

**PROBATION BOARD FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**

**BOARD MEETING – 14 JUNE 2013**

**337<sup>TH</sup> MEETING – 7<sup>TH</sup> OF TENTH TERM OF OFFICE**

1. ATTENDANCE

1.1 Present

Mrs V Patterson (Chairman)  
Mr R Mullan (Deputy Chairman)

Mrs J Erskine	Mr T O’Hanlon
Mr E Jardine	Mrs M O’Rourke
Mrs L Jennett	Mr M Wardlow
Mr B McAllister	Dr R Wilson

1.2 Officials

Mr P Doran (Deputy Director Operations)  
Ms C Lamont (Deputy Director Operations)  
Mr D van der Merwe (Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services)  
Ms L Cooper (Head of Business Planning and Development)  
Ms S Glenn (Acting Head of Finance)  
Mr P Moss (Board Secretary)  
Ms S Forrester (Secretariat)  
Ms G O’Hare (Head of Psychology and Interventions) (to item 3)  
Ms G Montgomery (Area Manager) (Observer)

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Mr Brown, Mr Rose, Ms Shepherd, the Director and the Head of Communications.

3. Presentation: Mental Health Issues within the Criminal Justice System: Challenges and Opportunities for Northern Ireland

The Head of Psychology and Interventions made a presentation [subsequently circulated] covering:

- PBNI Psychology Services
- Mental Health and the Criminal Justice System: Prevalence
- Findings from Strategic Reports
- Towards a Criminal Justice Mental Health Strategy
- Towards a shared Criminal Justice & Health Strategy
- The Vision

Members commented on:

- use of secure accommodation
- work with sentencers
- working with the Department of Health at an early stage
- the operational and corporate implications of the prevalence of sentenced prisoners suffering mental health problems (70%)
- need to reflect these issues in the Corporate Plan

The Chairman thanked the Head of Psychology and Interventions for her input.

The Head of Psychology and Interventions also reported to the Board that the Programmes Team at Alderwood had been nominated for a Regional Social Work Award.

#### 4. OPENING REMARKS AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The Chairman welcomed everyone and thanked Mr O'Hanlon and Armagh City and District Council for providing the venue for the meeting and arranging the Gaol visit which was to follow.

The Chairman expressed the Board's condolences to Mr Brown whose father had passed away. Mr Doherty would represent the Board at the funeral that afternoon.

The Chairman welcomed Ms Montgomery, the local Area Manager and PBNI representative on the Armagh Policing and Community Safety Partnership, as an observer.

No Conflicts of Interest were declared.

#### 5. CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 MAY 2013 (M5/13)

The minutes were signed as a correct record.

#### 6. MATTERS ARISING (Paper 59/13)

The Head of Business Planning and Development reported that, using the 2011 census as a basis, spending on probation per capita per year (page 7, paragraph 14) was £11.51 in Northern Ireland, £14.20 in England and Wales and higher again in Humberside and Devon and Cornwall Probation Trust regions,

The draft Annual Report and Accounts had been finalised and signed by the Director. They would be laid before the Assembly by the Sponsoring Division of the DoJ.

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

7. CORRESPONDENCE (Paper 60/13)

Members noted the various items.

FOR DECISION

8. Revised Delegated Limits (Paper 61/13)

The Acting Head of Finance presented the paper, which had previously been considered by the Audit Committee. The Board was being asked to note the revised delegations which had been advised by DoJ and to approve the consequential proposed revised internal PBNI Delegated Limits.

The Acting Head of Finance highlighted the decrease in delegated limits under the Grants heading from £100k to £50k. The DoJ representative at the Audit Committee had indicated that there might be scope for negotiation on this.

The Chair of the Audit Committee stated that the Committee had concerns around the areas of leases and grants. Further concern was expressed at the level of centralisation which these changes represented. It was noted that these changes had been advised by DoJ by letter in March 2013.

The Board agreed to record its concern over the increased level of oversight and the restrictions which this created.

