

PROBATION BOARD FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

BOARD MEETING – 13 APRIL 2012

324TH MEETING – 27TH OF TENTH TERM OF OFFICE

1. ATTENDANCE

1.1 Present

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

Mr J McKeever	Mrs V Patterson
Mr B Mooney	Mr D Rose
Mr B Osborne	Mr M Wardlow

1.2 Officials

Mr B McCaughey (Director)
Mr D van der Merwe (Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services)
Mr P Doran (Deputy Director Operations)
Mr P Moss (Board Secretary)
Ms G McGreevy (Head of Communications)
Ms S Forrester (Secretariat)

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Mrs McCartan, Dr Wilson, Mrs O'Rourke, Mr McNeill, Mrs Jennett and Ms Lamont.

3. OPENING REMARKS AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The Chairman advised that it was hoped to have staff observers attending Board meetings again from later in the year.

No Conflicts of Interest were declared.

4.(a) CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 MARCH 2012 (M3/12)

The minutes were signed as a correct record.

4.(b) COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ALLOCATIONS 2012/13 (Paper 39/12)

The Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services tabled a paper.

He explained that there had been an error in the Community Development Allocations 2012/13 paper considered by the Board at its February 2012 meeting.

The Board rescinded the decision taken in February 2012 to approve a grant of £90,000 to Women's Aid Federation NI for 2012/13 and approved a grant to the same organisation for 2012/13 of £90,192.

Action: Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services

5. MATTERS ARISING (Paper 30/12) (tabled)

The Director indicated that Mr Doran was working with the Human Resources Department to draw up a job description for the Area Manager Community Engagement post and Board Members would be kept informed of progress.

Action: Director

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

6. CORRESPONDENCE (Paper 31/12) (tabled)

The Board noted the letter of 4 April 2012 which the Director had sent to Mr Peter May regarding Implementing Owers: NIPS/PBNI/DoJ Interface and supported the position he had taken.

FOR DECISION

7. Budget 2012/13 (Paper 32/12)

The Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services presented the paper, explaining that the budget for 2012/13 was £19.6m, a decrease of £609k from the previous year.

The biggest proposed cut was in the non-staff budget head and the paper set out the areas where cuts would be applied to produce the necessary savings. In a number of areas savings had already been achieved in 2011/12 and the actions taken would carry over into 2012/13.

Members asked at what point the cuts would have an impact on the organisation's ability to achieve its core objectives. The Director indicated that this question would be addressed in discussion of the Management Information paper and added that a Strategic Outline case was being prepared for submission to DoJ to secure further funding.

Members noted that no savings were anticipated under the recruitment budget head.

One Member expressed concern about the size of the cut as applied to training. The Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services explained that the organisation was moving towards trying to accredit its own trainers in-house. Mr Doran commented that it had been possible to avail of a certain amount of free training through Community Addiction teams. The Director stated that the commitment to five days annual training for each staff member would be maintained.

The Chairman mentioned the need to be mindful of the impact of reductions on staff morale.

In response to a query about Board costs, the Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services explained that these appeared primarily under the salary heading.

The Board noted the paper and approved the 2012/13 budget for planning purposes.

Action: Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services

8. Request for Early Retirement (Paper 33/12)

The Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services outlined the background to the request in terms of the staff member's circumstances and the costs to the Board of agreeing to the request.

Subject to approval from the DoJ, the Board approved the application for early retirement and the payment of £3,609 to NILGOSC to bring it into effect.

Action: Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services

9. Risk Management Policy (Paper 34/12)

The Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services stated that the Risk Management Policy, which the Board had approved in February 2009, had been reviewed and the review had concluded that no substantive changes were required. A number of amendments had been made to the supporting Procedure and Guidance document.

The Board approved the revised Risk Management Policy.

Action: Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services

FOR NOTING

10. February 2012: Financial Outturn (Paper 35/12)

The Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services drew attention to salary costs where the apparent underspend could be explained by the sum which had been earmarked for the assimilation of administrative staff to NICS terms.

He highlighted the position with capital spend and pointed out that the Prompt Payment results had improved significantly in February, although they still remained below target due to staff concentrating on Account NI work.

The Board noted the paper.

11. Management Information (Paper 36/12)

The Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services presented the sections on sickness absence, health & safety and IT.

Mr Doran presented the organisational workload element of the paper, explaining that work was still on-going to validate the caseload figures for the end of March 2012.

The Board noted the increased workloads and evidence of increasing pressure on staff and supported the Director in seeking additional resources from DoJ and managing the risk effectively.

The Board supported the Director in advancing the recruitment process which was currently underway.

The Board noted the paper.

12. Programme of Visits and Business (Paper 37/12)

The Chairman referred to the raffles at the Staff Engagement days which had raised £728.50 for the Children's Hospice. The Board paid tribute to Mrs McCartan for organising this initiative.

The Chairman and other Board Members commented that the Staff Engagement days had been very successful.

The Board noted the paper.

13. Political and Public affairs: update (Verbal)

The Head of Communications updated Members regarding a forthcoming PPANI media briefing and a PPANI Practitioners seminar to which it was hoped to invite the media.

She reported that a corporate DVD was being put together for use with internal and external stakeholders. She was keen to have Board input and it was agreed that briefing information would be circulated to Members.

Action: Head of Communications

The Chairman commented that it was important to be very clear about the target audience for the DVD.

The Head of Communications outlined some work which was taking place with the investigative website, "The Detail".

AUDIT COMMITTEE

14. Report from the Committee (Paper 38/12)

The Committee Deputy Chair highlighted a number of items:

- the DoJ briefing on the Review of Financial Processes
- the pressure to prepare and approve the accounts in a tighter timescale
- the introduction of a Governance Statement which would replace the Statement on Internal Control in 2012/13

- a letter about the internal audit project under the DoJ Reform Programme which had raised the possibility of a single Internal Audit Unit for the core Department, the agencies and ALBs
- the satisfactory assurance rating resulting from the Income from Service Level Agreements audit report
- the issue of succession planning within the Committee and the importance of having at least one member with professional accountancy experience
- the draft Statement on Internal Control would be considered at the next Committee meeting
- the Committee had considered a paper on recent Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland Reports. The inspection of the care and treatment of victims and witnesses in the Criminal Justice System recommended that all post-conviction Victim Information schemes should be amalgamated under the supervision of PBNI. The Committee had queried whether there would be additional funding for this recommendation.
- The Committee had considered the Corporate Governance in central government departments: Code of good practice which might be included in the Board Induction process for new Members.

The Chairman referred to a matter with which he was dealing relating to the process for authorising the Accounting Officer's expenses.

The Board noted the paper.

OTHER BUSINESS

19. Director's/Secretary's Business

- (i) It was agreed that the General Purposes Committee would meet on 4 May to discuss the Review of the Northern Ireland Prison Service.
- (ii) The Director reported that Dr Michael Maguire had been appointed Police Ombudsman.
- (iii) The Director reported on the outcome of an investigation by the Northern Ireland Ombudsman.
- (iv) Mr Doran referred to the input of Professor Fergus McNeill at the January 2012 Board meeting. His work on desistance could now be accessed on the website of The Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (www.iriss.org.uk).

20. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting was confirmed for 18 May 2012 at 9:30am.

The meeting closed at 10:45am.