

**PROBATION BOARD FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**  
**BOARD MEETING – THURSDAY 19 FEBRUARY 2026**

**9.30 AM – CONFERENCE ROOM, PBNI HEADQUARTERS**

**ATTENDANCE**

**BOARD MEMBERS**

Mr Glenn Houston, Board Chair  
Ms B Mongan, Deputy Chair  
Ms K Anthony  
Mr J Johnston  
Mr M Mawhinney  
Ms E Patterson  
Ms M Brunt (via MS teams up to item 6, item 11 onwards)  
Mr B Ingram (via MS teams)  
Ms D Hunt  
Mr K Cameron  
Ms G McKeown  
Mr B Payne

**OFFICIALS**

Ms A Stewart, Chief Executive  
Mr S Hamilton, Director of Operations (via MS teams)  
Ms G Montgomery, Director of Operations  
Ms G McGreevy, Head of Communications  
Mr P King, Head of Finance & Estates  
Ms C Sweeney, Head of HR and L&OD  
Ms J Fitzsimons, Board Secretary  
Mrs A Abraham, Business Support Manager (Minutes)

**1. WELCOME, OPENING REMARKS AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

The Board Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, in particular the newly appointed Board Member, Mr Payne. Congratulations were extended to Ms Mongan in respect of her appointment to the role of Deputy Board Chair, which had been confirmed by the Minister earlier in the week. There were no conflicts of interest. A quorum was confirmed.

**2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies had been received from Mr Bowden.

**3. MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING – THURSDAY 20 NOVEMBER 2025 (PAPER)**

The minutes of the Board Meeting held on Thursday 20 November 2025 were approved as a true and accurate record.

The Board approved the minutes.

**4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES – THURSDAY 20 NOVEMBER 2025 (PAPER)**

There were seven actions from the previous meeting, of which four had been completed. In relation to the three outstanding actions: the Chief Executive informed Members that a draft CJINI MARA Inspection Report had been received for factual accuracy checking, and the final report would be brought to the Board once Ministerial approval for publication had been received. It was agreed that the Corporate Resources Committee (CRC) would nominate a Sustainability Champion at its next meeting and bring this to the April Board meeting for approval; and, the outcome of the remaining job evaluations has been delayed due to availability of panel members and will be reported at the next Board meeting.

The Board noted the paper.

## **5. CHAIR'S UPDATE (PAPER)**

The Board Chair referred Members to the paper highlighting attendance at various engagements. The Board Chair attended the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) meeting on 5 February 2026 and noted the good working relationships with internal and external auditors. He will also attend the next meetings of the Policy and Practice Committee (PPC) and Corporate Resources Committee (CRC).

The Board Chair attended the PPAG Senior Leadership Awards ceremony in the Bar Library in the presence of delegates from both jurisdictions, including the Permanent Secretary and his counterpart, the Secretary General.

Along with other Board Members, the Board Chair attended the 'Keeping the Community at the Heart of Criminal Justice' seminar in the University of Ulster at which the latest edition of the Irish Probation Journal was launched.

The Board Workshop on 19 March 2026 will focus on the annual Business Plan 2026-27, venue to be confirmed.

The Board noted the paper.

### **5.1 Reports from Board Visits and Events (Paper)**

Ms Anthony gave a summary of the visit to the Magherafelt office and community service project at Ballyronan Marina.

The Board noted the paper.

### **5.2 PBNI Work in Prisons, Workshop Summary (Paper)**

Mr Hamilton referred Members to the summary paper following the Board Prisons Workshop held on 22 January 2026. The themes emerging were outlined, including Clarity of Purpose and Strategic Direction, Partnership Working with NIPS, Healthcare and Others, Interventions and "What Works", Resettlement and Practical Barriers and Legislative and Accountability considerations. Mr Hamilton confirmed regular feedback is provided by the Chief Parole Commissioner and passed on to staff. The quality of the presentations provided by Ms Spence, Assistant Director Prisons and the Area Managers in each prison were commended.

The contribution of Niall Small (PCNI) was noted and the Board Chair confirmed that he had written a letter of thanks to Mr Small. A visit to HMP Magilligan is planned on 24 April 2026.

