

PROBATION BOARD FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

BOARD MEETING – 31 AUGUST 2012

327TH MEETING – 30TH OF TENTH TERM OF OFFICE

1. ATTENDANCE

1.1 Present

Mr R Spence (Chairman)
Mr J Quinn (Deputy Chair)

Mrs L Jennett	Mr D Rose
Mrs H McCartan	Mrs V Patterson
Mr J McKeever	Mr M Wardlow (except item 11)
Mr B Mooney	Dr R Wilson
Mr B Osborne	

1.2 Officials

Mr P Doran (Deputy Director Operations) (from item 3)
Ms C Lamont (Deputy Director Operations) (from item 3)
Mr P Moss (Board Secretary) (from item 3)
Ms S Forrester (Secretariat) (from item 3)
Mrs M Canavan (Head of Finance) (items 9-13)
Ms L Cooper (Head of Business Planning and Development) (items 10-12)

2. CLOSED SESSION

The Chairman briefed Members, in the absence of officers, about an HR matter.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Mr McNeill, Mrs O'Rourke, the Director, the Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services and the Head of Communications.

4. OPENING REMARKS AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The Chairman welcomed everyone. He explained that a staff observer who had been expected to attend was now unable to be present.

Members were reminded that this was the closing date for reply in respect of the 2012 Golf outing.

Mr Wardlow declared a Conflict of Interest in respect of agenda item 7, Section 75 Annual Progress Report and indicated that he would leave the meeting when this item was discussed.

A further Conflict of Interest was declared by Mr Osborne at agenda item 12 (paragraph 14 in the minutes).

5. CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 22 JUNE 2012 (M6/12)

The minutes were signed as a correct record.

6. MATTERS ARISING (Paper 62/12) (tabled)

(i) Members noted that the CEP Seminar had been cancelled due to poor anticipated attendance (page 3, paragraph 6(ii)).

(ii) Ms Lamont indicated that the Statement of Policy on Discretionary Provision (pages 3-4, paragraph 8) would be amended in the near future.

(iii) An update on punishments beatings/threats (page 7, paragraph 18) would be provided to the October Board meeting.

(iv) Mr Doran stated that there was nothing further to report on funding (page 8, paragraph 25(ii)). The Chairman reported on a meeting which the Director and he had had with Mr Peter May, Department of Justice (DoJ).

(v) Members who had attended the Inspire Art Launch on 3 July commended the event and suggested that the theme of “Art and Rehabilitation” would form a worthwhile piece of doctoral research. The Chairman said that this could be discussed with the Head of Business Planning and Development.

Action: Mr Doran

The hope was expressed that it might be possible for the art work to be displayed in a wider setting.

(vi) The Board noted the remaining matters arising and the actions taken.

7. CORRESPONDENCE (Paper 63/12) (tabled)

Members noted the Criminal Justice Board Communiqué July 2012 which was for internal use only.

The Chairman drew attention to the letter from the Northern Ireland Hospice thanking PBNI for a donation of £724.50 and commended Mrs McCartan for her contribution to this fund raising.

The remaining letters were noted.

Ms Lamont shared a communication which the Director had received from Investors in People (IIP) which included a certificate indicating that PBNI had been recognised as an IIP employer for ten years.

FOR DECISION

8. Management Statement/Financial Memorandum (Paper 64/12)

The Secretary outlined the various stages which had led to the production of the current draft.

He explained that there was one outstanding issue which had not been resolved with DoJ relating to the inclusion in the document of the internal PBNI paper “Delegated Financial Limits – Authority to Incur Expenditure.” Nevertheless it was considered preferable to seek approval of the document within the lifetime of the current Board.

The Board approved the paper and it was agreed that it would be returned to DoJ for final amendment and subject to a final proofreading.

The signed version would then be brought to Members for information.

Action: Secretary

9. Community Development Strategy and Policy 2012/13 (Paper 66/12)

Mr Doran presented the paper on behalf of the Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services and highlighted changes set out in the cover note in terms of increased limits for reviews and an updated timetable. He commented that the advertisement would encourage applications for funding up to £10,000. The Strategy included an updated section on customers, an emphasis on adjudicated offenders and now reflected the new arrangements with Policing and Community Safety Partnerships. The Policy Aim was that approximately 5% of PBNI’s budget would be used to provide Community Development funding. A dedicated manager had now been appointed to work in this area.

