

PROBATION BOARD FOR NORTHERN IRELAND
BOARD MEETING – THURSDAY 18 SEPTEMBER 2025
9.30 AM – CONFERENCE ROOM, PBNI HEADQUARTERS

ATTENDANCE

BOARD MEMBERS

Mr Glenn Houston, Board Chair
Ms E Patterson
Ms M Brunt
Mr B Ingram
Ms D Hunt
Ms B Mongan
Mr K Cameron
Mr D Bowden
Ms G McKeown

OFFICIALS

Ms A Stewart, Chief Executive
Mr S Hamilton, Director of Operations
Ms G Montgomery, Director of Operations
Ms G McGreevy, Head of Communications
Mr P King, Head of Finance & Estates
Ms J Fitzsimons, Board Secretary
Mrs A Abraham, Business Support Manager (Minutes)

GUESTS

Mrs P Somerville, Head of IT (Item 7)
Mr C Barnes, Deputy Head of IT (Item 7)
Mrs N Mill, Deputy Head of Stats & Research (Item 12)
Ms P Smyth, Deputy Head of HR and L&OD (Item 11-16)

1. WELCOME, OPENING REMARKS AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The Board Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and outlined the agenda for the meeting. A quorum was confirmed. Ms Brunt declared a conflict of interest in respect of Item 11. The Board Chair agreed that Ms Brunt would not participate in the discussion under this agenda item.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were apologies from Ms Anthony, Mr Johnston, Mr Mawhinney and Ms Sweeney.

3. MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING – THURSDAY 19 JUNE 2025 (PAPER)

The minutes of the Board Meeting held on Thursday 19 June 2025 were approved as a true and accurate record.

The minutes were approved by the Board.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES – THURSDAY 19 JUNE 2025 (PAPER)

There were six actions from the previous meeting. All had been completed.

The Board noted the paper.

5. CHAIR'S UPDATE (PAPER)

The Board Chair referred Members to the paper highlighting attendance at various engagements: on 23 June 2025 a drama production where the participants were service users completing the Duke of Edinburgh scheme; on 24 June 2025 a presentation on good practice with lifer prisoners; on 26 June 2025 his first Town Hall staff event; and a Cyber Resilience workshop on 1 July 2025.

He also confirmed that the Justice Minister had accepted PBNI's invitation to meet with Board Members on 16 October 2025.

5.1 Reports from Board Visits and Events (Paper)

Ms Brunt gave a summary of the paper on the visit to Maghaberry. Ms McKeown updated members on the visit to Aspire, and members noted the visit to Coleraine. The Chief Executive agreed that a visit to the Ballymena office could be arranged and confirmed that the Board Secretary will schedule a date in the new year. The template for visits will be updated to include a reference to Trauma Informed Practice and an additional section on Management Response. The Board Secretary will circulate the updated template to Members.

The Board noted the paper.

6. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S UPDATE (PAPER)

The Chief Executive referred to the paper, highlighting engagements and issues which had taken place since the June 2025 Board meeting.

Since the writing of the paper, the Chief Executive updated Members on a UK wide business continuity exercise called Pegasus effective from 17 September 2025.

In respect of PBNI's bid to the Transformation Fund, a decision is due to be taken w/c 22 September 2025. This would enable the roll out of ECO. Ms Stewart and Mr Hamilton had met with the Executive Office to discuss. The DoJ is supportive of PBNI's bid as reflected in the discussions at the Public Accounts Committee.

The Chief Executive confirmed that an external review had commenced of the PBNI Victims Information Scheme.

Since the Assembly returned, there had been an increase in Assembly Questions. It was suggested that a summary paper be presented at a future Board.

Ms Montgomery updated Members on recent Serious Further Offences.

The Board noted the update.

7. PRESENTATION – ONBOARDING TO CAUSEWAY PROGRAMME AND CYBER SECURITY UPDATE

The Board Chair welcomed Mrs Somerville and Mr Barnes to the meeting, to present on Onboarding to the Causeway Programme and to provide an update on Cyber Security.

Mrs Somerville gave a comprehensive presentation on Causeway Onboarding and talked through the progress to date against the Action Plan. Staff training has taken place, and we are now in the testing stage.

