

PROBATION BOARD FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

BOARD MEETING – 5 OCTOBER 2012

328TH MEETING – 31ST OF TENTH TERM OF OFFICE

1. ATTENDANCE

1.1 Present

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

Mrs L Jennett (from item 7)	Mr D Rose
Mrs H McCartan	Mr M Wardlow
Mr B Mooney	Dr R Wilson
Mrs M O'Rourke	
Mr B Osborne	

1.2 Officials

Mr B McCaughey (Director)
Mr P Doran (Deputy Director Operations)
Ms C Lamont (Deputy Director Operations)
Mr P Moss (Board Secretary)
Ms G McGreevy (Head of Communications)
Ms S Forrester (Secretariat)
Ms L Cooper (Head of Business Planning and Development) (item 7)
Mr T Doherty (Assistant Director) (item 10)
Mrs G Robinson (Head of Human Resources) (item 11)

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Mr McNeill, Mrs Patterson, Mr McKeever and the Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services. Mrs Jennett had indicated that she would be delayed.

3. OPENING REMARKS AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The Chairman welcomed everyone. He thanked Ms Forrester and the local staff for making the arrangements for the meeting.

There were no Conflicts of Interest at this point. Mr Osborne declared an interest in respect of the Volunteering and Mentoring Policy (agenda item 6, paragraph 7 in the minutes). Mr Wardlow declared an interest in connection with part of the Management Information paper (agenda item 13, paragraph 11 in the minutes).

The Chairman gave an update on the appointment of the next Chairman and the appointment and re-appointment of Members for the new Board.

The Chairman advised that the final meeting of the existing Board on 30 November 2012 would be used as an opportunity for outgoing and incoming Members to meet.

The Chairman reported that an Accountability Review combined with a farewell event for outgoing Members was being planned for 21 November.

4. CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 31 AUGUST 2012 (M7/12)

The minutes were signed as a correct record.

5. MATTERS ARISING (Paper 74/12) (tabled)

The Secretary gave a verbal update on communications with the Department of Justice (DoJ) in respect of finalising the Management Statement and Financial Memorandum. The Chairman asked that a copy of the latest version be sent to him.

Action: Secretary

The Board noted the remaining matters arising and the actions taken.

The Chairman advised Members that an art exhibition produced at Inspire and facilitated by the Prison Arts Foundation would be launched at the Long Gallery, Parliament Buildings on 4 December 2012.

6. CORRESPONDENCE (Paper 75/12) (tabled)

Members noted the letter of thanks from the Chairman of the Probation Association following his recent visit to PBNI.

Members warmly welcomed an email which the Director had received from DoJ indicating that additional funding would be made available in the current financial year and in 2013-14.

FOR DECISION

7. Volunteering and Mentoring Policy (Paper 76/12)

The Head of Business Planning and Development introduced the paper and outlined the consultation and research which had led to the production of the current draft. It was intended to operate a pilot scheme in the SENDA area, after which further consideration would be given to the widening of the arrangements.

It was agreed that Section 5c should be expanded to include the words “and a clear specification of their role in dialogue with them” and that Section 5i should also include the words “with periodic reviews of their volunteer experience”.

The Head of Business Planning and Development explained that a role specification had been produced. It was not possible to produce a job description as the volunteers would not have employee status. The Volunteer Coordinator would match the needs of offenders with volunteers in an individualised approach.

Mr Osborne declared an interest in connection with his wife's role as the Director of Volunteer Now.

The Head of Business Planning and Development talked through the lessons which had been learned from a study visit to Staffordshire and West Midland Probation Trust.

Members were advised that the issue of insurance would not be relevant as government carried its own risk.

A Member expressed the view that the introduction of this Policy would have implications for PBNI's funding of organisations which used volunteers as there would need to be benchmarking to ensure consistency.

Subject to the amendments to Section 5, the Board approved the Volunteering and Mentoring Policy.

Action: Head of Business Planning and Development

FOR NOTING

8. Punishment beatings/threats (Verbal)

Mr Doran reported on meetings with NIACRO and community representatives. Area Managers were monitoring the situation and the number of beatings/threats did not appear to be increasing. He added that the topic would be brought to a future meeting of the General Purposes Committee.

Action: Mr Doran

9. The Board's response to the DoJ consultation on Reducing Offending: Towards a Safer Society was circulated.

10. Reducing Offending Partnership (Paper 77/12)

Mr Doherty introduced the paper, explaining that the Reducing Offending in Partnership initiative (ROP) was an overarching framework which brought together criminal justice agencies and specialist services to prioritise interventions with identified priority offenders. It had grown out of a police-led initiative in the Ballymena area and had led to a formal pilot involving PSNI, PBNI and YJA in the Ballymena, Coleraine and Larne area. He explained that ROP was based on a three strand approach: Prevent and Deter; Catch and Control; and Rehabilitate and Resettle.

The ROP Steering Group was due to meet in late October to agree a plan for full roll-out of this initiative. This would lead to the introduction of the "Rehabilitate and Resettle" strand in all PBNI teams. PBNI's commitment to this initiative was reflected in the Business Plan for 2012-13 which included the objective "To contribute to the delivery of the multi-agency Reducing Offending in Partnership initiative from April 2012".