The Board noted the updates.

## **6. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S UPDATE (PAPER)**

The Chief Executive referred Members to key highlights in the paper.

### **Engagements**

The Chief Executive outlined engagements with staff, the Admin Forum and Leadership Forum, an on-boarding session of new staff, a meeting with PBNI social work students,

and team visits to Magherafelt and ISU Rural South, Portadown. Issues raised by admin staff included the challenges of working as a sole admin officer, limited opportunities for hybrid working, and the availability of car parking. An action plan has since been developed to address the key issues.

External engagement meetings included participation at the High Sheriff Service User Awards, attendance at the Retired Associates of Probation meeting, attendance at an NI Assembly event on 'Supporting Women in Public Life', an input to the Chief Executive's Forum on building confident leadership across the NI Public Sector, and a meeting with Judge Keown in relation to issues with the Substance Misuse Court operation and leadership which has now been stabilised. The Chief Executive also attended the Department of Justice (DoJ) Arms-Length Bodies briefing on the proposed draft budget for 2026-27 to 2029/30.

### **Key Issues**

Key issues detailed in the paper included progress on the development of the Corporate Plan; consideration of the implications for Probation of the draft multi-year budget; the UK Parliament Public Accounts Committee report on efficiency and resilience of the UK Probation Service; Causeway onboarding; the Organisational and Area Manager Review; options for the Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime (EPPOC) beyond 2027; a request from the Justice Committee for views on the impact of the Department of Health Adult Protection Bill; and an update on the CJINI Inspections.

In relation to Causeway Onboarding Phase 1, it was previously confirmed that it was not possible to go live on 19 January 2026 due to issues arising during testing and a scheduled code freeze. Testing has now been completed. Following engagement with the Head of Causeway, an onboarding date for PBNI has been agreed for the end of May 2026. The Board Chair acknowledged the work of Ms Montgomery, the Head of IT and the IT team and thanked the Chief Executive for her commitment to progressing the go live date.

In relation to the Draft Multi Year Budget for 2026-27 to 2029-30, Mr King gave a summary of the implications: Year 1 - achievable with some minor adjustments, Year 2 – likely to require consolidated staff reductions and office restructures, Year 3 – funding drop creates a position that is unachievable without significant structural and service delivery change. Further detailed analysis will be presented at future CRC and Board meetings.

### **Emerging Issues**

The Department of Justice intends to introduce the Sentencing Bill to the Assembly in the coming weeks, reflecting recommendations from the 2020 DoJ Sentencing Policy Review and the 2021 Way Forward report. Details had still to be received from the DoJ.

The Board noted the paper.

## **BOARD BUSINESS**

### **7. DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN 2026-29 (PAPER)**

Ms McGreevy referred Members to the draft Corporate Plan 2026-29 which was developed following extensive consultation with staff, service users, statutory partners,

community and voluntary sector partners and the wider public. Members found the plan straightforward to understand while also highlighting the complexities of probation and welcomed the focus on people. It was agreed that it will provide an appropriate framework for the Board when monitoring progress against key objectives over the next three years and for budget scenario planning. Ms McGreevy outlined the next steps: Any further feedback from Members and additional information, mainly within the section on resources, to be added before forwarding to the designer; a final draft will be forwarded to Members, and the Plan will be submitted to the Minister for approval.

The Board approved the Corporate Plan 2026-29 and agreed to submit to the Minister for approval when finalised.

#### **8. DRAFT ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN 2026-27 (PAPER)**

Mr Hamilton provided a summary of the draft Annual Business Plan 2026-27 and the actions to support year 1 of the Corporate Plan. This will be submitted to the Minister together with the Corporate Plan 2026-29.

Discussion took place around the four themes: Probation Practice, People, Partnerships and Future Proofing Our Service. Some amendments to language and terminology were suggested and the need for the Plan to align with the Strategic Risk Register. Further feedback was requested as soon as possible, before final submission to the Minister. It was agreed that realistic outcome measures and key performance indicators would be developed and discussed at the workshop in March.