In relation to the period PBNI entered on Monday 15 September (VMO Testing), it was noted that there was an issue in relation to connectivity. Colleagues are working to resolve the issue, and it was not anticipated that this would delay onboarding as the project plan had taken account of potential for issues to arise. PBNI is confident of meeting the target date for Phase 1 (pre-sentence reports and adjournments) to go live on 16 January 2025.

The Chair confirmed that Onboarding to Causeway was on the Board's Strategic Risk Register.

Mr Barnes apprised Members of PBNI's Cyber Security arrangements, explaining how data was held by IT Assist and the provision of a top of the range VPN secure remote access to allow staff to work from home or from any government office, as and when required.

Action: The Head of IT to update the Board on the Causeway Onboarding programme in 12 months' time.

The Board noted the presentations.

8. CORRESPONDENCE (PAPER)

There were twelve items of correspondence to note, some of which were self-explanatory. The Board Chair asked Members to note, in particular, items 8.3, 8.6, 8.9 and 8.11.

8.1 Correspondence between Chief Inspector, CJINI to Chief Executive – Review of the Effectiveness of Part 1 of the Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act (NI) 2021 – Part Three

8.2 Finance Director, DoJ to Chief Executive – Equality and Rural Needs for Future Years Exercise

8.3 Finance Director, DoJ to Chief Executive – PBNI Revised Budget Allocation 2025-26

The Board Chair asked members to note the confirmed budget allocation for 2025-26. No additional funding had been received.

8.4 Correspondence between Director of Policing Policy and Strategy, DoJ and Chief Executive – Improving Health within the Criminal Justice System

8.5 Justice Minister to Chief Executive – Letter of thanks for Belfast Pride

8.6 Chief Executive to Financial Performance, DoJ – Public Sector Transformation Fund: Enhanced Combination Orders

The Chief Executive advised that PBNI was anticipating the outcome of the second round of transformation bids in respect of Enhanced Combination Orders, in the next few weeks.

8.7 Director General NIPS to Chief Executive – Reducing Reoffending Strategic Outcomes Group

8.8 Accountability and Financial Management Division, DoF to Chief Executive – PAC Report “Reducing Adult Reoffending in Northern Ireland”

8.9 Correspondence between Programme Director, EPPOC and Chief Executive – Membership of EPPOC Sponsor Group

The Chief Executive welcomed the opportunity for PBNI to accept the invitation to the Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime (EPPOC Sponsor Group) as PBNI may benefit in terms of funding for the Community and Voluntary Sector.

8.10 Correspondence between Director Victims Support Division, DoJ and Chief Executive – Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy (2024-2031) – Strategy Oversight Board Delivery Partners

8.11 Financial Services Division DoJ to Chief Executive – 2025-26 PBNI Staff Pay Remit

Members were asked to note DoJ's approval of the 2025-26 pay remit for all PBNI staff aligned to the National Joint Council pay award.

8.12 Chief Executive NIACRO to Justice Minister – Urgent Engagement on Local Growth Fund Delivery in Northern Ireland

The Board noted the correspondence.

BOARD BUSINESS

9. Q1 PBNI BUSINESS PLAN PERFORMANCE 2025-26 (PAPER)

Mr Hamilton gave a summary of the paper, highlighting the progress made against each of the four Outcomes in Q1 2025-26. At the end of Q1, of the eighteen actions and underpinning measures that required action, two were complete, ten had an Amber (in progress) rating and the remaining six are not yet due.

Following a discussion on the continued high level of sick absence the Board Chair suggested that hard targets in next year's plan, both aspiring and short term, would be useful.

The Board approved the paper.

10. DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN 2026-29 CONSULTATION DOCUMENT (PAPER)

Ms McGreevy advised Members of the objectives, timings and model being put in place to consult on the draft Corporate Plan 2026-29. She advised that the Board Chair and Chief Executive are due to meet with Area Managers and two groups of staff in different geographical locations to seek views on the Plan following the launch next week. The external engagement with statutory partners and key stakeholders within the community and voluntary sector will commence late September. In October 2025, a virtual Townhall meeting will be held with staff, and the Trauma Implementation Group and Service Users Group will have the opportunity to share their views on the plan. The Justice Minister will be attending the Board Meeting on 16 October 2025 with a focus on the draft Corporate Plan and the linkage with justice priorities.