Members welcomed the work which was being done in this area, although they raised a note of concern about the wording of the "Prevent and Deter" strand which appeared to link anti-social behavior with young people.

Ms Lamont acknowledged Mr Doherty for his work and leadership.

The Board noted the paper.

11. Management Information (Paper 82/12)

Ms Lamont talked through the statistics on caseloads and reports.

She highlighted the conclusion of the Global Corporate Challenge which had had a number of positive impacts on business health and raised over £12k for charity.

She updated Members regarding a Judicial Review.

Ms Lamont explained that there had been a change in arrangements for the PPANI Strategic Management Board with PBNI now taking the chair. PBNI would also have an Assistant Director as a core member.

She briefed Members on developments with Policing and Community Safety Partnerships.

Mr Doran informed Members about three Serious Further Offences.

The Chairman welcomed the Head of Human Resources and thanked her for the paper she had produced on sickness absence. Members had a detailed discussion around sickness absence statistics, costs and causes and a number of suggested further solutions.

Mr Wardlow declared an interest in connection with the element of disability in this discussion in his capacity as the Chief Commissioner of the Equality Commission of Northern Ireland.

The Board formally welcomed the comprehensive analysis and agreed that the appropriate steps were being taken to address the issue.

The Board noted the paper.

12. Update on Business Cases submitted at September 2012 (Paper 80/12)

Mr Doran presented the paper which updated the Board on a number of business cases which had been submitted to DoJ and were either awaiting approval or had received approval recently.

The Board noted the paper.

13. Financial Outturn: August 2012 (Paper 81/12)

Mr Doran presented the paper which included the first report to be drawn from the Account NI system to which PBNI had moved at the start of July 2012. The paper also included information on a number of critical assumptions as requested by the Board at its previous meeting.

Mr Doran reported that salary costs were on target with spend against budget at 41%. The payment of community grants was behind profile due to issues around business

case approvals and receiving the prior year's grants. Capital expenditure was running at a low figure of 11%, but there were a number of items of planned expenditure in the pipeline. Prompt Payment results in July 2012 had achieved a figure of 91.5%, just short of the public sector target of 95%. The Prompt Payment statistics were now produced centrally by the DoJ based on information on the Account NI system.

Mr Doran advised that the move to Account NI had been discussed at the Audit and Risk Management Group as requested at the previous Board meeting. It would also be discussed at the October Audit Committee meeting.

The Board noted the paper.

14. Programme of Visits and Business (Paper 83/12)

The Chairman highlighted the launch of the Corporate DVD and thanked the Head of Communications for her work in relation to this.

The Board noted the paper.

15. Political and Public Affairs: update (Verbal)

The Head of Communications reported on attendance at political party conferences, Mr Doran's participation in a panel discussion around a play showing at the Lyric Theatre ("The Long Road"), the launch of the PPANI Annual Report and the forthcoming Public Protection Advisory Group meeting in Dublin in November. A presentation had been made as part of the Corporate DVD Launch to a member of staff who had won a Butler Trust award. She also updated Members on the Information Commissioner's findings regarding two data loss incidents.

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

16. Report from the Committee (Paper 84/12)

Dr Wilson presented the paper. He highlighted the useful discussion around the PBNI response to the draft Reducing Offending Strategy. The Committee had approved the Community Grants Scheme Policy for 2013/14 and had discussed a consultation paper on reforms to the NI Social Care Council Model of Regulation.

The Chairman drew attention to the discussion around the arrangements for determining the Director's pay in line with that of Chief Executives of Probation Trusts in England and Wales.

The Board noted the paper.

OTHER BUSINESS

17. Chairman's Business

It was confirmed that the Board would meet on 2 November and on 30 November 2012 which would be a joint session for current and incoming Members.

The Chairman suggested that 16 November which was being held for the General Purposes Committee might also be used to prepare for the Accountability Review.

18. Director's/Secretary's Business

(i) The Director indicated that he would bring a paper on Strategic Alliances to the General Purposes Committee meeting on 16 November.

Action: Director

(ii) The Director reported that, following his visit to the Czech Mediation Service, PBNI had received an invitation to attend the Czech Mediation Service's Conference at their expense.

(iii) The Director gave further detail regarding a Judicial Review.

(iv) The Director informed Members about correspondence received from the Ombudsman.

(v) The Director advised Members about an issue involving HMRC and staff salaries.

(vi) The Director referred to the discussion at the last Board meeting around hostels and stated that he would table correspondence at the next Board meeting.

Action: Director

(vii) The Secretary gave an update on the Board Appeal Panel, as part of which it had been necessary to seek legal advice on the process.

(viii) The Secretary informed outgoing Members that they would have to return their passes on departure. They could also return papers for secure disposal.

19. Any Other Business

It was confirmed that the General Purposes Committee would not meet on 19 October 2012.

20. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting was confirmed for 2 November 2012 at 9:30am.

The meeting closed at 12:00 noon.