions:-

(a) Elected Members will be provided with details of the South Yorkshire Probation Trust web site, enabling them to make on-line suggestions of

local projects which are suitable for the community payback system;

(b) Elected Members will be provided with summary details of the community payback projects which have taken place in Rotherham during the last three years and arrangements may be made for Elected Members to view these projects;

(c) Elected Members will be invited to visit the Rotherham Local Delivery Unit premises at Masbrough.

Lynda Marginson and Sarah Mainwaring were thanked for their interesting and informative presentation.