

## PROBATION BOARD FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

**BOARD MEETING – 18 MARCH 2016****9.30 AM – PBNI HQ****372nd MEETING – 4th of THE ELEVENTH TERM OF OFFICE****ATTENDANCE**

Mrs Vilma Patterson (Chairman)	Mrs J Erskine (Deputy Chairman)
Mrs J Gillespie	Mr E Jardine
Mr I Jeffers	Ms A Matthews
Mr R Mullan	Mr G OhEara
Mrs P Shepherd	Mrs B Stuart
Mr D Wall	

Ms C Lamont, (Acting) Director  
Mr P Doran, Deputy Director  
Mrs C Teggart, Head of Finance  
Mr M Cox, Board Secretary  
Mrs W Rodgers, Personal Secretary (Minutes)

**1. OPENING REMARKS AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. She apologised for the failure of the technology at this meeting, which was due to the expiration of a security certificate.

The Chairman congratulated Mrs Erskine on her appointment as Deputy Chair by the Minister, following the process managed by the DOJ. She expressed her thanks on behalf of the Board to Mr Mullan for all his work and assistance in carrying out the role during his three year term of the last Board.

No conflicts of interest were noted.

**2. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Mr D Brown, Member, Mr T O'Hanlon, Member, Mr H Hamill (Acting) Deputy Director, Mrs G Robinson, Head of HR.

**3. CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES**

The minutes of the Board meeting held on 19 February 2016 were accepted as an accurate account of the meeting.

**4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES (Paper 19/16)**

The Board noted the matters arising.

## 5. CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE – VERBAL

The Chairman noted that five Members would be attending the 'Twitter' training organised for 6 April 2016. She noted that there would be other similar training organised for other Board Members in due course.

A Corporate Plan sub-group consisting of about five Members would be established. Volunteers would be sought. Members of the Sub-group would be required to attend additional meetings.

The Chairman noted that there had been very positive feedback from those attending the Probation in Focus Seminar on 11 March. This was the first such event PBNI had held. During the subsequent discussion a number of Members offered their thoughts on the content and the collective views expressed were positive. The Chairman thanked all those involved in organising the Seminar.

The Board noted the update.

## 6. DIRECTOR'S UPDATE – VERBAL

The (Acting) Director advised that she had no formal update for the Members.

She noted that there had been some reference by the Justice Committee of what is involved in 'Problem Solving Courts in their 21<sup>st</sup> Century Justice Report'. She explained that these courts focus on the problems behind the individuals offending. This sits very easily with PBNI's provision of reports to courts. The Deputy Director stated that a critical element is the judicial oversight. Experience from elsewhere is that some positive benefits have been identified. The (Acting) Director offered to give a more detailed briefing and this was accepted.

**Action: (Acting) Director to provide a written brief on 'Problem Solving Courts' to Members.**

## 7. CORRESPONDENCE (Paper 2016)

The Chairman advised Members of correspondence from the Minister in relation to his approval of the Business Plan 2016-17, this was tabled at the meeting. Also for noting was correspondence from Nick Perry to Accounting Officers on Department of Justice – Annual Report and Accounts and Whole of Government Accounts 2015-16.

Members noted the correspondence.

## 8. AUDIT COMMITTEE UPDATE (Paper 21/16)

The Committee Chair updated Members on the work of the Audit Committee and advised that the draft minutes were presented for Members' information. It was noted that the Committee meetings in May had been rescheduled to allow for the end of year accounts

to be signed off in time. Both the Head of Finance and the external auditors (PWC) had advised that they were content with the timeframes.

The revised Terms of Reference for the Committee were presented to Members for approval. A main change is to the name of the Committee which reflects the extended role. It was proposed that the Committee now be named the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC). The Chairman requested that on page 4 that another point be added 'Bring to the Board any areas of concern or recommendations'. The Terms of Reference were approved by the Board with this one change. The Chair of the Committee thanked Members for their input.

Members were advised that an internal audit on Budgetary Control had received a 'substantial' rating.

The Board approved the revised Terms of Reference and name change to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC).

**Action: The Terms of Reference to be updated in the Standing Orders, Board Secretary**

The Board noted the update.

