

PROBATION BOARD FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

BOARD MEETING – 20 January 2017**9.30 AM – PBNI HQ****381st MEETING – 13th of THE ELEVENTH TERM OF OFFICE****ATTENDANCE**

Mrs Vilma Patterson (Chairman)	Mrs J Erskine (Deputy Chair)
Mr D Brown	Mrs J Gillespie
Mr I Jeffers	Ms A Matthews
Mr R Mullan	Mr G OhEara
Mr D Wall	

Officials

Ms C Lamont, Chief Executive
Mr P Doran, Deputy Director
Mr Hugh Hamill, (Acting) Deputy Director
Mrs G Robinson, Head of HR
Mrs M Bowers, (Acting) Head of Finance
Mr M Cox, Board Secretary
Mrs W Rodgers, Personal Secretary (Minutes)

Observer

Mr P McCusker, Area Manager

1. OPENING REMARKS AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. She particularly welcomed Mr Paul McCusker, Area Manager, to the meeting as an observer and expressed a hope that he would find the meeting informative. The Chairman acknowledged the current political uncertainties and stated the potential impact on the draft Corporate Plan which will be considered under agenda item 5.

No conflicts of interests were declared.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies received from: Mr E Jardine, Member; Mrs B Stuart, Member; Mr T O'Hanlon, Member; Mrs P Shepherd, Member.

3. CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES (M11/16)

The minutes of the Board meeting held on 16 December 2016 were accepted as an accurate account of the meeting.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES (Paper 01/17)

The Chairman drew attention to outstanding actions for members and asked that these be completed as soon as possible. Action 4 (a) is due to be brought to the Board in February 2017. All actions from the 16 December 2016 were noted as being completed.

Action: Members to respond to actions, Board Members.

The Board noted the Matters Arising.

5. CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE – VERBAL

The Chairman congratulated Ms Matthews on her appointment to the Office of Legislative Council and wished her well in her role.

Members were advised of the office visits that had been arranged and encouraged members to take part in the visits.

The Chairman and Chief Executive will be attending the annual NIO Symposium on 2nd and 3rd February 2017 in St Andrews. The theme is - Exiting the EU: The Security Implications for Northern Ireland. Exiting the EU has particular relevance to PBNI in its cross-border work with the Probation Service.

Members were reminded of the Training Event being held on 10 February 2017 on Governance and Board Effectiveness which will have an independent facilitator. Arrangements are underway for the event. There will also be a meeting of the Corporate Planning Sub-group prior to the training event to discuss the draft Corporate Plan which has been revised to reflect the political uncertainty.

The Chairman advised that she will be attending Public Accountability & Governance for Board Members run by the Chief Executive's Forum on 23 January 2017. Mrs Erskine will also be attending the event on behalf of another organisation.

On behalf of the Board the Chairman has written to Mr Liam Ferguson, retired Probation Officer, congratulating him on his award of BEM in the New Year's Honours List and to Mr Ronnie Armour on his appointment as Director of the Reducing Offending Directorate.

An interview with AgendaNI has been set up with contributions from Dr Nicola Carr and Gerri Hanna. The purpose of the article is to increase understanding of the work of Probation and Problem Solving Justice.

The Chairman advised that she had written to the Director of Safer Communities and is meeting with him next week. The purpose of the meeting is to keep him informed of developments of the Corporate Plan and establish his view on the scope to launch before the end of March, against the background of the Assembly elections. The launch is still being considered and the Lord Chief Justice has agreed to be the key note speaker at the event.

The draft Corporate Plan approved by the Board at its meeting in December 2016, has been revised, pending the outcome of the meeting with the Director of Safer Communities. The Board Secretary advised that the revised plan had the overt references to the Programme for Government taken out as it had not been endorsed by the Assembly and had therefore no status. The Board Secretary talked through the five strategic priorities and the impact on these for the work of Probation. There was discussion on delivering the probation service against the likely reducing budget and how the monies will be distributed throughout the Justice System. There was also discussion around communication with staff and the need to continue to deliver the statutory duty of the Probation. Although there is a period of uncertainty some assumptions on money and issues has been kept in. The Sub-group will meet on 10th February 2017 with the draft being brought to the Board in February for endorsement. It is hoped the launch of the Corporate Plan will take place on 30 March 2017.

The Board noted the update.

Action: Draft Corporate Plan to be brought to February Board for endorsement, Board Secretary

6. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S UPDATE – VERBAL

The Chief Executive informed the meeting of her engagement with the Department. The Permanent Secretary had called an extraordinary Senior Civil Servants Forum to update on work that the Minister will focus on during the lead up to the election. He also informed the meeting that there was no indication of the level of the overall budget however the Permanent Secretary of DOF is likely to release 75% of last year's budget figure in the latter part of March and 95% by the end of June. It was advised that DAERA are 90% EU funded and therefore budgetary provision will have to be found across the other departments to ensure that essential costs are covered. The Permanent Secretary advised the meeting that there will be no new initiatives until the financial position was clear with regard to the impact on Probation's involvement in initiatives such as the 'Aspire Men's project' (under Fresh Start), Domestic Violence Courts, Substance Misuse Courts and Supervised Activity Orders, the Chief Executive will be clarifying the issues with the Director of Safer Communities as soon as possible.