The Board approved the Annual Business Plan 2026-27 and agreed to submit the Plan to the Minister for approval subject to amendments following feedback.

#### **9. QUARTER 3 BUSINESS PLAN PERFORMANCE 2025-26 (PAPER)**

Mr Hamilton outlined the progress on actions in respect of Business Plan Performance at the end of Q3 2025-26. Of the eighteen actions, five were complete, twelve have Amber (on target) ratings and one (in relation to sickness absence) has a red rating. Currently the status of the action in relation to sickness absence is Amber and this will be reflected in the Q4 update.

The Board approved the paper.

#### **10. DRAFT BUDGET ALLOCATION 2026-27 (VERBAL)**

Mr King had provided an update at Item 6.

The Board noted the update.

#### **11. BOARD SECRETARY'S BUSINESS (PAPER)**

The Board Secretary referred Members to the annual self-assessment checklist and requested completion by 26 March 2026, explaining that a collated response will be brought to the April Board meeting and would inform the PBNI Annual Report 2025-26.

Members were reminded to complete mandatory on-line training on cyber security and equality and confirmed that an e-mail with a link to the training site would be forwarded by the Learning & Development team.

Details of two further office visits to Portadown and Armagh will be sent to Members in due course.

The Board noted the update.

## **12. COMMUNICATIONS DASHBOARD (PAPER)**

Ms McGreevy highlighted the key engagements, current initiatives, a summary of external consultations and significant cases. She provided an overview of the progress on the Doubleband documentary, particularly the communications in respect of victims.

**Action: The PBNI response to the NI Housing Executive's consultation on the Supporting People Strategic Intent 2026-31 to be shared with Members via Decision Time.**

The Board noted the paper.

## **AUDIT AND RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

### **13. COMMITTEE CHAIR'S UPDATE (PAPER)**

The Committee Chair referred Members to the paper, highlighting the ongoing work of the Committee. The paper set out a summary of the ARAC meeting held on 5 February 2026. The progress on the three Internal Audits was noted. In respect of the Audit Control Log, actions had been taken in relation to the recent Area Manager Monitoring review, in line with agreed recommendations and are being kept under review. The final report on the Standard Deviations Deep Dive exercise had been received. At the end of Quarter 4, evidence will be provided if there is continued improvement. The results will be taken forward at PPC.

Mr King is working on an Assurance Mapping template and when populated, it will be clear to see all risks and developments and easily track progress.

Ms McGreevy updated Members on the work by NIPSO to develop a new Complaints model for Departments and ALBs which should be implemented in summer 2026. The differences to PBNI's Complaints Policy relate to a reduction in time frames for completion, a requirement to investigate anonymous complaints and the inclusion of legal and disciplinary cases in the complaints process. The PBNI Complaints Policy will be updated and brought to PPC and Board in Quarter 2 2026-27.

The Board noted the paper.

#### **13.1 Strategic Risk Register Q4 2025-26 (Paper)**

The Board Secretary referred Members to the paper. The Strategic Risk Register (SRR) Q4 2025-26 had been reviewed at the ARAC meeting on 5 February 2026. All scorings remain the same, except for Risk 4 'Budget'. The residual score for this risk was reduced from 9 to 3 due to additional funding of £254k received at December monitoring. Risk 6 'Technology' had been significantly revised due to the agreed 'go live' date of January 2026 for the Causeway onboarding not being achieved. Horizon Scanning had been reviewed and revisions made. There continue to be two red risks (Risk 1B Staff

Resources and Capacity and Risk 6 Technology) and five others have an amber rating.

Following discussion, and as recommended by ARAC, it was agreed that the Risk Appetite for Risk 1b should be set to 'Open'.

The Board noted the revisions to the Strategic Risk Register Q4 2025-26 and approved the Risk Appetite for Risk 1b as 'Open'.

## **CORPORATE RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

### **14. COMMITTEE CHAIR'S UPDATE (PAPER)**

The Committee Chair referred Members to the paper which summarised the business discussed at the CRC meeting held on 4 December 2025.

The Board noted the paper.

