

**PROBATION BOARD FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**

**BOARD MEETING – 14 DECEMBER 2012**

**331<sup>ST</sup> MEETING – 1<sup>ST</sup> OF ELEVENTH TERM OF OFFICE**

1. ATTENDANCE

1.1 Present

Mrs V Patterson (Chairman)

Mr D Brown

Mrs J Erskine (except part of item 13)

Mr E Jardine

Mrs L Jennett (to item 14)

Mr T O’Hanlon

Mrs M O’Rourke

Mr D Rose (from item 4)

Ms P Shepherd (except item 10)

Mr M Wardlow

1.2 Officials

Mr B McCaughey (Director) (to item 21)

Mr P Doran (Deputy Director Operations) (to item 21)

Ms C Lamont (Deputy Director Operations) (to item 21)

Ms G McGreevy (Head of Communications) (to item 21)

Mr P Moss (Board Secretary) (to item 21)

Ms S Forrester (Secretariat) (to item 21)

Mrs M Canavan (Head of Finance) (to item 13)

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Dr Wilson, Mr McAllister, Mr Mooney and the Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services.

4. OPENING REMARKS AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the newly constituted Board.

The Chairman, on behalf of the Board, thanked those Members who had completed their term of office at the end of November: Mr Ronnie Spence (Chairman), Mr Jimmy Quinn (Deputy Chairman), Mrs Hilary McCartan, Mr Joe McKeever, Mr John McNeill and Mr Bill Osborne. She stated that PBNI was indebted to them for the work they had carried out in defining the strategic direction of Probation in the past 6+ years. She read out a thank you note which she had received from Mr Spence following the farewell Reception on 30 November.

The Chairman indicated that Ms Shepherd had declared a Conflict of Interest in her capacity as Acting Chief Executive of Extern in connection with agenda item 8, Community Development/Grants Supplementary Funding Round 2012/13 (Paper 98/12) and would absent herself when this item was being considered (see item 10 in the minutes). No further Conflicts of Interest were declared at this point. During consideration of agenda item 11, Financial Outturn: October 2012 (Paper 100/120),

Mrs Erskine declared a Conflict of Interest in connection with her membership of the NILGOSC Board and withdrew for part of this item (see item 13 in the minutes). A further possible Conflict of Interest in respect of his role as Chief Equality Commissioner was declared by Mr Wardlow when the Reducing Offending Strategic Framework document was tabled (see item 20(ii) in the minutes).

4. CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 2 NOVEMBER 2012 (M9/12)

The minutes were signed as a correct record.

5. MATTERS ARISING (Paper 94/12) (tabled)

Members were advised that the order for the continuation of the Microsoft Enterprise Agreement had been placed (page 2, paragraph 8).

Members were asked to note that the Management Statement and Financial Memorandum (pages 2-3, paragraph 9) had now been signed by the Director and sent to DoJ for signature and that the revised Code of Practice for Members (page 3, paragraph 10) was now in place.

With reference to the Business Plan Objectives and in particular the wording of the objective relating to the case management system (page 3, paragraph 11), the Director reported that DoJ had agreed at the Overview meeting that the procurement of the case management system was beyond PBNI control.

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

6. CORRESPONDENCE (Paper 95/12) (tabled)

Members noted the October 2012 Criminal Justice Board Communiqué which was for internal use only and the letter of acknowledgement from the NIPS Director General in response to the Director's letter of sympathy following the murder of prison officer David Black.

The Director drew the attention of Members to the letter from the Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for Justice regarding a proposed briefing by the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) and PBNI on the management of life and indeterminate sentence prisoners.

7. The Chairman indicated that there were a number of tabled papers on this occasion, although it was not her intention that this would be normal practice.

The Register of Interests form was distributed to Members.

FOR DECISION

8. Proposed Dates for Board and General Purposes Committee meetings 2013  
(Paper 96/12)

The Chairman presented the paper and the Board agreed to the proposed meeting dates.

**Action: Secretariat**

The Director asked the Chairman to agree that the scope of the General Purposes Committee, which usually considered operational issues, be broadened to consider Finance and HR matters. The Chairman concurred with this proposal.

There was discussion of the General Purposes Committee's terms of reference and decision taking remit. Comment was made that the distinction between the Board and the General Purposes Committee needed to be maintained.

9. Audit Committee: appointment of Chair and Members (Paper 97/12)

This paper was tabled.

The Chairman presented the paper. She recommended that three existing members of the Audit Committee – Michael Wardlow, Brendan Mooney and David Rose – be re-appointed and that Julie Erskine and Edgar Jardine be appointed to the Committee. She further recommended that Michael Wardlow be appointed as Chair of the Committee.

Mr Wardlow commented that he was not a qualified accountant, although he had been an Accounting Officer. The Chairman said that she had raised this issue with DoJ whose response was that the professional support provided by the Internal and External Auditors would be at the disposal of the Audit Committee.

The Board approved the appointments to the Audit Committee as outlined above.

**Action: Secretary**

10. Community Development/Grants Supplementary Funding Round (Paper 98/12)

Ms Shepherd was absent for this item.