The Chief Executive advised that there was also a meeting with the Lord Chief Justice. He is supportive of Enhanced Combination Orders (ECOs) and that he is keen to roll these out. He is aware that the funding will cease at the end of March 2017.

Sonia Crozier of the National Probation Service in England and Wales will be visiting PBNI for a two day visit on 26 and 27 January 2017. She is interested in looking at how 'Reset' and 'ECO' operate. In England and Wales there is a white paper on changes within prisons and using probation staff more within prisons. Developments will be kept under review. Phil Wragg and others have been invited to attend the meeting with Ms Crozier.

The Chief Executive advised that she had also written to Mr Ronnie Armour congratulating him on his appointment to Director of Reducing Offending and that he had stated that he was keen for a meeting with Probation.

The Board noted the update.

7. CORRESPONDENCE (Paper 02/17)

The Chairman advised members that there were three items of correspondence for members to note.

7.1 Letter received by Cheryl Lamont from Nick Perry re Accounting Officer Designation

7.2 Letter received by Cheryl Lamont from Claire Sugden MLA re visit to Portadown Office

7.3 Letter received by Cheryl Lamont from George Hamilton CC re congratulations

The Chief Executive advised members that item 7.2, letter received from the Minister, which requested a visit to the Portadown office by the Minister will not now happen.

The Board noted the correspondence

8 CORPORATE GOVERNANCE ANNUAL REVIEW (PAPER 03/17)

The Board Secretary introduced the paper and advised that there were two purposes to the paper. Firstly, to review the governance arrangements of the Board, including, but not explicitly, to review the Management Statement Financial Memorandum (MSFM); and secondly to consider the outcome of the governance self-assessment questionnaire.

The Board noted the review of the MSFM and the need to have it revised.

The background to the MSFM and its overall purpose were discussed. It was advised that some minor amendments have to be made. There will be a Governance Audit in quarter four and this is to ensure that arrangements are in order.

The Board Secretary summarized the self-assessment recently completed by members. It was mainly positive with nothing of concern identified. It was noted that the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) guidance suggests that there should be such a review completed annually. A formal self-assessment will be under taken at the facilitated event on 10 February which will allow a governance action plan to be prepared. The Chair of the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee advised that she had reviewed the MSFM recently and it appeared to be in order.

The Board noted the update.

9. PROGRAMME AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT UPDATE (Paper 04/17)

The Programme and Project Management quarterly update was presented to members for their information.

The Deputy Director provided an update on the Case Management System and advised that the Chief Executive was the SRO for the project, which has now been established. It will be managed under Prince II methodology.

He also reported that there are currently 126 ECOs and the reoffending rate has been low for the Orders. As there will be no funding after March, there is likely to be a break in the project at that time. This will allow for an evaluation on the costs and outcomes to be carried out.

'Reset' was funded at present to the end of March –if no further funding there will be an exit plan for those offenders to keep in touch with their mentors.

Access has a target of 400 referrals with a 40% successful outcome – this is on target.

The Chairman advised that the Board is pleased that the projects continue to be successful and it is regrettable that there is not funding to continue. There was discussion around the risks and consequences of reduced funding to the Voluntary and Community Sector.

There was an update on the Workforce Modernisation Project. The Project is proceeding as planned. The implementation of the short term recommendations are proceeding well. There are a number of reviews taking place on particular roles.

It was advised that a cultural survey will be conducted and this will be undertaken by an external company. Discussion ensued on the importance of this exercise.

The fit out of the Graffiti van is due to be completed by the end of March.

PWC are looking at cost modelling to provide evidence on the ECOs and other projects.

The Board noted the paper.

10. QUARTER 3 BUSINESS PLAN 2016/17 UPDATE (PAPER 05/17)

The (Acting) Deputy Director took the Members through the paper advising that eight objectives had a 'green' rating and one had a 'red' rating. There was discussion around potentially ceasing of funding for a number of projects at the end of March.

Action: Update on initiatives to be provided at the February Board, (Acting) Deputy Director

The Head of HR gave an update on sick absence. It was advised that the target for the year had not been met in quarter 1 and therefore was behind throughout the year. Assurance was given that sick absence is receiving full attention. The Chief Executive and Deputy Directors have met with department leads individually and have reviewed how managers are dealing with sick absence. 'Return to Work' interviews are being done and there have been a number of returnees. Long term sickness and dismissals through ill health are being looked at earlier than previously.