#### **14.1 Financial Outturn Report – January 2026 (Paper)**

Mr King advised that a break-even position was forecast at the year end. The Capital budget will be fully utilised and there may be additional capital funding available. The Estates team is currently working on bringing forward works at the Ormeau site. A new opportunity has arisen to purchase the adjoining property to the Armagh office, providing the sale goes through in March. A Business Case for Board consideration is being prepared and will set out the merits and risks associated with the planned purchase..

The Board noted the paper.

Ms Sweeney advised that more work was required on the Pay Incremental Progression Policy and Procedures and would be meeting the CRC Committee Chair later today to discuss.

## **POLICY AND PRACTICE COMMITTEE**

### **15. COMMITTEE CHAIR'S UPDATE (PAPER)**

The Committee Chair provided an update from the PPC meeting held on 11 December 2025. Ms Montgomery had apprised the committee of an independent review of the three victims information schemes operational across the criminal justice system, jointly commissioned by the Director General NIPS, the Chief Executive PBNI and the Head of Public Protection, DoJ. The report brings forward twenty recommendations which will inform improvements for PBNI and will be brought to the Board when finalised.

PBNI is currently working on a Responsive Case Management scheme to replace Standards Deviations. This will be piloted in 2026/27 and the evaluation will be brought to a future PPC meeting.

The Board noted the paper.

#### **15.1 Caseload Statistics Q1 and Q2 2025-26 (Paper)**

Mr Hamilton drew Members' attention to the key headlines in the paper. The report showed a downturn in Probation Orders, probably due to offenders spending longer on remand and then receiving a licence. Currently there are approximately 4,000 service users under supervision, with a ratio of 3:1 managed by PBNI in the community and managed by prison based staff. The Caseload Statistics Q3 2025-26 report will be available by the end of February 2026.

The Board noted the paper.

## **16. CORRESPONDENCE (PAPER)**

There were thirteen items of correspondence to note, most of which were self-explanatory.

**16.1 Ombudsman, NIPSO to Chief Executive on Development and Implementation of New Complaints Standards for NI Government Departments and ALBs**

**16.2 Finance Director, DoJ to Chief Executive on Revised Budget Allocation 2025-26**

**16.3 Chief Inspector, CJINI to Chief Executive on Inspection of Adult Safeguarding Arrangements in the Criminal Justice System in NI**

**16.4 Between Chief Executive and Causeway Director on PBNI's On-Boarding to Causeway Data Sharing Mechanism for Phase 1**

**16.5 Between Director General, NIPS and Chief Executive on Review of Rehabilitation Framework**

**16.6 Permanent Secretary, DoJ to Chief Executive on Draft Budget 2026-27 to 2029-30**

**16.7 Permanent Secretary, DAERA, to Chief Executive on the Climate Change (Reporting Bodies) Regulations (NI) 2024 – Completion of the First Mitigation Reporting Cycle**

**16.8 Between Clerk to the Justice Committee, NI Assembly and Chief Executive on the Adult Protection Bill**

**16.9 Between Clerk to the Justice Committee, NI Assembly and Chief Executive on the Draft Multi-Year Budget 2026-2029/30**

**16.10 Secretary of State for NI, UK Government to Justice Minister on Commencement of the Identity and Language Act**

**16.11 Finance Director, DoJ to Chief Executive on Proposed Draft Budget 2026-27 to 2029-30 Consultation**

**16.12 Finance Director, DoJ to Chief Executive on Proposed Draft Budget 2026-27 to 2029-30 – Indicative Allocations**

**16.13 High Sheriff of Co. Antrim, High Sheriff's Association NI to Chief Executive on a Letter of Thanks**

The Chief Executive referred Members to Item 16.10 Correspondence from the Secretary of State to the Justice Minister on the Commencement of the Identity and Language Act. The implications for PBNI will need to be considered. The Chief Executive will provide an update at a future Board meeting. The Board noted the correspondence.

## OTHER BUSINESS

### 17. ANY OTHER BUSINESS (VERBAL)

There was no other business.

The next Board meeting will be held on Thursday 23 April 2026 at 9.30 am in PBNI HQ, Conference Room.

The meeting ended at 12.28 pm.

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Mr Glenn Houston  
Board Chair

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Date