

PROBATION BOARD FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

BOARD MEETING – 11 DECEMBER 2015**9.30 AM – CONFERENCE ROOM, PBNI****369th MEETING – 1st of ELEVENTH TERM OF OFFICE****ATTENDANCE**

Mrs Vilma Patterson (Chairman)	Mr R Mullan (Deputy Chairman)
Mr D Brown	Mrs J Erskine
Mrs J Gillespie	Mr E Jardine
Mr I Jeffers	Ms A Matthews
Mr G OhEara	Mrs P Shepherd
Mrs B Stuart	Mr D Wall

Ms C Lamont, (Acting) Director
Mr P Doran, Deputy Director
Mr H Hamill, (Acting) Deputy Director
Mrs G Robinson, Head of HR
Mrs C Teggart, Head of Finance
Mr M Cox, Board Secretary
Mrs W Rodgers, Personal Secretary (Minutes)

1. OPENING REMARKS AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The Chairman welcomed Members to the inaugural meeting of the newly constituted Board. Members were informed of the timetable for the meeting with a group photograph being taken after the meeting. The Chairman advised the meeting that she had met with all Members of the Board as well as the outgoing Board Members for their thoughts and observations on the Board. It had been a most useful and informative exercise. All in attendance individually introduced themselves to the other attendees.

Declared conflicts of interest: Mr Wall advised that he was a member of NIACRO and Mrs Stuart advised that she was Vice Chair of Extern.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mr T O'Hanlon.

3. CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES

The minutes of the Board meeting held on 13 November 2015 were accepted as an accurate account of the meeting with a small number of agreed minor amendments.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES (Paper 157/15)

The Board noted the matter arising which is expected to be addressed in January 2016.

5. CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE – VERBAL

The Chairman advised Members that she and Mr Jardine had attended, on behalf of the Board, the Public Protection Advisory Group (PPAG) seminar on 20 November 2015 at Belfast City Hall. The Seminar was excellent with updates and examples of the work being carried out given by both PBNI and the Irish Probation Service. Some service users were present and gave attendees examples of their experience in using the services of the Probation Board.

The Chairman also advised that she, Ms Lamont and Mr Cox, met with the Permanent Secretary, Nick Perry; the Director for Safer Communities, Anthony Harbinson, and the Director General of Prisons, Sue McAllister as a follow up to the Accountability Meeting with the Minister in October. Areas of discussion were: the restructuring of the Department with the PBNI moving to the Reducing Offending Directorate (ROD) and ensuring that this would not affect PBNI's independence; the current secondment of the PBNI's Director to Prisons would not result in a conflict of interest in his role. The Chairman advised that she will follow up on the meeting by letter.

Members were reminded of the Board Induction event taking place on the 14 and 15 January 2016.

The Board noted the update.

6. DIRECTOR'S UPDATE – VERBAL

The (Acting) Director, on behalf of herself and her Executive colleagues, welcomed the Members to the newly constituted Board and looked forward to working with the Members.

The first meeting of the Heads of Probation and the Heads of Prison, North and South, is due to take place on 14 December 2015 with all attending aware of the challenges faced going forward.

The Board noted the update.

7. CORRESPONDENCE (Paper 158/15)

Members noted the correspondence. The (Acting) Director advised that she will follow up on the letter from Les Allamby with her Executive colleagues and will advise the Board of any update.

The letter received from Derek Baker on the Restructuring Programme was noted for information.

8. POLICY AND PRACTICE COMMITTEE (Minutes)

The Chairman introduced Mr Jardine as the interim chair of the Committee. It was explained that the new committee structure had been piloted since August of this year and had worked well so far.

The Chair of the Committee gave the Members background into the remit of the Committee and the areas of work that it covers, also how it links into the Board.

The Chair of the Committee provided the Members with background into the caseload figures and how this impacts on PBNI. The Deputy Director advised Members of the current issue of a backlog in the courts due to barristers not taking some criminal cases and that the Lord Chief Justice had called a meeting to plan for when the cases might come to court. At present there is a backlog of approximately 600 cases which PBNI has plans in place to cope with. The position will be kept under close review

9. INFORMATION ASSURANCE POLICY (PAPER 159/15)

At the meeting of the Committee held on 27 November 2015 the overarching Information Assurance Policy and supporting guidance and procedures were discussed in depth. The two key policies were the Information Assurance Policy and the Internet and Email Usage Policy. The Deputy Director took Members through the policies and advised that the amendments requested by the Committee had been made.

