

PROBATION BOARD FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

SPECIAL BOARD MEETING – 26 JUNE 2015

9.00 AM – CONFERENCE ROOM, PBNI

364th MEETING – 35th of TENTH TERM OF OFFICE

ATTENDANCE

Mrs Vilma Patterson (Chairman)	Mr D Brown
Mr E Jardine	Mrs L Jennett
Mr T O'Hanlon	Mrs P Shepherd
Mr D Rose	Dr M Wardlow
Dr R Wilson	

Ms C Lamont, (Acting) Director
Mr P Doran, Deputy Director
Mr H Hamill, (Acting) Deputy Director
Ms C McCann, Head of Finance
Mrs W Rodgers, Personal Secretary (Minutes)

Guest, Mr Mark Adam, DOJ Reform Programme

1. OPENING REMARKS AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The Chairman welcomed Members to the meeting and introduced Mark Adam, lead for the DOJ Reform Programme, to the Members. The Chairman thanked Mr Adam for attending the Special Board Meeting to meet with the Members and advised that the purpose of the meeting was for Mr Adam, who is leading the structural reform on behalf of the Permanent Secretary, to advise Board Members on plans for the structural reform of the DOJ and where and what may be the impact on Probation.

The Members and attendees introduced themselves to Mr Adam.

No Conflicts of Interest were declared

2. MEETING

Mr Adam thanked the Chairman for her welcome and advised Members that he saw the meeting as a discussion more than a meeting.

Mr Adam commented that money was the driver in the process although his aim was to put the right services in the right place 'enabling justice' and to ensure the policy agenda for the future. There were three questions for consideration in the programme:

1. What is the answer to interface issues in the community?
2. What is the relationship with the Police?
3. What is the relationship with Prisons and YJA?

Mr Adam would be looking at: youth conferencing which could potentially sit with Probation or stay with YJA; the arrangements for Community and Voluntary Sector Funding; NIPS should have a simplified hierarchy; working with YJA synergies and how to deal with the past legacies with regard to the Police.

The key desire is where PBNI see community service delivery sitting and what is its status, what service and what is to be delivered is important. Once redesigned the community interface would be a powerful new model.

The floor was opened up to questions from the Members.

The Chairman commenced the discussion by commenting that it is early in the debate and that Probation want to be part of the influencing in the debate but has no desire to go down the NOMS route. Probation is successful in its outcomes and operating through stream lined approaches with the Organisation being open to considering all options. Mr Adam confirmed that there was no appetite for a NOMS route and he advised that PBNI will not move Directorate within a restructuring of the DOJ directorate until the right alternatives are in place for the arm's length bodies.

Dr Wardlow commented that this is about people, what does success look like? This is the key issue and what is the statutory responsibility of the state? A division between administrative policy and delivery could create silos.

In response to Dr Wilson's concerns about the proposed division of Directorate responsibility; and his comments that policy should drive change, Mr Adam advised that there is duplication of services throughout the justice system and the Department needs to look at itself – legal aid is a pressure. In England and Wales rehabilitation has gone, Northern Ireland is the only region driving rehabilitation forward and we cannot afford to lose this.

Mr Adam commented on PCSPs on the bureaucracy and cost of PCSPs and their value for money. It was felt that they have the potential to contribute to criminal justice.

Mrs Shepherd thanked Mr Adam for his openness within the discussion and asked, if there was a blank piece of on paper where would the Board fit in? She asked if there was established a set of guiding principles that everyone would sign up to and whether there was an independent input to the reform so it is not just driven through. It is important that everyone agrees the direction of travel. Mr Adam advised that he would be talking to people to ascertain their thinking, although the timeframe for reform is 4 – 5 years. Mr Adam hopes to advise what will be on the agenda by September/October 2015.

Mrs Jennett commented that there needs to be link that brings together the process right through from the offence to Parole Commissioners to linking to the outside.

In terms of opportunities for the Board, Mr Adam commented that 'it is about growing a way out of a crisis or reduce and sell our way out'.

The Chairman summarised the discussion bringing attention to money, reorganisation and priorities. Lessons had been learnt from the NOMS experience which has not worked for delivery of probation services. It is important to have the right design for the new structures. Probation keeps offenders at the centre of what they do. Having NDPB status gives Probation flexibility to work independently and create partnerships. With the question of timelines, the Board would like to know when they will also be consulted, to ensure overall governance; the Board would like to be consulted as the process progresses. Mr Adam advised that the programme commences on Monday 29 June 2015 with the first meeting taking place on that day. The (Acting) Director and Gillian Robinson, Head of HR will be party to programme arrangements. He is happy to come back for discussions however there will be a requirement for conversations over the summer and

then he will return to the Board in September. Mr Adam advised the Members that the timelines for Forensics and PBNI would be in the next calendar year with Courts and Police in the following calendar year. Mr Adam advised that he was happy to meet with any of the Members individually to discuss the programme.

The Chairman thanked Mr Adam for attending.

The meeting closed at 10.15 am

32. DATE OF NEXT BOARD MEETING

The next meeting would take place on Friday 14 August 2015 at 9.00 am, PBNI Headquarters, Conference Room.

Vilma Patterson
Chairman

Date