

PROBATION BOARD FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

BOARD MEETING – 13 March 2015**9.00 AM – THE MOUNT BUSINESS & CONFERENCE CENTRE****360th MEETING – 31st of TENTH TERM OF OFFICE****ATTENDANCE**

Mrs Vilma Patterson (Chairman)	Mr R Mullan (Deputy Chairman)
Mr D Brown	Mrs J Erskine
Mr E Jardine	Mrs L Jennett
Mr D Rose	Mrs P Shepherd
Dr M Wardlow (Items 12- 32)	Dr R Wilson

Ms C Lamont, (Acting) Director
Mr P Doran, Deputy Director
Mrs G Robinson, (Acting) Board Secretary/Head of Human Resources
Ms C McCann, Head of Finance
Mr B McCutcheon, Head of IT (items 1 - 7)
Mrs W Rodgers, Personal Secretary (Minutes)

1. OPENING REMARKS AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The Chairman welcomed all attendees to the meeting and advised Members of the timings for the day.

No Conflicts of Interest were declared.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from, Mr T O'Hanlon, Mrs M O'Rourke and Mr H Hamill, (Acting) Deputy Director.

3. CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES

The Minutes from the Board Meeting held on 13 February 2015 were agreed as an accurate account of the meeting with the following amendment:

- Mr Rose was in attendance at the meeting held on 13 February 2015.

Minutes of the Closed Session held on 13 February 2015 were agreed during the Closed Session held 13 March 2015.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES (Paper 31/15)

Members were asked to note the Matters Arising, with all actions either in progress or completed.

The (Acting) Director updated the Members on Action 10 and advised that a meeting had been arranged to meet with the Director of NIHRC on 14 April 2015.

5. CORRESPONDENCE

There was one item of correspondence for the Members' attention.

- Communique from the (Acting) Director to all staff in March 2015.

All other correspondence would be presented during the closed session at this meeting.

6. HATE CRIME POLICY (Paper 32/15)

Members were advised that the Hate Crime Policy had been presented to the General Purposes Committee on 27 February 2015. The Deputy Director took Members through the background of the Policy and the changes that had been made from the previous Hate Crime Policy dated 2005 and the subsequent Interim Guidance approved by the Board in 2013.

The Chair of the General Purposes Committee advised that there had been a full discussion at the Committee meeting on the 27 February 2015 and that the Committee had recommended approval of the Policy to the Board.

The Board approved the Policy.

7. IT STRATEGY (Paper 33/15)

Brian McCutcheon, Head of IT, presented the 2015 – 2017 IT Strategy to Members.

Members were advised of IT issues experienced over the last number of weeks which had added weight to systems requiring upgrading and modernisation.

The Head of IT answered questions from Members on costings and linkages with other DOJ organisations.

The Head of IT provided Members with an update on the current situation with the Case Management System. Members were advised that the Prison's system, PRISM, was a viable option. It was explained that although a business case would be required, a procurement exercise would not need to be undertaken.

The Deputy Director advised Members that he was satisfied that the best way forward would be to use the PRISM platform.

The Chairman congratulated the Head of IT on the paper presented.

The Board approved the Strategy.

8. DELEGATED FINANCIAL LIMITS 'WRITE OFF' OF INCOME (Paper 34/15)

The Head of Finance advised Members that the presented paper had been to Audit Committee on 6 March 2015.

The Deputy Chair of the Audit Committee advised Members that the paper had been discussed by the Committee and that the Committee had agreed to recommend approval to the Board.

The Board approved the paper.

9. DRAFT BUSINESS PLAN 2015-2016 (Paper 35/15)

The Deputy Director advised Members that the Draft Business Plan 2015-16 had been presented to the Board in February. Since then a number of changes had been made and the Members were taken through each of these as laid out in the briefing paper. The (Acting) Director advised that she did wish to make one further amendment to Objective 4, last bullet point, 'to jointly review with NIPS service delivery in Prisons'.

The Board approved the paper.

10. COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR FUNDING POLICY (Paper 36/15)

The Head of Finance advised Members that the Community and Voluntary Sector Funding Policy had been approved by the Board on the 10 October 2014. Since then an internal audit had made one recommendation. The amendment was therefore to remove the process normally carried out by Area Managers and add in Assistant Directors to the process.

It was confirmed to Members that all grants would now be reviewed on a quarterly basis and they would now be paid in arrears.

The Board approved the change to the Community and Voluntary Sector Funding Policy.