The Head of Finance presented the paper, explaining that, due to a combination of additional funding and funding not taken up, it had been possible to earmark approximately £150k for supplementary community development funding. All groups in receipt of community development grant funding for 2012/13 had been invited to apply for supplementary funding for in-year use and the Allocation Panel had considered a total of 48 applications.

The conclusions of the Allocation Panel were set out in Annex 1. Under PBNI's delegated limits grants over £50k required Board approval. The Board was therefore being asked to approve the allocations to Roghanna and Breakthru as in both these cases the cumulative total was over £50k. The remaining decisions of the Allocation Panel were presented to the Board for noting.

The Head of Finance explained that a further issue had arisen in respect of funding to NIACRO for 2012/13. She tabled and talked through an addendum to Paper 98/12, highlighting the various sums which had already been approved for different

NIACRO projects and the proposed additional £5k for the APAC Women Project. The DoJ had approved the larger grants to NIACRO and indicated that the remainder could be approved by PBNI. Board approval was therefore being requested for the additional grant.

The Chairman commented that it would be helpful for the Board to have a presentation from senior managers in relation to groups funded by community grants.

**Action: Director**

She also emphasised the importance of evaluation and the Director stated that the recommendation from the Board to appoint a person for a year to carry out an evaluation was being actioned.

The Board approved the allocations to Roghanna (£8480.44), Breakthru (£9924.84) and NIACRO APAC Women (£5k) and noted the rest of the information presented.

**Action: Mr Doran**

11. Update on Business Cases submitted at November 2012 (Paper 99/12)

The Head of Finance explained that the paper contained two elements.

Firstly it provided an update on business cases which were due to be submitted or had been submitted to DoJ. Business cases entailing capital expenditure over £100k had to be submitted to DoJ as did all renewals or extensions of operating leases for property.

Secondly it contained a recommendation as to a process which might be adopted in terms of provision of information on this area to the Board.

The Head of Finance outlined the current position with the business cases for the Downpatrick, Andersonstown and Magherafelt sites.

In terms of the process, it was proposed that the Board should receive an executive summary of each new business case rather than the full document. The Board could then consider each case and either approve it for submission to DoJ or seek clarification. An executive summary of the business case for the Downpatrick site had been attached as an example.

Following discussion, Members noted the detail of the cases presented and approved the executive summary template, subject to inclusion of an assessment of risk in each case.

**Action: Head of Finance**

12. Board Induction

A draft programme was tabled.

Members were advised that the venue would be in the greater Belfast area and that there would be a choice of visits to teams as part of the induction programme.

Members agreed to the proposed programme.

FOR NOTING

13. Financial Outturn: October 2012 (Paper 100/12)

The Head of Finance presented the paper, explaining that the October figures included year to date information. There had been issues around the budget upload module, following the move to Account NI and PBNI was currently using templates which DoJ would upload on its behalf.

The Head of Finance reported that to date there had been no confirmation of the expected NNC pay settlement, but £10k per month was being accrued in anticipation of the increase. There was also an accrual of £295k to date in respect of the expected costs of the assimilation of administrative staff to NICS terms and conditions.

The receipts budget had been increased in the October monitoring round to allow for income from seconded staff in addition to that from NIPS.

In other revenue spend against budget stood at 69%. There had been significant pre-payments (e.g. rates in May) but there were pressures in this area. It was anticipated that monies would be moved in the January monitoring round to meet these pressures, once the back pay figures for administrative staff were known.

Capital expenditure to date was £103k. There were plans to purchase IT equipment prior to year end. Capital receipts were unlikely to be realised due to the offer which had been made for Ramoan.

Prompt Payment results for PBNI for October stood at 90% against a public sector target of 95%.

Members noted the 78% of budget spent to date under the accommodation costs heading and were advised that this was attributable to an issue at the Ormeau Road office which had now been resolved.

One Member commented on the need for the Board to maintain awareness of the position regarding pension arrangements and projected returns. Mrs Erskine withdrew from the meeting at this point for the remainder of the pension discussion. The Head of Finance noted that there were hugely technical issues in this area and that this was an area considered by the Audit Committee.

The Head of Finance clarified that it would be necessary to bid for monies for the Downpatrick service delivery site, as DoJ would not carry forward capital.

The Head of Finance acknowledged that there was a risk in terms of the provision of management information due to the ongoing problem with uploading information. Although DoJ would upload the information on PBNI's behalf, PBNI did not have a devolved reporting system to get profiling by cost centre.

The Board noted the paper.

The Chairman extended the Board's best wishes to the Head of Finance who was leaving her post at the end of the month.

14. Management Information (Paper 101/12)

Ms Lamont introduced the paper. She drew attention to the total workforce figure of 427, pointing out that since March 2011 increasing use had been made of fixed term contracts.

She highlighted the sickness absence figures where the average number of days per employee (year to date) was 13.24 against a target of 10. The average number of days per employee in 2007/8 had been 18 and this had been addressed with a new Sickness Absence Policy. The average for 2010/11 and for 2011/12 had been 10 and 11 days respectively, so there was now evidence of an upward creep in the figures.