A number of points were raised in discussion:

- The Community Development funding relationship was not necessarily a partnership
- It was confusing to encourage applications up to an implied maximum of £10,000 when it was possible to be awarded a much larger grant. It might be preferable to say that £10,000 was the average grant size.
- It needed to be made clear whether an organisation could make one application only or multiple applications for a series of projects
- There was a lack of clarity resulting from the use in the same document of the terms “purchasing services” and “grant in aid” which were two different systems
- This expenditure was recorded in the Annual Accounts as “Grants for Community Development”
- The Policy Statement (paragraph 12.6.1) needed to be more precise in identifying those areas which PBNI wished to address
- There was no need for both a Strategy and a Policy
- Consideration should be given to developing a simpler Policy template
- This was the only area of PBNI’s work which could potentially allow it to engage in prevention. A decision had been previously been taken not to fund

prevention in the light of budgetary constraints, yet the reference from the Corporate Plan in paragraph one of the Strategy referred to “those at risk of offending and re-offending”

- The Board would welcome additional information on the evaluation of this funding and the expected outcomes
- The document was a reflection of an on-going debate which had been taking place over a number of years
- It would be valuable to look at the grant documentation used by other organisations
- It had been decided to advance the timetable in the light of the amount of administrative work involved
- Any delay caused by taking time to overhaul the process radically could have a detrimental effect on potential recipients of funding
- The Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJINI) was undertaking a review of the voluntary and community sectors’ involvement in the Northern Ireland Criminal Justice system, but this was not due to be published before December 2012
- A review by the CJINI in 2006 had complimented PBNI’s scheme and this paper represented an update of the previous year’s scheme which the Board had endorsed.

It was agreed that the Director through the Deputy Director Operations would draft a shorter document for approval by the General Purposes Committee on 14 September which would set out a simplified set of arrangements for 2013/14 which would still enable the proposed timetable to be met.

Action: Mr Doran

10. DoJ Reform Programme: Internal Audit (Paper 67/12)

Ms Lamont presented the paper.

The Chair of the Audit Committee indicated that the Committee would support the line of action proposed by the Director.

The Board approved the Director’s recommendation that PBNI should avail of the one year extension in its current contract with KPMG and give further consideration to arrangements for Internal Audit service provision from 2014/15.

Action: Director

11. Section 75 Annual Progress Report (Paper 65/12)

Mr Wardlow left the meeting for this item.

The Head of Business Planning and Development presented the paper, highlighting work around the Revised Equality Scheme, strategic implementation, equality monitoring and research and Good Relations.

The Board approved the Section 75 Annual Progress Report for submission to the Equality Commission.

Action: Equality Manager

FOR NOTING

12. Q1 Business Plan update (Paper 68/12)

The Head of Business Planning and Development presented the paper, explaining that, by the end of the first quarter of the year (June 2012), eight of the ten objectives had a green “RAG” status.

Members considered that the amber status of Objective 2 (relating to a pilot learning and communications difficulties screening exercise) might need to be reconsidered at the end of the year, as this was linked to a wider programme of work which had not yet begun.

The Board noted the paper.

13. Financial Outturn: June 2012 (Paper 69/12)

The Head of Finance presented the paper.

She explained the various elements which were included in salary costs where spend against budget was 25%.

In Other Revenue spend against budget was 37% as rates had been paid in full in May. This area of the budget was particularly challenging as there were still pressures emerging.

There had been no capital expenditure to the end of June, although the figure at the end of August stood at £70k.

The Prompt Payments results had declined due to the demands of the move to Account NI to which staff had been obliged to give priority.

In response to queries, the Head of Finance said that travel and subsistence claims were now being processed using the Account NI I-Expenses system and it was hoped that teething problems would soon be overcome. There was significant variance in the electricity and telephone headings, but profiling had been done on an across the year basis and this would even up over the year.

The Chairman requested that in future this paper should have a paragraph on underlying critical assumptions which would include those factors which had the potential to cause a variance in the figures in the region of £100k.

Action: Head of Finance

The Board noted the paper.

14. Management Information (Paper 70/12)

Ms Lamont introduced the paper.