Discussion took place on the four priorities of the draft Plan. Including 'Trauma' in the heading of priority 3 was also mentioned. Members were asked to provide further feedback through the Board Secretary.

The Board approved the paper.

11. DRAFT ANNUAL EQUALITY PROGRESS REPORT 2024-25 (PAPER)

Ms Smyth, Deputy Head of HR and L&OD, gave a summary of the paper in the absence of Ms Sweeney. She confirmed that Ms Sweeney had attended training on the completion of the Equality Commission template. Prior to submitting the report to the Equality Commission, three actions were agreed.

Action: The Head of HR and L&OD to update the staff survey statistics in the Annual Equality Progress Report.

Action: The Chief Executive to clarify PBNI's role in relation to Rural Needs

Action: The Board Secretary to source online Equality training for Board Members through L&OD.

The Board approved the paper.

12. QUARTERLY MANAGEMENT INFORMATION REPORT (PAPER)

The Board Chair welcomed Mrs Mill, Deputy Principal, Statistics & Research to provide input on the statistical information in the paper.

Mr Hamilton and Ms Montgomery talked through the Operational Overview sections. In terms of caseload, the overall trend was slightly downwards. While the number of reports had increased, it was explained that there are now three additional report types/definitions. There had also been an increase in Crown Court requests and victim's information remained static. In respect of Serious Further Offences (SFOs), deviations to practice standards were not a feature of the SFOs. Members were advised that Q2 to date there had been seven SFOs and these will be reported on in the Q2 Management Information Report.

Ms Smyth reported on recruitment, attrition rates and staff absence. She assured Members that measures were being taken to address sickness absence through middle managers and Occupational Health.

Action: The Head of HR and L&OD to provide the Board with a more meaningful narrative on the Days Lost Per Employee (rolling 12 month period) at the November Board meeting.

Mr King advised that the financial position had been reevaluated at the end of June 2025 following the outcome of June monitoring and the completion of PBNI five-year forecasts and referred to the summary of outturn table.

In respect of Estates, PBNI had sought the assistance of an external contractor to undertake carbon calculations to set out its carbon baseline and allow a report to be finalised for the legislative target date of October 2025. Discussions are nearing completion with Land & Property Services in respect of the redevelopment of headquarters and it is hoped to submit the business case to DoF in October 2025.

Ms McGreevy updated Members on data incidents and complaints.

It was agreed that more time to discuss the Quarterly Management Information report at Board was required.

Action: Board Secretary to allocate more time on the agenda for the Quarterly Management Information report for future meetings.

The Board noted the paper.

13. BOARD SECRETARY'S BUSINESS

The Board Secretary advised that Members were invited to attend the Town Hall meeting on 16 October 2025, prior to the Minister's visit to the Board. The DoJ Permanent Secretary hopes to attend the November 2025 Board meeting.

13.1 Draft Remuneration Committee Terms of Reference (Paper)

The Board Secretary advised Members that the Remuneration Committee (RemCo) met in June to review the Committee Terms of Reference (TOR) and recommended that the TOR be brought to the Board for approval. The revisions to the TOR were outlined.

The Board approved the RemCo Terms of Reference.

13.2 Board Work Plan 2025-26 (Paper)

The Board Secretary referred Members to the Work Plan 2025-26 and confirmed that a draft meeting schedule for 2026-27 will be circulated for consideration prior to the November 2025 Board meeting.

14. COMMUNICATIONS DASHBOARD (PAPER)

Ms McGreevy took Members through the paper, highlighting engagement meetings and summaries of external consultations and significant cases in September and October 2025.

The Board noted the paper.

AUDIT AND RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

15. COMMITTEE CHAIR'S UPDATE (PAPER)

The Committee Chair referred Members to the paper, highlighting the business of the Committee meeting held on 4 September 2025.

The Board noted the paper.

15.1 Risk Management Quarterly Report Q2 and Draft Strategic Risk Register Q3 2025-26 (Paper)

The Board Secretary took Members through the Risk Management Quarterly Report Q2 2025-26.

Summarising the updates to the SRR the Board Secretary explained that there is now one red risk, compared to three in the last quarter. Risk two (Programmes and Interventions) continues to be red, risk three (Risk Management of Service Users) is now sitting at amber due to two planned actions moving to Key Controls in relation to recruitment and organisational learning from SFOs. Risk four (Budget) has also been

reduced to amber status due to the initial savings plan being agreed by the Board and the opening pressure reduced.

