

PROBATION BOARD FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

BOARD MEETING – 24 FEBRUARY 2012

322ND MEETING – 25TH OF TENTH TERM OF OFFICE

1. ATTENDANCE

1.1 Present

Mr R Spence (Chairman)

Mr J Quinn (Deputy Chairman) (to item 13)

Mrs L Jennett

Mrs H McCartan

Mr J McNeill

Mr B Osborne

Mrs M O'Rourke

Mrs V Patterson (from item 7)

Mr M Wardlow

Dr R Wilson

1.2 Officials

Mr B McCaughey (Director)

Mr D van der Merwe (Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services)

Mr P Doran (Deputy Director Operations)

Ms C Lamont (Deputy Director Operations)

Mr P Moss (Board Secretary)

Ms S Forrester (Secretariat)

Ms E McIlroy (Assistant Director) (item 4)

Mr H Hamill (Assistant Director) (item 5)

Mr T Doherty (Assistant Director) (item 11)

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Mr Rose, Mr McKeever, Mr Mooney, the Head of Communications and the Head of Business Planning and Development.

3. OPENING REMARKS AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The Chairman thanked everyone for their contributions to the Accountability Review which he felt had been very successful.

He explained that there were no staff observers in attendance on this occasion, but that invitations would be issued again in the near future.

He extended the Board's congratulations to Mr Wardlow on his appointment as Chief Commissioner of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

Mr Osborne declared an interest in connection with the NIACRO Jobtrack paper (Agenda item 9) in respect of funding provided to NIACRO via a programme with which he was involved. See also item 4.

Mr Osborne thanked Ms McIlroy for her input to the Launch of the Small Grants Programme event on 8 February. Members who had attended this event thanked Mr Osborne for the invitation.

4. PRESENTATION: POLICING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIPS

Mr Doran introduced the topic, explaining that the Justice Act (NI) 2011 had made provision for the establishment of Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs) and District Policing and Community Safety Partnerships in Belfast. He talked through the make-up of the PCSPs and noted that the process of appointing independent members was now taking place. PBNI had made a bid to be a designated organisation. A number of awareness raising events for staff had taken place and managers believed that PBNI would make a significant contribution to this process.

Ms McIlroy touched on the opportunity which PCSPs gave PBNI to deliver on its Community Safety Strategy, raise its profile and inform other stakeholders, and streamline and develop its engagement with communities in local areas.

Mr Doran reported that a former member of staff had been engaged on a part-time basis to assist with this work and a dedicated section had been created on the PBNI intranet.

Mr Wardlow declared an interest in respect of his membership of the Northern Ireland Policing Board.

Members concurred that these developments represented a significant opportunity for PBNI and a platform in each geographical area from which to promote a consistent message.

Members also acknowledged that this work represented a significant time commitment for staff at Area Manager level, a commitment which extended beyond attendance at meetings. Ms McIlroy explained that there would be an Area Manager assigned to each PCSP and arrangements were in place for managers to cover for one another. The Director advised that DoJ had not offered any additional resources in respect of this work.

Members welcomed the opportunity for PBNI to be involved in this work.

The Chairman thanked Mr Doran and Ms McIlroy.

FOR DECISION

5. Domestic Violence and Abuse Policy (Paper 7/12)

Mr Hamill presented the paper, explaining that both the Policy and Procedures had been updated to take account of developments since 2003. A full internal consultation had taken place.

It was proposed that paragraph 8 should be amended to state that the Policy would be reviewed “not later than 3 years” from the date of approval by the Board.

Subject to the above amendment, the Board approved the Domestic Violence and Abuse Policy.

Action: Mr Hamill

6. CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16 DECEMBER 2011 (M11/11)

The minutes were signed as a correct record.

7. CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20 JANUARY 2012 (M1/12)

The minutes were signed as a correct record.

8. MATTERS ARISING (Paper 4/12) (tabled)

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

9. CORRESPONDENCE (Paper 5/12) (tabled)

The Board noted the December 2011 Criminal Justice Board Communiqué.

FOR DECISION

10. Draft PBNI Business Plan 2012/13 (Paper 6/12)

The Director presented the paper and talked through the various pieces of work which had been undertaken to prepare for drafting the Plan. Five strategic themes and ten priorities had now been identified. He drew attention to the section headed “Business Plan Delivery” and the statement that PBNI would “continue its discussions with the Department of Justice about the resources required to deliver its current and future responsibilities”.

The Board approved the draft 2012/2013 Business Plan for submission in the first instance to DoJ officials and thereafter to the Minister of Justice for his approval.