The Board noted the revised delegations advised by DoJ Annexes A to D and approved the proposed PBNI Financial Delegations Annex E.

**Action: Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services**

It was agreed that these changes and the way in which they had been communicated should be discussed at the Overview meeting.

**Action: Chairman**

9. Sale of Antrim property (Paper 62/13)

The Acting Head of Finance presented the paper which the Chairman commended for its clarity of detail.

The Board approved the sale of 38 Fountain Street, Antrim at £95k.

**Action: Acting Head of Finance**

10. Communications Strategy (Paper 63/13)

The Chairman explained that the Communications Group had now considered this revised draft Strategy with the Head of Communications.

The Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services advised that the proposed timing of the Staff Survey (August 2013) was to be reviewed. The Chairman stated that the Survey should take place in the 2013-14 year.

**Action: Head of Communications**

A number of amendments were agreed:

- PSCPs and Councilors to be added to the paragraph on “Audiences”
- key message number three to be qualified/put in context
- typing error in final paragraph, page 1 to be corrected
- words “and the criminal justice sector” to be added to first paragraph under heading “Aim of the Strategy”
- inclusion of reference to issue of mental health
- inclusion in key messages of information about cost of Probation

Subject to the above amendments, the Board approved the revised draft Communications Strategy.

**Action: Head of Communications**

11. Communications Group: Terms of Reference (Paper 76/13)

The Board approved the Terms of Reference and agreed that they should be subject to revision in 12 months.

**Action: Head of Communications**

FOR NOTING

12. April 2013 Outturn (Paper 64/13)

The Acting Head of Finance presented the paper.

She explained that the initial detailed budget profile for 2013/14 had been presented to the May General Purposes Committee meeting. The initial budget profile had identified a number of pressures, all of which had been included in the June monitoring round. Work was in hand for scenario planning in the event that some of the bids were not successful.

The expected outturn had been shown in graph form to highlight where pressures were expected. The budget profile for April was reflected as the actual expenditure, as the detailed budget profiling exercise had only been completed in May.

The April figures included the reversal of year end accruals and pre-payments. It was anticipated that monthly accruals and pre-payments would be processed from June 2013.

The Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services reported that the Director had met with Mr Harbinson (DoJ). The £700k bid in respect of staff costs had been met, but doubt remained as to whether the bid for £500k for non-staff costs would be successful. A further series of meetings had been arranged to explore this scenario. The formal decisions in respect of the June monitoring round were expected in early July.

The Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services pointed out that the format of the Board out-turn paper had been changed to include a graph following comment from KPMG. The Chairman welcomed the new format.

The Chairman indicated that there would be a further opportunity to discuss the budget under Audit Committee business.

The Board noted the paper.

### 13. DoJ Management Information Needs (Verbal)

The Head of Business Planning and Development referred to the letter to the Director from Mr McGuckin (DoJ) which had been provided to the Board under the heading of Correspondence. DoJ were scoping out the development of the Strategic Information Framework.

The letter also addressed the issue of a shared services approach with reference to statistician staff and stated that staff would be embedded in business units and continue to be co-located there in the long term.

It was agreed that the Board should be kept apprised of developments.

**Action: Head of Business Planning and Development**

### 14. Business Cases update (Paper 65/13)

The Acting Head of Finance talked through the paper.

The Chairman asked for additional information to be provided in terms of the value of the business case and its impact on the work of probation.

**Action: Acting Head of Finance**

Members commented that the state of various premises had been raised with them on their visits to teams.

In response to a query, the Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services said that there was not a capital budget programme as it had been anticipated that the capital budget would be provided out of the sale of properties. Work was in hand to re-prioritise the Estates business cases. It was agreed that the paper for the August Board meeting should include this information on prioritisation.

**Action: Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services**

### 15. Management Information (Paper 66/13)

Ms Lamont talked through the Human Resources section of the paper. She noted that the Head of Human Resources would make a presentation on sickness absence to the June General Purposes Committee. The Chairman welcomed the presentation of information in graph form.

The Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services addressed the section on the IS Strategy. He clarified that PBNI had updated the Outline Business Case for the new Case Management System on behalf of DoJ.

The Board Secretary highlighted the new section on legal issues.

Mr Doran covered the sections on Organisational Workload and current developments. Concern was expressed that pressure to increase the proportion of Short Pre-Sentence Reports could lead to a reduction in the role of social work assessments for the courts.

Ms Lamont reported to the Board on one Serious Further Offence which was likely to be high profile.

The Chairman confirmed that the Director had reported to her that the Reconciliation Exercise on all Court results on the Integrated Court Operation System had been successfully completed.

The Board noted the paper.

#### 16. Programme of Visits and Business (Paper 67/13)

The Chairman noted the meeting on 7 June 2013 with NIPS and the issue of committals which the Director had briefed her on.

Ms Lamont reported that in light of the significant increase in the workload, 70% in the past three years with no resourcing uplift, PBNI had been refining its SLAs with NIPS. Despite a series of meetings with NIPS and the bi-lateral meeting on 7 June 2013 at NIPS Headquarters, it was concluded that PBNI would reluctantly have to accept the decision by NIPS that it would undertake committal interviews at Maghaberry from 1 August 2013. It was noted by the Director General that this was not simply a financial decision but one seeking to make best use of new prison staff grades. It was noted that this would be kept under review within the SLAs on a quarterly basis or indeed be escalated more readily should there be any concerns or change in position.

Members expressed concern at the erosion of a core PBNI activity and urged that representations should be made at high level.

Ms Lamont drew attention to the attendance of Mr Hamill at the Radicalisation Awareness Network Working Group on Prisons and Probation in Madrid at which the speaker had been Professor Fergus McNeill.

The Board noted the paper.

#### 17. Political and Public Affairs: Update (Verbal)

The monthly media coverage paper was tabled.

The Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services, in the absence of the Head of Communications, drew attention to the area of social media and the website. Twitter was now the most significant referral source into the PBNI website.

18. Strategic Risk Register – Risk 4 – Finance Risk (Paper 68/13)

The Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services talked through the key controls/systems/actions to manage risk in connection with the Risk “PBNI’s budget comes under pressure due to increased service delivery requirements”.

In response to a query, he explained that, due to the timing of the June Audit Committee meeting which was to consider a paper on the 2013/14 Risk Register, the version before the Board was not the most up to date version of this risk.

It was agreed that the Finance risk from the most up to date version of the Risk Register would be presented to the August Board meeting.

**Action: Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services**

The Board noted the paper.

19. Corporate Plan update for information (Paper 69/13)

The Chairman thanked the Head of Business Planning and Development, Mr McIlwaine and other staff who had contributed.

The drafting Workshop would take place on 3 and 4 July.

The Board noted the paper.

20. Board Objectives and Workplan 2013/14 (Paper 70/13)

The Board noted the paper.

21. A Follow-up Review of the Probation Board for Northern Ireland Community Service Scheme (Paper 71/13)

The Board recorded its congratulations to staff on such a positive report.

The Board noted the paper.

AUDIT COMMITTEE

22. Report from the Committee (April 2013) (Paper 72/13)

The Committee Chair presented the paper.

He reported that the Internal Audit report on Time Management had received a limited assurance. However the Committee was monitoring the situation and had no serious concerns. The Review of Responding to Serious Further Offences had received a satisfactory assurance.

The Committee had considered the Strategic Risk Register and a paper on the Bribery Act and Risk Assessment.

The Committee Chair had invited Committee members to identify any training opportunities of which they became aware.

The Board noted the paper.

23. Report from the Committee (May 2013) (Paper 73/13)

The Committee Chair presented the paper.

He drew attention to the Internal Audit report on Staff Supervision in which three Priority 2 and one Priority 3 recommendations had been made.