The Board approved both the Information Assurance Policy and the Internet and Email Usage Policy.

10. ESTATES – DOWNPATRICK OFFICE HOW SERVICES WILL BE DELIVERED USING YJA OFFICES (PAPER 160/15)

The Head of Finance presented the paper to the Members and informed that, on this occasion due to time constraints and the requirement for a decision, the paper had not been processed through the Corporate Resources Committee in advance of consideration by the Board.

Members were advised of the reasons for the urgency in finding alternative premises to the PBNI Downpatrick office and the efforts that had taken place to find a suitable alternative. Members noted that the YJA office did not meet with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) however there were alternative arrangements in place to meet disabled clients in Downpatrick Courthouse if necessary. There are such long standing arrangements in place at Enniskillen and Omagh which have worked well. The Board were asked to approve the temporary arrangement of PBNI sub-letting a floor in the YJA office in Downpatrick for a period of one year.

In answer to a question, it was confirmed that PBNI's branding will be on the premises.

The Board approved the sub-letting of the YJA office as requested in the paper.

Mrs Gillespie asked for the Members to have sight of the Estate Strategy. Members were informed that this would form part of their ongoing induction.

11. MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES (PAPER 161/15)

The Chairman provided Members with background into the makeup and purpose of the committees and what committees there were. In addition to the existing committees (Audit, Corporate Resources, Policy & Practice and Remuneration), panels maybe required to consider appeals on voluntary and community funding and grievances.

There had been only two standing committees (Audit and General Purposes) up until August 2015. However following a review it was decided to establish the additional committees to allow for more in-depth discussion. During the pilot of the new structure, Mr Jardine chaired the Policy & Practice Committee (PPC) and Mr Mullan chaired the Corporate Resources Committee (CRC). Mrs Erskine had served as Deputy Chair of the Audit Committee (AC) and had agreed to take over as Chair. Members were asked to express an interest in which committee they wish to join or have an interest in their work and whether they would be interested in Chair / Deputy Chair positions for the committees. A Repository and an Expression of Interest form will be emailed to Members for completion to help match Members' to the most appropriate committee. There is urgency around the membership of the Audit Committee; Members were asked to make a return by 15 December 2015. All other forms are due by the 4 January 2016 and it is intended to ratify membership at the January Board on 15 January 2016.

Action: Members to return Repository and Expression of Interest forms to the Board Secretary in the timeframes given.

12. FINANCE OUTTURN – NOVEMBER 2015 (PAPER 162/15)

The Head of Finance introduced the paper and briefed the Members on the information contained within the paper. It was explained that, as there was not a Monitoring Round in November there had not been an opportunity to re-profile expenditure which means the current figures do not reflect the true position. A request has now been received for the January Monitoring Round, which will allow the profile to be reviewed. The expectation is that the new profile will show a break even forecast.

Members were taken through and discussed areas of interest including the current situation on:

- VAT registration and the positive impact on revenue that this would have
- The 2016/2017 budget scenario paper although there had been no information received on what the budget would be for 2016/2017
- Staffing costs and the training budget

The impact of the cuts received from Prisons was discussed and the impact on staffing.

The Chairman informed Members that the next Overview Meeting with the Department is on the 12 January 2016.

The Board noted the paper

13. PROGRAMME AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT UPDATE (PAPER 163/15)

Members were advised of the purpose of the paper and the Head of Finance updated on the current position of the business cases and projects.

A Member asked about the Workforce Modernisation Programme, specifically if it had had internal and external inputs. It was advised that an Organisational Development Project had been carried out during the year with an external input. The Workforce Modernisation Programme is building on the progress to date from the Organisational Development Project.

There was discussion on the use of any underspend being used to fund programmes. The Chairman advised that it had been one of the most difficult decisions for the Board in the last year to reduce funding in the Community and Voluntary Sector across Northern Ireland for support services but this was necessary to protect statutory front line work.