The statistical trend is downwards and it is expected to start the new financial year in a stronger position than 2016/17. There have been a number of serious illness and pregnancy related absence throughout the year which have had an impact on the figures. There are a number of Wellbeing initiatives being looked at with middle managers being involved in management of staff. The Chairman noted that there is a requirement to have a duty of care to those who are sick but also to those who are well and at work.

A member advised that the Voluntary and Community Sector are concerned about European funding and the impact that the loss of funding will have on them. Particularly cross-border funding and initiatives in both jurisdictions.

The Board noted the paper.

11. REGISTER OF INTERESTS FOR PUBLICATION (PAPER 06/17)

The Board Secretary introduced the paper to members. The purpose of the paper is to protect Probation from criticism and provide information in an open and transparent way. It is the individual's responsibility to advise of any interests that may be seen as a conflict. Mr Wall advised, for clarity, that he was a member only of NIACRO and on the Board of the Community Foundation Northern Ireland.

Action: Amendments to be made to the paper and then the Register of Interests to be published on the PBNI Website, Board Secretary.

The Board noted the paper.

12. FINANCIAL OUTTURN – DECEMBER REPORT (Paper 07/17)

The (Acting) Head of Finance presented the paper to the Members. The year to date underspend is £176k or 1.41% of the budget as of 31 December 2016.

£100k of underspend has been allocated to community grants. Accommodation costs are currently the main driver in the underspend. With re-profiling of costs in January Monitoring this position will be corrected and the finance department is forecasting £0 - £50k underspend for the year in January but continues to monitor spend both actual and forecast in an effort to maximise spend without exceeding budget. From a capital perspective we expect to spend full budget with two large expenditure items still to be added – 'Graffiti' van and replacement print services solution.

There has been verbal confirmation that the January Monitoring budget is approved but no formal notification has been received as yet. There is additional budget for HMRC travel and subsistence pressure. The balance of changes details internal re-allocations. An update on VAT was given.

The prompt payment figure was the highest in DoJ and above the NICS average.

The Board noted the paper.

13. MANAGEMENT INFORMATION PAPER (Paper 08/17)

The Head of HR gave an update on sick absence under agenda item number 10 of this meeting.

The (Acting) Deputy Director advised members that the caseload figures remain largely unchanged. A proposal will be brought to the Policy & Practice Committee to change the format of the statistics shown to give them more context. For example, it was noted that convictions since 2012-13 had decreased by 24% while workload had reduced by 3% over the same period. ROSH, PPANI, ECO and ECS are also more demanding on resource due to their intensive supervision; work on a financial modelling will give a clearer picture of the resources required for such cases. The Chief Executive advised that there had been a reducing number of cases going through the courts and the Lord Chief Justice recognises the complexity of cases and the mental

health issues. The (Acting) Deputy Director and Board Secretary will be meeting with the DOJ in February to discuss these concerns.

Background was given into the Office Transfer Project. PBNI have been invited to be part of the pilot. All leases and freehold will be transferred to the DOF Properties Services in April 2018. There was discussion on the concerns and risks that this project may entail. A meeting has been arranged to understand this project more before PBNI could agree to be involved.

The Deputy Director advised that the work on Electronic Information Management and the storage of offender files will be undertaken by Careworks, but work has been delayed due to Carework's current workload.

There are currently 17 legal cases ongoing, split between operational cases and HR and Health & Safety. There has been a rise in Judicial Reviews being lodged and this in turn has provided an issue of meeting the court deadlines. The issue of the courts having unreasonable expectations on receiving responses will be discussed with the Crown Solicitor's Office.

The Members were informed of a current Serious Further Offence, with background being given on some cases of punishment beatings. There are issues in communities at present and the AD for Urban is liaising with the PSNI and local managers to address some of the issues identified.

The Board noted the paper.

14. PROGRAMME OF VISITS AND BUSINESS (Paper 09/17)

The Board noted the paper.

15. BOARD WORK PLAN 2016 – 2017 (PAPER 10/17)

The Board Secretary advised that he had written to the Committee Chairs asking them to consider how the Committees could best contribute to the delivery of the Corporate Plan. This would also allow the Committees to plan their work across the year, including the frequency of meetings, which would, in turn, inform the Board Work Plan.

Action: Committees to discuss delivery of the Corporate Plan, Committees

The Board noted the paper.

16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business

17. BOARD SECRETARY'S BUSINESS

- 17.1 Members were reminded to have their expenses up to date for the end of the financial year
- 17.2 Members were reminded of the Training Day on 10 February 2017 and the format it will take
- 17.3 Roisin Muldoon, Assistant Director, is organising the Spring Ball had if any members wish to attend, please contact Secretariat for tickets
- 17.4 Members were reminded of the office visits being arranged and advised of the importance of the visits

18. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will take place on Friday 17 February 2017, PBNI HQ, Conference Room, 9.30 am.

Vilma Patterson
Chairman

Date