Action: Director

11. NIACRO Jobtrack (Paper 8/12)

Mr Doherty presented the paper. He explained that the rationale behind this funding request was the critical role of employment in preventing reoffending and rehabilitating offenders.

He reported that the target for referrals was on course to be exceeded by the end of March 2012. The target for employment outcomes had been adjusted downwards from 30% to 20% and performance in this area sat at around 19%. This compared to 27% into employment in relation to DEL’s mainstream programme, but the

mainstream programme catered for the general population, while Jobtrack focused on medium and high risk offenders. The target for training outcomes had been adjusted down to 10% and achievement in this area was slightly exceeding the target. The training target related specifically to those moving into more formal training programmes and did not cover training received on the Jobtrack programme itself.

Mr Doherty advised that NIACRO had worked with PBNI to ensure a consistent quality of service and feedback from PBNI staff was very positive.

Following previous comment from the Board, a strategic tier had been established to include representatives from DEL and DoJ.

The Board was now being asked to renew its partnership with NIACRO's Jobtrack scheme for the year 2012/13 and approve funding of £202,000.

Members expressed some concerns as to whether the programme represented an effective use of such a large sum of money. Comment was made that the funding request to the Board always came very near the end of the financial year.

The Director pointed out that the current request represented the second year of a three year arrangement which the Board had already approved in principle. Ms Lamont commented that the strategic tier had been established to address issues previously voiced by Members and that structures were now in place to facilitate a wider debate. She had taken part in a Jobtrack meeting with NIACRO in January which the Chair of the DEL Assembly Committee, Basil McCrea MLA, had also attended.

Comment was made that there was a need for a strategic review which would look at different models of getting people into employment in the light of the new economic market.

In conclusion it was noted that the Board had made a three year commitment from which there was no reason to withdraw. While acknowledging that progress had been made towards taking a more strategic view, it was agreed that there would be merit in having a "summit" event which PBNI might organise towards the end of 2012. It was agreed that that the Board's thinking on this issue should be shared with NIACRO and DoJ.

The Board agreed to renew its partnership with NIACRO's Jobtrack scheme for the year 2012/13 and approved funding the scheme in the amount of £202,000, subject to approval by DoJ.

Action: Mr Doherty

12. Community Development 2012/13 Allocations (Paper 9/12)

The Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services presented the paper and the annex which detailed the various organisations which it was proposed to fund in 2012/13 together with the amounts allocated.

Members discussed the evaluation process. The Director commented that the £1m Community Development spend provided tremendous value for money and allowed PBNI to work in partnership in every community in Northern Ireland. It was

suggested that the process might be strengthened by funding a dedicated in-house operational lead and evaluator from this budget heading.

Action: Director

It was also suggested that the Board's understanding of the value of this work would be enhanced by having one of the groups in receipt of funding make a presentation to the Board or General Purposes Committee or alternatively PBNI might host a showcase event for the various funded groups.

Action: Director

The Chairman commented that in future years the Board would welcome brief, additional information regarding the groups in those instances where the recommendation for funding exceeded the Panel's limit.

Action: Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services

The Board approved the grants to Breakthru (alcohol and drugs funding) (£53,175) and to Women's Aid Federation NI (£90,000*). [*This figure was changed to £90,192 at the Board meeting of 13 April 2012].

The Board further approved, subject to DOJ approval, the grants to NIACRO Family Links, APAC, APAC Mental Health and Choose to Change (£110,000) and Extern Recycle Project (£114,240).

Action: Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services

13. Appointment of Diversity Champion (Verbal)

The Chairman referred to the comments made by the Minister at the Accountability Review, indicating that he had no plans to change the status of the Board and would be proceeding to advertise later in the year for new Board Members. This process would include consideration of reappointment for Members completing a first term.

The Chairman therefore proposed to consider at a later meeting changes to the Committee Chairs and the appointment of a new Diversity Champion. The Board endorsed this proposal.

Action: Chairman

FOR NOTING

14. PBNI Business Plan 2011-2012: 9 month progress report (Paper 10/12)

The Director commented on the very positive position. Eight of the nine objectives were on target to be achieved by the end of March 2012. It had been indicated at the six month stage that the ninth objective (procurement of a new electronic case management system) would not be achieved.

A full report on performance would be brought to the April 2012 Board meeting.

Action: Head of Business Planning and Development

The Director indicated his intention to make changes to the portfolios of the Deputy Directors. He would provide a report on this to the March 2012 Board meeting.

Action: Director

The Chairman welcomed the excellent performance which the paper represented.

The Board noted the paper.

