

PROBATION BOARD FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

BOARD MEETING – 10 MAY 2013

336TH MEETING – 6TH OF TENTH TERM OF OFFICE

1. ATTENDANCE

1.1 Present

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

Mr D Brown	Mr T O’Hanlon (to item 17)
Mrs J Erskine	Mrs M O’Rourke
Mr E Jardine	Mr D Rose (from item 7)
Mrs L Jennett	Mr M Wardlow
Mr B McAllister	Dr R Wilson (to item 11)

1.2 Officials

Mr B McCaughey (Director)
Mr P Doran (Deputy Director Operations)
Ms C Lamont (Deputy Director Operations)
Mr D van der Merwe (Deputy Director Finance & Corporate Services)
Mr P Moss (Board Secretary)
Ms G McGreevy (Head of Communications)
Ms S Forrester (Secretariat)
Ms S Glenn (Acting Head of Finance) (items 7-8)
Ms L Cooper (Head of Business Planning and Development) (from item 7)
Mrs G Robinson (Head of Human Resources) (item 15)
Mr T Doherty (Assistant Director) (item 17)

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Ms Shepherd.

3. OPENING REMARKS AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The Chairman welcomed everyone.

She advised Members that Mr Robin Mullan had been appointed as Deputy Chairman of the Board in a process run by the DoJ. She expressed congratulations to Mr Mullan and said that she looked forward to working with him.

No Conflicts of Interest were recorded.

**4. CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON
12 APRIL 2013 (M4/13)**

The minutes were signed as a correct record.

5. MATTERS ARISING (Paper 47/13)

The Board noted the matters arising and the actions taken.

6. CORRESPONDENCE (Paper 48/13)

Members noted the letter from the Minister of Justice approving the Board's 2013-14 Business Plan.

FOR DECISION

7. Draft Annual Report and Accounts 2012/13 (Paper 49/13)

The Acting Head of Finance presented the paper, an earlier draft of which had been considered by the Audit Committee. The audit was due to begin the following week so the audit opinion had not yet been provided, but it would be made available to the June Audit Committee meeting.

The Acting Head of Finance listed the various sections which made up the Annual Report, highlighting the Governance Statement which had replaced the Statement on Internal Control.

She talked through the budget overview tables in the cover paper.

She highlighted a number of items in the expenditure against budget overview table. The underspend of £89k under the pay heading had been anticipated. The £291k underspend in the cash use of NILGOSC and HMRC provisions was partly attributable to cash payments being lower than the budget determined by the Actuary at the previous valuation of the fund. The performance against the Departmental Expenditure Limits (DEL) cash budget was an underspend of £266k. There was a £57k overspend in depreciation.

The Annually Managed Expenditure (AME) budget was a net credit of £414k. It reflected changes and movements in provisions related to staff pension provision.

Capital expenditure saw an underspend of £71k as expenditure was restricted due to delay in receipt of proceeds.

Members were advised that net liabilities had increased. The paragraph headed "Going Concern" set out a pension scheme liability of £10,501k resulting in an overall net liability of £10,802k. As the Board would have the ongoing support and funding of DoJ, it was appropriate for the accounts to be prepared on a going concern basis.

There had been a decrease in the value of the non-current assets (property, plant, machinery) and also a decrease in the value of current assets due to a decrease in prepayments and an increase in the value of assets held for sale.

Current liabilities reflected an overdrawn position of £1,253k due to payments made at the end of March 2013 for which funding drawdown was not reflected until early April.

Non-current liabilities relating to pension liability had increased by £970k. This had been calculated by an actuary appointed by NILGOSC. Pension commitments were the subject of a detailed Note to the Accounts (Note 15).

The Statement of Changes in the Taxpayers Equity detailed the reserves including the general reserve and revaluation reserve.

The Acting Head of Finance highlighted Note 23, Related Party Transactions and asked Members to provide any further information if appropriate.

She explained that the Audit Committee would consider the draft Annual Report and Accounts at its June meeting, after which the Director would be in a position to sign the Annual Report and Accounts on behalf of the Board.

The Chairman welcomed the helpful and comprehensive presentation. She commended the Governance Statement.

The Chair of the Audit Committee congratulated staff on meeting the demanding timeframe for the production of the Accounts. The Audit Committee had discussed the paper at some length and had no major concerns. The Committee had considered the issues of going concern, overdraft, governance statement and movement on assets which was outside PBNI control.

Comment was made on Note 15 to the Accounts (Pension Commitments) and the view was expressed that the expected rate of return on assets was overly optimistic.

The Chair of the Audit Committee stated that the Audit Committee had taken the view that it would be useful to hold a half day briefing session on pensions for Board Members. The Chairman endorsed this view.

Action: Deputy Director Finance & Corporate Services

The Board agreed the Annual Report and Accounts in principle.

It was further agreed that, after the Audit Committee had considered the Annual Report and Accounts at its June meeting, unless there was any substantive change, they would be signed off by the Chair of the Audit Committee, the Board Chairman and the Accounting Officer.