11. ORGANISATIONAL POLICY SCHEDULE – (Paper 37/15)

The Deputy Director advised Members that the Policy Schedule had been presented to the General Purposes Committee on 27 February 2015.

The General Purposes Committee had agreed to recommend a number of policies being removed from the schedule and the timing of the review of policies moving from three years to four years. The Chair of the General Purposes Committee advised that the Committee had agreed to recommend approval of the proposed changes to the Board.

The Chair of the General Purposes Committee advised Members that the General Purposes Committee had recommended the removal of seven/eight policies. The Committee had discussed duplication and rationalisation of policies which exist across the Criminal Justice system; the Deputy Director advised that policies across the Criminal Justice system had previously been reviewed for duplication.

The Chairman wished to thank those who had worked on this piece of work and was keen to see the schedule going forward. Particular thanks was paid to Dr Wardlow and Dr Wilson who had used their experience in shaping the new policy template.

The Board approved the paper.

12. DISABILITY ACTION PLAN (Paper 38/15)

The Head of Human Resources briefed Members on the background of the presented paper, advising that Mr Paul McIlwaine had conducted the work on the Disability Action Plan (DAP) for 2015-2020, building on the previous Action Plan. Having conducted a consultation, consideration was given to the feedback from this and PBNI's statutory duty to promote positive attitudes and to encourage the participation of people with disabilities in public life. Members were advised that Mr McIlwaine had presented PBNI's Plan to the Equality Commission recently and it had been met with approval.

The Board approved the paper.

13. GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE – ANY OTHER BUSINESS (Agenda items 13 and 14 - minutes)

Draft minutes from the Committee meeting held on 27 February 2015 were presented to Members for information. The Chair of the General Purposes Committee highlighted a number of points of discussion to the Members including: The Organisational Policy Schedule; the Management of Information paper which had been deferred from the February Board; in particular there was considerable time taken to discuss sick/absence. The Age of Criminal Responsibility was also discussed. It was confirmed that PBNI had responded previously to the Youth Justice Agency's consultation on this matter.

The agenda for the March 2015 Committee meeting was in progress however the Chair of the General Purposes Committee would advise if there is a need for a meeting in March.

Action: The Chair of the General Purposes Committee to advise if the Committee will meet in March.

The Board noted the update.

15. AUDIT COMMITTEE – ANY OTHER BUSINESS (Agenda items 15 and 16 - verbal)

The Chair of the Audit Committee briefed Members on the meeting held on 6 March 2015. Minutes will follow for the Board's information at the next Board meeting.

Members were advised that Internal Audit had revised their rating assurance to substantial on Administration of Grants and the Chair commented that he was pleased that the Organisation is being consistent in its assurance ratings. Members were advised that Fraud would become a standing item on the agenda. A new format of the Risk Register will be brought to the Board for approval.

The Chair of the Audit Committee briefed Members on Internal Delegation limits. This had been discussed at the Audit Committee held on 6 March 2015 and it was agreed to recommend the proposed change to the delegated limits to the Board. Members were provided with details of the delegated limits as laid out by the DOJ and that the purpose of this proposal was to bring PBNI in line with DOJ's limits. The paper was tabled for Board Members' consideration. The Board approved the revised limits to PBNI's Delegated Limits.

Following Mr McAllister stepping down as a Board Member, Mrs Jennett had volunteered to join the Audit Committee for the remainder of its term. Mr Brown proposed Mrs Jennett with Mr Rose seconding therefore motion was carried.

17. SENTENCER AND PAROLE COMMISSIONERS SURVEYS (Paper 39/15)

The Deputy Director advised Members that it was a business objective to carry out the Sentencer and Parole Commissioner surveys.

Members were briefed on the Sentencers' survey. The feedback was mainly positive with a key finding that they would like to see more Short Pre-sentence Reports and rural courts would like to see more of a Probation Officer presence in the courts.

Members were briefed on the Parole Commissioners' survey, the Parole Commissioners surveyed agreed that it was of value to have social work input into the reports.

Action: The Deputy Director to thank respondents for their input

The Board noted the update.

18. NICTS CONSULTATION ON COURTS (NICTS) ESTATES (Paper 40/15)

Members were advised that this was an early notice of a NICTS Consultation. The purpose of the proposals are to bring Northern Ireland courts in to line with Great Britain and Ireland and in doing so, moving to three administrative centres from seven.

There was discussion on the impact to PBNI and its clients. It was agreed that the draft response would be presented at the April Board meeting.

The Board noted the paper.