The Board noted the paper.

14. MANAGEMENT INFORMATION (PAPER 164/15)

The Head of HR introduced the HR section of the paper and gave Members an update on staffing. There was discussion around the turnover of staff with Members being advised that this was mostly likely due to the staff waiting for the outcome of the work on a voluntary exit scheme. However, the decision was taken at the last Board not to participate in the scheme as it would not provide value for money.

There was discussion on sick absence figures. Members were advised that NISRA would be compiling the figures instead of it happening in house with the expectation that the figures would be consistently presented across the Department. It was stated that there is a particular issue with Long Term Sickness (LTS) which is being addressed by new policies and procedures now in place. A Member asked what the target percentage was for sick absence and stated that it is 5.5% in Health. It was advised that this year there had not been a target but there will be for next year in the Business Plan. A Member suggested that offices with no absence should also be shown on the figures.

The (Acting) Deputy Director took the Members through the caseload figures, advising that this area of work is brought to the PPC for in-depth discussion. It was highlighted that there are more complex cases than in 2011, with the staffing levels being the same as 2011. A summary of caseload shows that Community Service Orders have increased by 29% since this time last year.

The Deputy Director updated Members on the Information Strategy and explained that a group had been convened to look at Phase 2 of the MinutePad rollout. IT were looking at WiFi connectivity throughout HQ to make connection easier for the devices. The Head of IT and Head of Finance are working on a Business Case for a capital bid on this.

The Deputy Director confirmed that there were no Serious Further Offences (SFOs) to report this month.

In response to a question on communications with staff, the (Acting) Director advised that she issues a bi-monthly communique to staff, the Head of HR continues to engage with unions and there are staff engagement events due to take place in February 2016.

The Chairman advised Members of the importance of Board Members' visits to offices both to see the work in the field first hand and to represent the Board with staff engagement.

The Board noted the paper.

15. PROGRAMME OF VISITS AND BUSINESS (PAPER 165/15)

The Chairman introduced the paper to the Members advising that it provides a wealth of information on the scale of engagement with stakeholders and events that PBNI are involved in. The (Acting) Director highlighted a number of items to Members.

Discussion took place around the benchmarking of Probation against the rest of Europe and England and Wales with positive feedback on PBNI being noted. A Member asked if there had been any feedback from the Chief Inspector of the Criminal Justice Inspection for Northern Ireland (CJINI) on the report on Maghaberry with reference to PBNI. The Chairman advised that she had met with Brendan McGuigan and will feedback to the Board with any update as appropriate.

The Board noted the paper.

16. BOARD WORK PLAN 2015-2016 (PAPER 166/15)

The Members were advised of the purpose of the paper and how it advises Members of the forward plan of work for the Board. It is updated each month as required, giving substantive items and standing and quarterly items.

The Board noted the paper.

17. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman informed that the feasibility of having a conference focusing on Probation was being carried out. More information will be available at the next meeting of the Board. She advised Members that work would be commencing on planning for the new Corporate Plan for 2017 - 2020.

Action: Information on a potential conference to be provided by the Head of Communications.

Action: Preparation of the Corporate Planning process. by end of financial year by the (Acting) Director.

18. BOARD SECRETARY'S BUSINESS

The Board Secretary reminded Members:

- Timely submission of expense claims
- In January a Register of Interests form will be sent to Members to complete
- The Board Induction event will be on 14 and 15 of January and a programme will be sent to Members shortly. If any Members wish to stay overnight or have any special dietary requirements these needs should be notified. All Members are to bring their MinutePad to the meeting
- There will be a rolling plan of visits to offices by Members throughout the year
- Please wear your PBNI passes, when received, in the building
- The use of telephones – in the meeting should not happen at least as a courtesy to other Members

19. CLOSED SESSION

Minutes from the closed session held on 13 November 2015 were agreed as accurate.

20. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would take place on Friday 15 January 2016 at as part of the Board Induction Event – Park Avenue Hotel, 158 Holywood Road, Belfast, BT4

Vilma Patterson
Chairman

Date