Action: Director

8. Sale of Ramoan House (Paper 50/13)

The Acting Head of Finance presented the paper. The Board had been kept up-to-date regarding the position with Ramoan and was now being asked to approve the sale of the property at £73k. Land and Property Services had recommended that this offer be accepted and DoJ had approved the sale at this price.

There had been a recent incident of vandalism at the property which had resulted in some minor internal damage.

The Board approved the sale of Ramoan House at £73k and delegated authority to the Chairman to agree a revised sale price to compensate for damage caused, should the purchaser request it.

Action: Deputy Director Finance & Corporate Services

9. Communications Strategy (Paper 51/13)

The Head of Communications presented the paper. She explained the aim of the Strategy and its objectives in terms of internal communications, external communications and public affairs and outlined proposals for evaluation.

Members welcomed the paper and commended the work of the Communications Team.

A number of points were raised in discussion:

- value in enhanced engagement with MLAs – listening as well as briefing
- the aim of the Strategy might be “to engage civic leaders, citizens and staff about the work of Probation”
- objectives might be broadened, e.g. to increase engagement with staff, public awareness, confidence in communities and enhance partnerships and relationships
- the proposals for delivery of internal communication objectives eg monthly podcasts might be too ambitious,
- concerns around the use of Twitter and the culture of instant and constant comment
- need to focus on service users in terms of what the organisation provided for them (leaflets in a variety of formats) and how the organisation communicated with them (possible use of focus groups)
- seek feedback from the media as to how the organisation related to them
- huge impact of social media especially on young people
- merits of using a microsite
- value in providing Board Members with “soundbites” to use in their ambassadorial role
- importance of engaging with Councillors
- inclusion of section about crisis management

It was agreed to convene a Board Member panel of reference to meet with the Head of Communications. The Chairman, Mr O’Hanlon, Mr McAllister and Dr Wilson agreed to be part of this panel.

It was agreed that the Strategy would be revised to reflect the above discussion and input from the panel and would be brought back to a future meeting.

Action: Head of Communications

10. Appointment of General Purposes Committee Deputy Chair, Audit Committee member, Audit Committee Deputy Chair

The Chairman reported that she had considered the expressions of interest received and proposed Mrs Jennett as the General Purposes Committee Deputy Chair. She also proposed Mr Brown as an Audit Committee Member and Mrs Erskine as the Audit Committee Deputy Chair.

The Board endorsed these proposals.

11. Business Cases update

The Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services updated Members regarding the pay remits for administrative staff assimilation, the Domestic Violence Abuse Programme business case, business cases relating to Owers recommendations 35 and 37 and Downpatrick premises.

DoJ had in principle approved the £700k bid for additional staff.

He also updated Members on the pay remit for Probation grade staff, the pay remit for the Director, Community Grant to Extern and Omagh and Coleraine offices.

The Director referred to a business case being worked up for new city centre premises.

The Board noted this information.

It was agreed that this item should be presented to the June Board meeting as a paper, to include information on all current business cases requiring approval above the Board's delegated limits and delegated limits.

Action: Deputy Director Finance & Corporate Services

FOR NOTING

12. Management Information (Paper 52/13)

Ms Lamont explained that some of the figures in the first half of the paper represented the position at the end of March 2013. Henceforth the figures would be provided two months in arrears.

The Health & Safety statistics covered the period up to the beginning of May 2013 and included an incident involving a member of staff in April which was reportable to the Health & Safety Executive.

Mr Doran reported on the ICOS reconciliation exercise. The Director said that he would provide the Chairman with a copy of the report on this exercise.

Action: Director

The Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services gave an update on the Helpdesk software application, anti-virus and client security software replacement and secure remote laptops for ISU Probation Officers. He also reported on an incident during which PBNI was unable to access ICOS as a consequence of Causeway annual disaster recovery testing. The electronic Board provision Working Group had been established.

Mr Doran commented on the organisational workload figures which reflected the full year's performance.

He talked through the 2012/13 Complaints Report. Clarification was sought as to the number of complaints upheld or partially upheld which related to supervision. It was agreed that this detail, along with trend information and any lessons learned from the 2012/13 figures would be provided to the June Board meeting in conjunction with the revised Complaints Policy.

Action: Head of Business Planning & Development

Members highlighted the sickness absence figures. Ms Lamont confirmed that the target 2013/14 was 10 days per employee. There was a suggestion that a staff member focus group might be convened to look at the issue. Ms Lamont referred to the presentation which the Head of Human Resources had made to the October 2012 Board meeting. This presentation could be made available to Members.

There was a request for further analysis around the causes of sickness absence and a comparison between PBNI and other Probation Services. It was proposed that the Head of Human Resources would provide a more detailed briefing on sickness absence to the June General Purposes Committee meeting.

Action: Head of Human Resources

The Board noted the paper.

13. Programme of Visits and Business (Paper 53/13)

The Chairman updated Members on a tele-conference in which she had participated the previous day with other Probation Chairs in which there had been discussion of the Transforming Rehabilitation initiative.

A Member raised the issue of restorative justice and the Chairman said that it would form part of the corporate planning discussion.

Mr Doran reported on the Minister's visit to the Limavady Road Office.