He also highlighted the paper on the Pension Fund Valuation Assumptions and Report. There was now an increased pension deficit of £10.5m. He suggested that the full Board should have a presentation on this issue.

**Action: Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services**

The Board noted the paper.

24. Report from the Committee (June 2013) (Verbal)

The Committee Chair gave a verbal report. He reported that a meeting of the Committee convened on 10 June 2013 had been inquorate. The meeting had proceeded on an informal basis and a formal meeting had taken place that morning immediately before this Board meeting.

The meeting had approved the draft Audit Committee Annual Report for presentation to the Board.

The Committee had considered a draft of the Report To Those Charged With Governance. The external auditors had indicated that they anticipated recommending to the Comptroller and Auditor General that he certify the 2012/13 financial statements with an unqualified audit opinion.

The Committee had discussed a paper on the 2013/14 Strategic Risk Register. The Audit and Risk Management Group had proposed that three risks be de-escalated to departmental risk registers, but the Committee had asked for the third of these risks (failure to comply with Health and Safety Standards, including Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007) to be retained at strategic level.

**Action: Head of Business Planning and Development**

The Committee had reviewed the draft Annual Report and Accounts. A change had been made to the version previously seen by the Board in that the value of the Antrim property had been reduced by £55k. Other changes had been presentational. Authority had been given to the Chairman, Chair of the Audit Committee and Director to agree the final version of the Accounts and the Director had now signed and submitted them.

The Committee Chair reminded Members that the General Purposes Committee had requested that a budget contingency scenario paper be prepared for the June Audit Committee meeting. This paper had been tabled at the informal (inquorate) meeting on 10 June which was attended by a DoJ representative.

This paper stated that DoJ had agreed to provide £700k towards staff costs and £350k for the first six months of 2014-15. There was considerable doubt as to whether two further bids for £150k (staff overheads) and £350k (estates pressures) would be successful. This could leave the Board with a £0.5m budget deficit.

A number of possible actions to reduce costs as set out in this paper had included vacating leased premises and a number of owned premises, but the Committee had had doubts about the feasibility of this option.

The Committee Chair suggested that the Board should ask for a detailed paper addressing the budget deficit with costed and deliverable options exploring both staff and non-staff costs and this was agreed.

**Action: Director**

The Chairman expressed the view that a special Board meeting should be convened in July to consider the further paper which the Board had now requested.

It was stressed that the paper requested above should be a professional high quality paper including realistic figures and clear information on timing and the impact of options presented.

The Board agreed to convene a special meeting in July to discuss the paper and the Secretariat was requested to check dates and make the necessary arrangements.

**Action: Secretariat**

## 25. Audit Committee Annual Report (Paper 74/13)

The Board noted the paper.

### GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

## 26. Report from the Committee (May 2013) (Paper 75/13)

The Committee Chair presented the report on the meeting held on 24 May 2013 at which a presentation had been made by Dr J Topping, University of Ulster, on “A Criminology of Crime and Society”. The main topics of discussion had been a Detailed Profile Budget, an IS Update and an Initial Benchmark Paper.

The Committee would consider the issue of sickness absence at its next meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS27. Chairman's Business

The Chairman reiterated the Board's thanks to Mr O'Hanlon and the Armagh City and District Council. Mr O'Hanlon said he was delighted to welcome Members to Armagh and looked forward to assisting with the tour of Armagh Gaol.

28. Director's and Secretary's Business – Consolatory Payments Policy and Procedure

The Board Secretary presented a paper proposing the suspension of the Consolatory Payments Policy and Procedure in the light of the new provisions for delegated Limits.

The Board approved the paper.

**Action: Board Secretary**

29. Any Other Business

It was confirmed that the General Purposes Committee would meet on 28 June 2013.

30. Date of Next Meeting

The next regular Board Meeting would take place on Friday, 9 August 2013.

The meeting closed at 12:45 pm.

---

**Vilma Patterson**  
**Chairman**

---

**Date**