The Board approved the paper.

15.2 Report to those Charged with Governance – Final (Paper)

Mr King referred Members to the final Report to Those Charged with Governance 2024-25. He advised that no significant changes had been made to the draft version brought to the Board in June.

The Board noted the paper.

CORPORATE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

16. COMMITTEE CHAIR'S UPDATE (PAPER)

Mrs Hunt, in the absence of the Committee Chair, took Members through the paper, summarising the business at the meeting on 2 September 2025.

16.1 PBNI Disciplinary Policy (Paper)

Ms Smyth referred to the summary of revisions that had been made to the previous policy and sought feedback from Members. It was noted that there will be less involvement of Board Members in the process going forward. Discussion included the lack of reference to disability and Trauma Informed Practice within the Procedures.

Action: Head of HR & OD to consider adding more narrative in relation to supporting staff with disabilities and making reference to Trauma Informed Practice within the Procedures.

The Board approved the paper.

16.2 Sustainability Plan (Paper)

Mr King referred members to the Stage 1 Activity Report on PBNI's Carbon Footprint and Costed Action Plan. This will be published on PBNI's website and must be considered and included for all business cases.

The Board approved the paper.

16.3 Disposal of Alderwood (Paper)

Mr King summarised the background and work to date undertaken to decommission and prepare the Alderwood site for disposal. Members were asked to approve the completion of the disposal and transfer to NIPS.

The Board approved the paper.

16.4 Financial Outturn Report – August 2025 (Paper)

Mr King gave a summary of the outturn, budget and forecast position for 2025-26 as at 31 August 2025. Monies had been accrued for the NILGOSC NIPSA pensions issue. The Pay Award 2025-26, a 3.2% uplift on all pay points, had been approved by the

Department and will be paid in September 2025 salaries. The Board Chair thanked the Chief Executive, Mr King and the Finance team for their work in Q2.

The Board noted the paper.

POLICY AND PRACTICE COMMITTEE

17. COMMITTEE CHAIR'S UPDATE (PAPER)

The Committee Chair updated Members on the business reviewed at its meeting on 11 September 2025, detailed in the paper.

The Board noted the update.

17.1 Service User Involvement Strategy (Paper)

Members were asked to consider the Service User Involvement Strategy and approve the Action Plan for Year 1. Progress will be monitored by the PPC.

The Board approved the paper.

17.2 New Initiatives (Paper)

Mr Hamilton presented the paper to Members outlining the proposed six new initiatives: Bail Information; Domestic Abuse Prevention Orders (DAPOs); Restorative Justice – ‘coordination/allocation of referrals’; Electronic Monitoring (GPS) – co-located team membership; Supervised Suspended Sentences; and the full roll out of Enhanced Combination Orders throughout NI. The first three initiatives are not under PBNI’s remit and all are subject to additional funding resources. The PPC will be updated on the progress of each initiative.

Action: Board Secretary to schedule a future Board Workshop focusing on ‘New Initiatives’.

The Board approved the paper.

17.3 Serious Further Offences Annual Report 2024-25 (Paper)

Ms Montgomery referred Members to the Annual Report on Serious Further Offences (SFOs) 2024-25, highlighting the importance of learning and actions following SFO Notification. She explained that the increase in SFOs compared to 2023/24 was mainly due to non-fatal strangulation being added as an eligible offence. She assured Members that this would be closely monitored.

The Board approved the paper.

17.4 Deaths under Supervision Annual Report 2024-25 (Paper)

Members were asked to note the Annual Report 2024-25 on Deaths of Service Users under Supervision, highlighting the importance of staff reviewing risk assessments, progressing referrals expediently, obtaining feedback on interventions and timely enforcement of breaches at an earlier stage, to try to prevent such deaths.

The Board noted the paper.

OTHER BUSINESS

18. ANY OTHER BUSINESS (VERBAL)

The Board Chair advised that the Department of Justice would be progressing a recruitment process for the Board Deputy Chair position in mid-October.

The next Board meeting will be held on Thursday 20 November 2025 at 9.30 am in PBNI HQ, Conference Room.

The meeting ended at 12.45 pm.

Mr Glenn Houston
Board Chair

Date

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