The Director referred to the DoJ Information Needs meeting which was taking place that afternoon. He would bring this matter back to the Board.

Action: Director

Mr Doran commented on the Fine Enforcement Programme Board.

The Chairman thanked the staff who had written the report on the visit to the London Probation Service.

The Board noted the paper.

14. Political and Public Affairs: Update

The Head of Communications tabled the monthly media report. The Chairman thanked her and her team for the level and breadth of media coverage being achieved.

A query was raised as to the cost of Probation per head of population or per household. This information would be provided.

Action: Head of Business Planning & Development

There was discussion around the limited level of engagement with NIO. The Chairman suggested that further consideration should be given to this in the light of current developments for Probation in England and Wales.

15. Strategic Risk Register – Risk 3 (Workforce Capacity and Capability)
(Paper 55/13)

The Head of Human Resources explained that the Department had been concentrating on the recruitment of fixed term staff which had been possible following the submission of a successful business case to DoJ for additional funding.

SMT would begin work on the Organisational Development Plan at the end of June 2013.

The revised Sickness Absence Policy would be brought to the Board in October 2013. Long term sickness absence had been identified as the major issue with mental/behavioural issues the greatest causation. The current level of sickness absence remained high at 12.4 days per person.

In response to a query as to why the residual risk was regarded as high, the Head of Human Resources said that systems and structures had to be addressed and future –proofing of fixed term contracts had still to be resolved.

The Board noted the paper.

16. Strategic Issues and Alliances (Paper 54/13)

The Chairman explained that this paper was being withdrawn and would be brought to a future meeting.

17. CJI Community Supervision Report: Executive Summary and Action Plan
(Paper 56/13)

Mr Doherty presented the paper, referring to the update which he had provided to the April Board meeting.

The report had now been published and the attention of Members was drawn to the headline scores in the executive summary.

The Criminal Justice Inspectors had commended PBNI's Best Practice Framework and NI Standards document. They had made positive comments on risk assessments, multi-agency arrangements, delivery of interventions, community service placements, record keeping and home visits.

The Inspectors had set down three recommendations and five areas for improvement but these were matters of operational practice rather than strategic issues and had been addressed in the PBNI Action Plan.

The Minister had launched the report at a very positive event on 2 May which had provided a significant endorsement of PBNI's work.

The Head of Business Planning and Development explained that the action points would be monitored via the control log which the Audit Committee considered.

In response to a query, the Director explained that, although the headline scores focused on quantitative measures, the full report also addressed qualitative issues through interviews with offenders, victims and partners.

The Chairman recorded the Board's appreciation to all the staff and the Director for the work which the Report represented.

The Board noted the paper.

18. Corporate Plan Update

The Chairman reported that the Group had held its first meeting.

It was intended to have a first draft on which to consult by the end of June.

The Chairman thanked the Head of Business Planning & Development for her input.

19. Board Objectives and Workplan 2013/14 (Paper 57/13)

The Board noted the paper.

AUDIT COMMITTEE

20. Reports from the Committee April 2013 and May 2013 (Verbal)

The Committee reported that the April meeting had considered a series of reports from the Internal Auditors. There were no issues which needed to be brought to the attention of the Board.

The May Committee had been convened specifically to consider the Annual Report and Accounts with an associated paper on Pensions.

The Board noted the reports.

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

21. Report from the Committee (April 2013) (Paper 58/13)

The Committee Chair reported on the useful discussion around the role of the Committee, the Budget 2013/14 and the IS Update.

The Committee had taken a decision regarding the Terms of Reference and Proposed Approach to the Evaluation of Community Grants.

The Committee Chair had asked Dr John Topping to speak at the May Committee meeting. Mr Fulton and Dr Carr were confirmed for the June Committee meeting.

It was noted that Ms O'Hare would speak at the June Board meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

22. Chairman's Business

The Chairman reported that Armagh Council had offered to host a Board meeting combined with lunch and a tour of Armagh Gaol.

Members agreed to the proposal that the meeting on 14 June 2013 should take place in Armagh.

The Chairman thanked Mr O'Hanlon for facilitating these arrangements.

23. Director's Business

- (i) The Director acknowledged the death of Mike Moloney, Director of the Prison Arts Foundation. The Chairman joined with him in expressing the Board's regret.
- (ii) The Director reported that he and the Deputy Directors would attend a North/South Probation Management meeting on 30/31 May.
- (iii) The Director said that he had been asked to appear before the Justice Committee on 16 May with reference to life sentence prisoners.
- (iv) Mr Doran informed Members that 4 PBNI teams had taken part in the Belfast Marathon.
- (v) The Director stated that Mr Peter May was moving from DoJ to DCAL and would be replaced by Mr Anthony Harbinson.
- (vi) The Director thanked the Deputy Directors, Senior Team and all the staff in connection with the CJI Community Supervision Report.

24. Any Other Business

It was confirmed that the General Purposes Committee would meet on 24 May 2013.

25. Date of Next Meeting

The next Board Meeting would take place on Friday, 14 June 2013 in Armagh.

The meeting closed at 12.25 pm.

Vilma Patterson
Chairman

Date