Ms Lamont drew attention to the Health and Safety statistics and various elements of Health & Wellbeing activity, including the flu vaccination pilot and stress workshops. She outlined aspects of the IS Strategy update including developments with the new case management system and the provision of secure remote access laptops and secure briefcases.

Mr Doran talked through the caseload statistics, explaining that both the total number of orders and total number of people being supervised by PBNI were at the end of October 2012 2% up on the corresponding figures for October 2011. The number of reports completed appeared to be leveling off, with the number of PSRs decreasing and the number of short PSRs continuing to rise.

Mr Doran reported on the third annual Public Protection Advisory Group Seminar in Dublin, the visit by the Westminster Justice Committee to Inspire and the contribution made by the Finance team to the community development supplementary funding round.

The visit by the Minister of Justice to the Co-located Public Protection and the North Belfast teams was also highlighted.

Mr Doran reported on one serious Further Offence.

It was suggested that the Health and Safety element of the paper might include near misses and that the long term sickness absence figures might indicate how many staff were represented by the total number of days. The possible inclusion of statistics relating to tribunal and grievances was also raised. The Chairman indicated that she would include this paper in the review of Board papers which she was planning.

**Action: Chairman**

It was agreed that it would be useful for the Board to have a presentation on the changes to the types of orders and offenders under PBNI supervision.

**Action: Director**

In response to a query, the Secretary advised that the question of electronic provision of information to Board Members and paperless meetings was under consideration.

The Board noted the paper.

15. Programme of Visits and Business (Paper 102/12)

The Director presented the paper and drew attention to a number of events. He thanked Mr Stephen Hamilton (Area Manager) for his contribution to the opening of the Portadown office and the visit to the Supervised Activity Order Pilot Scheme in Banbridge.

The Chairman said that this paper represented the breadth of PBNI's engagement.

The Board noted the paper.

16. Political and Public Affairs: update (Verbal)

The Head of Communications tabled a number of newspaper articles and explained that she maintained a monthly press coverage folder if any Members wished to see this. In response to a query, she added that the Communication section also undertook an in-house media audit.

In response to a further query, she explained that FOI and DPA request also fell within her remit. It was agreed that statistics relating to these requests could be included in the Management Information paper.

**Action: Head of Communications**

The issue of Assembly Questions (AQs) was raised. The Director explained that a record was kept of these, including information on the amount of time spent on each question. It was further agreed that statistics regarding AQs could be included in the Management Information paper.

**Action: Secretary**

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

17. Report from the Committee (November 2012) (Paper 103/12)

The Chairman presented the paper and noted that the Strategic Issues and Alliances paper would be brought to the Board in February 2013.

In response to a query, she explained that consideration would be given to the business of the General Purposes Committee and its role in dealing with papers for the Board.

The Board noted the paper.

OTHER BUSINESS

18. Chairman's Business

(i) The Chairman advised that arrangements would be made for Board Members to be supplied with secure briefcases.

(ii) The Chairman explained that Members would be given a Corporate Governance file at the Induction.

(iii) The Chairman outlined arrangements for the appointment of the Board Deputy Chairman.

(iv) The Chairman said that arrangements for her to meet with Members on a one to one basis were in hand.

(v) The Chairman told Members that the practice of staff observers attending the Board meeting would resume in the new year.

**Action: Secretariat**

19. Director's/Secretary's Business

(i) The Director reported that he had with Ms Lamont and Ms Muldoon visited each prison to meet with staff after the murder of prison officer David Black.

(ii) The Secretary explained the arrangements for submission of travel claims and asked Members to submit these on a monthly basis.

(iii) The Secretary informed Members of the insurance cover which was in place for them.

20. Any Other Business

(i) Date of General Purposes Committee

It was confirmed that the General Purposes Committee would meet on 1 February 2013.

(ii) Strategic Framework for Reducing Offending

Mr Doran explained that the Board had made a significant contribution to the initial draft of this document.

The revised draft which he was now tabling had been received the previous day with a request for comments by 31 December 2012 so that the document could be submitted to the Minister on 3 January 2013. It had subsequently been clarified that comments would be accepted in January and February 2013, so there would be an opportunity for in-depth discussion at the February General Purposes Committee.

Mr Wardlow declared a possible Conflict of Interest and indicated that he would not make any comments.

The Director commented that the document should have facts and figures relating to Northern Ireland and that it did not give sufficient acknowledgement to what was currently working well.

It was agreed that officers would draft and submit a response to meet the deadline of 31 December. Any Member who wished to make comments at this stage was asked to contact the Board Secretary and it was agreed by the Board that the Chairman would submit the final comments on behalf of the Board by the required deadline. The response would be provided to Members for information.

**Action: Mr Doran**

21. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 18 January 2013 as part of the Board Induction.

22. Closing Remarks

In closed session the Chairman updated Members on an HR matter.

The meeting closed at 12:55pm.