She drew attention to the sickness absence figures which now stood at an average of 13.21 days per employee for the year to date against a target of 10 days.

She mentioned the Health and Safety accident/incident statistics, pointing out that an incident in June had had to be reported to the Health and Safety Executive.

She highlighted some of the issues around Account NI which had gone live on 2 July.

She talked through the caseload and report figures. The total number of orders being supervised by PBNI was 3% higher than at the end of July 2011. The total number of reports completed in the 12 months to the end of July 2012 was up 5% on the 12 months to the end of July 2011. The number of PSRs had fallen by 5%, while the number of short PSRs completed had doubled.

Following the recent recruitment exercise, PBNI had now offered 18 fixed term contracts to Probation Officers who were likely to be in post by the end of September 2012. Ms Lamont thanked the Human Resources department for the speed with which they had processed this exercise.

Ms Lamont outlined the current position regarding a hostel in Belfast.

Mr Doran briefed Members on the detail of a number of CJINI inspections and on a Serious Further Offence.

Concern was expressed at the level of sickness absence. Members asked that the Head of Human Resources would provide additional information on this area at the next Board meeting including a breakdown of the figures by staff group and detail as to how the different stages in the current procedures were followed.

Action: Head of Human Resources

Members discussed the hostel issue in some detail. Mr Osborne declared an interest in terms of a piece of work he was undertaking. Members supported the position taken by senior management and it was suggested that PBNI might consider sending a note of support to the hostel providers.

Action: Director

It was agreed that any issues arising from the move to Account NI should be discussed at the Risk Management Group.

Action: Director

The Board noted the paper.

15. Programme of Visits and Business (Paper 71/12)

The Chairman highlighted the visit of the Probation Association Chairman and Chief Executive which had showcased PBNI's work and provided an opportunity to learn about developments in England and Wales.

The Board noted the paper.

16. Political and Public Affairs: update (Verbal)

Mr Doran drew attention to the visit of the Justice Minister to the Waterside office which was featured in the tabled Probation News.

AUDIT COMMITTEE

17. Report from the Committee (Paper 72/12)

The Committee Chair presented the paper.

She invited Members to note:

- The satisfactory level of assurance in the Internal Audit report on the Review of the Management of Offenders who pose a Risk of Serious Harm to Others
- The overall satisfactory level of assurance in the Internal Audit end year report against audit plan for 2011/12
- The unqualified Audit opinion in the 2011/12 Annual Accounts
- The positive conclusions of the NIAO Report to Those Charged with Governance
- The draft Committee Annual Report 2011/12 which the Board had considered at its June meeting
- The establishment of a Business Review and Improvement Team
- Annexes A and B which covered the closed sessions with the Internal and External Auditors. Both these sessions had been very positive. In the session with the external auditors the need to advance the timetable for the preparation of the annual accounts had been highlighted.

The Committee would hold its next meeting on Friday 12 October.

The Board noted the paper.

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

18. Report from the Committee (Paper 73/12)

The Committee Deputy Chair presented the paper.

The main topic of discussion had been the Strategic Framework for Reducing Offending. It was considered that the DoJ consultation paper had not given sufficient recognition to PBNI's role as a key partner. Senior Management would draft a response to the consultation.

The Committee had also received an update on Terrorist/Politically Motivated Offenders and the Director had undertaken to keep the Board up to date with any further developments.

Action: Director

The Chairman advised that the Director and he had met with Peter May regarding the Reducing Offending Strategy. There were to be a number of public meetings at each of which the Board would be represented by Members and officers. He had also drawn attention to the topic in his article in Probation News. He proposed that the General Purposes Committee meeting on 14 September should consider PBNI's draft response which could then be finalised after the public meetings.

The Board noted the paper.

OTHER BUSINESS

19. Chairman's Business

The Board agreed to the Chairman's proposal that the Board meeting on 5 October 2012 should be held in the PBNI Ballymena office.

20. Director's/Secretary's Business

The Secretary said that there were a number of copies of the Probation Association Annual Review available for any Member who wished to have one.

21. Any Other Business

It was confirmed that the General Purposes Committee would meet on 14 September when the two substantive agenda items would be the Strategic Framework for Reducing Offending and Community Development 2012/13.

22. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting was confirmed for 5 October 2012 at 9:30am.

The meeting closed at 12:05pm.