19. WORKFORCE MODERNISATION PROGRAMME - PROGRAMME DEFINITION DOCUMENT (Paper 41/15)

The (Acting) Director advised Members that Workforce Modernisation had been introduced at the last Board meeting in February with an action to bring a fuller report to the Members in March.

The (Acting) Director presented the paper to members.

A discussion ensued with reference to PBNI's approach to this programme of work. Meetings had been held with Anthony Harbinson and Rosemary Crawford from DOJ who commended PBNI's approach.

The Chairman advised Members that the Organisational Programme Board met with Rosemary Crawford of DOJ in attendance; again the progressive approach of PBNI had been recognized.

Action: It was agreed that the Board would receive quarterly reports up to November 2015.

The Board noted the paper.

20. 2015-2016 OPENING BUDGET PAPER (Paper 43/15)

The Head of Finance took Members through the briefing paper and gave explanations for each table provided. It was confirmed to Members that there was a decrease in budget for 2015-2016 of 9.2% equating to a total budget of £17.214m, a reduction of £1.706m. The Board noted the paper.

21. FEBRUARY FINANCIAL OUTTURN AND COST REDUCTION (Paper 43/15)

The Head of Finance presented the paper to Members and highlighted a number of areas to Members by way of an update.

The level of underspend was discussed and the mitigating factors which had contributed to it, mainly the difficulty in having in-year budget reductions together with the final budget agreed at a late point in the financial year. The Chairman noted the in-depth planning that had been carried out for this budget year (2014-2015) and next (2015-2016).

The Board noted the paper.

22. BUSINESS CASES, PROJECT AND PROGRAMME UPDATE (Paper 44/15)

The Board noted the paper.

23. EMPLOYERS LIABILITY INSURANCE FOR EMPLOYEES AND BOARD MEMBERS (Paper 45/15)

The Head of Finance briefed Members on the background to this paper. Advice has been sought and received from both the Department and the Crown Solicitors Office with both stating that there is no requirement for Employers' Liability Insurance.

Mrs Erskine advised that she would refer to another public body as to their arrangements and feedback to the Audit Committee.

Action: Mrs Erskine to feedback to the Audit Committee on another public body's arrangements.

The Board noted the paper.

24. CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (Verbal)

This agenda item was discussed under agenda item 7 of today's meeting

25. MANAGEMENT OF INFORMATION (Paper 46/15)

Members noted the paper. One Member queried if all the information contained in the report was required each month for presentation to the Board. The Chairman advised that Mr David Nicholl would be looking at this during the review of Standing Orders.

The Board noted the paper

26. PROGRAMME OF VISITS AND BUSINESS (Paper 47/15)

The Chairman asked for the format of the paper to be changed to make reading clearer. Also under the Board Events/Visits/Business – 25 February 2015, NIACRO to be removed from the presentation to the Justice Committee line. The Justice Committee met at NIACRO's building.

Action: Format of paper to be changed and agreed by the Chairman.

The Board noted the paper

27. BOARD OBJECTIVES AND WORKPLAN 2014-15 (Paper 48/15)

Members were advised that this was the final paper for the year 2014-15 which gave a good insight and record of the Board's work over this period. The Board Objectives and Workplan 2015-16 is currently being developed and will be presented to the Board at the April 2015 Board meeting.

The Board noted the paper.

28. CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

- a) The Chairman advised that there will be a Closed Session after Board business is completed followed by a session on Board Effectiveness.
- b) The Chairman briefed Members on PBNI's briefing session to the Justice Committee on 25 February 2015 where she was accompanied by the (Acting) Director, the Deputy Director, the (Acting) Deputy Director and the Head of Communications. The Chairman advised that the Justice Committee was well attended and that the session lasted one hour. The Chairman thanked the (Acting) Director, Deputies and Head of Communications as the session proved to be very worthwhile to present PBNI's work.
- c) Members were advised that the Chairman and (Acting) Director had met with Anthony Harbinson.
- d) The Chairman also met with Richard Good, Special Advisor to the Minister.

29. DIRECTOR'S /SECRETARY'S BUSINESS

- a) The (Acting) Director advised Members that she had taken part in a Radio Ulster broadcast on 4 March 2015 with the Minister and Director General of Prisons present.

The meeting closed at 12.15 pm, followed by a closed session for the members on the Organisational Development Review of SMT.

30. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would take place on Friday 17 April 2015 at 9.30 am, PBNI Headquarters, Conference Room.

Vilma Patterson
Chairman

Date