15. Programme for Government: Consultation Response (Paper 11/12)

Mr Doran commented that the response reflected the debate which had taken place. It had been shared with the Justice Committee and other stakeholders before being submitted to OFMDFM.

The Board noted the paper.

16. Corporate Social Responsibility (Paper 12/12)

The Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services referred to the request at the December 2011 Board meeting for information on this area of work and talked through the detail of the paper.

The Board noted the paper.

17. December 2011: Financial Outturn (Paper 13/12)

The Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services presented the paper. He drew attention to the area of salary costs, explaining why they were underspent at this point and noted that capital spend was running slightly behind. He updated Members regarding the position with the sale of Ramoan. He pointed out that the Prompt Payments results had been affected by the focus on work for the Account NI Project.

The Board noted the paper.

18. Management Information (Paper 14/12)

The Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services presented the paper. He highlighted the sickness absence figures. The Board had asked at the December 2011 meeting that the possibility be examined of a link between sickness absence due to stress and significant amounts of untaken leave. The question had been explored and no obvious link had been established. Members noted the increase in total days lost in January 2012 and asked that management should continue to monitor this area closely.

Ms Lamont noted that the Health & Wellbeing Survey had identified stress – both in and out of work – as an issue. The Psychology Department had delivered a series of stress workshops. The take up from staff had been lower than hoped for and it was now intended to review and learn from these events.

The Board noted the paper.

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

This paper was tabled.

The Director highlighted the Long Service Awards event which the Minister had attended.

Members expressed a wish to undertake further visits to teams and offices.

Action: Secretariat

The Board noted the paper.

20. Political and Public affairs: update (Verbal)

Mr Doran spoke about a number of items:

- the opening of the new Ballymena office
- a joint briefing of MLAs with the Youth Justice Agency
- an article in the Newsletter by Basil McCrea, MLA
- an invitation from the Justice Committee for PBNI to host a meeting, the timing of which would affect the timing of a possible event for MLAs in the Long Gallery.

AUDIT COMMITTEE

21. Report from the Committee (Verbal)

The Committee Chair gave a verbal report on the meeting of 9 February. She drew attention to a number of areas:

- a closed session to evaluate the performance of the Internal and External auditors; this process was ongoing
- a presentation by DoJ on the Review of Financial Processes in Northern Ireland
- correspondence from DoJ regarding the DoJ Reform Programme: Internal Audit Project
- her attendance at an initial meeting of DoJ Audit Committee Chairs
- the completion by Committee Members of a Skills Repository template
- the NIAO Audit Strategy for 2012/13
- a revised Risk Management Policy and Procedures

The Committee Chair referred to the very tight timetable for production of the 2011/12 Annual Accounts and raised for consideration the possibility that the Board might meet on 15 June rather than 22 June as scheduled.

Action: Chairman

22. Governance documents (Paper 16/12)

The Committee Chair reported that the Committee had considered the DAO (DFP) 03/12 letter "Introduction of the Governance Statement for the 2012/13 Accounting Period". This letter advised that it was DFP's intention to replace the Statement on Internal Control (SIC) with a Governance Statement for the financial year 2012/13 onwards. There would be no template for this Governance Statement, but a number of elements had been identified as essential features, including assessment by the Board of its own effectiveness. The letter referred to the 2005 Corporate Governance in Central Government Departments: Code of Good Practice which formed part of the Board paper, although the Committee had considered a revised 2011 Code of Practice. It was agreed that the 2011 version should be circulated to Board Members.

Action: Secretariat

The Board Chairman commented that this development represented an important change in practice.

The Board noted the paper.

OTHER BUSINESS

23. Chairman's Business

A paper setting out the attendance of Members at the five staff engagement events in March was tabled. Members were requested to finalise their attendance and, in the case of the two events which the Chairman was not attending, Members were asked to decide who would make the closing remarks.

24. Director's/Secretary's Business

(i) Mr Doran advised Members of an SFO in which sentencing was due to take place that morning.

(ii) The Secretary asked Members to ensure that all outstanding travel claims for the 2011/12 financial year were submitted by Friday 2 March 2012.

25. General Purposes Committee

The Chairman reminded Members that they had agreed the General Purposes Committee would serve as a forum at which areas of work might be considered in more depth than was possible at a Board meeting.

It was agreed that it was not necessary for the General Purposes Committee to meet on 9 March 2012. However a programme would be drafted for future meetings of the Committee in which a number of themes would be identified for discussion each month.

Action: Chairman/Director

26. Any Other Business

One Member invited the Board to consider ways in which it might support or be involved in the 2013 Derry City of Culture programme.

27. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting was confirmed for 23 March 2012 at 9:30am.

The meeting closed at 12.35 pm.