**9. POLICY AND PRACTICE COMMITTEE UPDATE (PAPER 22/16)**

The Chair of the Committee provided an update to Members on the Policy & Practice Committee and provided draft minutes for information.

It was advised that Eithne McIlroy, Assistant Director, had briefed the Committee on progress of the Youth Justice Review. A press release issued on the 14 March 2016 by the Minister, although short, did state the importance of keeping young people out of the Criminal Justice system. The next Policy & Practice Committee will look at involvement with Youth Justice.

There were three policies presented to the Board for approval.

9.1 (a) Recruitment Policy – following full discussion at the Policy & Practice Committee, it was agreed to recommend approval of the Policy to the Board.

The Board approved the Recruitment Policy.

9.1 (b) Redundancy Policy and Procedures – following full discussion at the Policy & Practice Committee, it was agreed to recommend approval of the Policy to the Board.

The Board approved the Redundancy Policy and Procedures.

9.1 (c) Transfer and Mobility Policy - following full discussion at the Policy & Practice Committee, it was agreed to recommend approval of the Policy to the Board.

Members were advised of the benefits of this policy and that a number of other regions had asked to see the policy. It was explained that Social Services do not have a mobility policy and the benefits of such a policy were explained. The Deputy Director explained that only experienced Probation Officers (POs) were transferred to the Intensive

Supervision Unit (ISU) or prisons. By using the Transfer and Mobility Policy this allowed POs to gain the experience needed.

The Board approved the Transfer and Mobility Policy.

The Chair of the Committee updated Members on the discussion around the Communication update and advised that a Communications Strategy will be brought to the Board for approval.

With the meeting of the Committee being the first of the newly constituted Board, the Terms of Reference and the work of the Committee were discussed. Also discussed was how it could best support the Board. Discussion ensued and it was agreed that the Committee would look at its Terms of Reference.

There was discussion on the Age of Criminal Responsibility, it was agreed that a paper would be brought to the next Policy & Practice Committee for discussion.

**Action: Paper on Age of Criminal Responsibility to be presented to the PPC on 29 April 2016.**

The Board noted the update.

#### **10. FINAL 2016/2017 BALANCED BUDGET (PAPER 23/16)**

The Head of Finance presented a balanced budget paper for 2016/17 to the Members. The Budget for the 2016/17 had been confirmed as a 2.9% cut which equated to £485k. It was noted that payroll costs account for 92% (before offsetting income) of the budget and that the non-payroll costs are now at the minimum level. The Voluntary and Community Sector funding has been ring-fenced by the Department and therefore there is no movement allowed. Discussion ensued on additional budgetary pressures, income streams and agency staff. Also discussed was the reduction in the prison budget and the transfer of risk because of this. It was agreed that a fuller discussion on the transfer of risk due to the reduction in prisons budget should be discussed at the Corporate Resources Committee on 8 April 2016. Also the VAT position and its complexities should be discussed at CRC.

**Action: Risk transfer due to reduction of prison's budget and the VAT position to be discussed at the next CRC – 8 April 2016**

The Board noted the paper

#### **11. FINAL BUSINESS PLAN 2016 - 2017 (VERBAL)**

The Deputy Director took the Members through each objective of the Business Plan. At the last Board meeting Members had asked for objectives to be more measurable. The Deputy Director advised that this had been done. There was discussion around the printing of the document and when it would be ready.

**Action: Members are to receive a copy of the Business Plan once it is printed, Board Secretary.**

The Board noted the update.

**12. CORPORATE PLAN 2017 – 2020 (PAPER 25/16)**

The Chairman advised Members that she is setting up a sub-group for the Corporate Plan and this would involve a number of extra meetings. The Chairman invited the (Acting) Director to update the Members on the key timings for the Plan. It was explained that with the new Assembly it was thought that the planning session should be held late June, early July to allow for the new Assembly to 'bed in'. The Sub-group will comprise six Board Members and the Management Executive Team.

**Action: The Board Secretary to email members and ask for expression of interest in joining the sub-group.**

The Board noted the paper.

**13. BOARD WORK PLAN 2016 - 2017 (PAPER 26/16)**

The Board Secretary introduced the paper to Members advising that the new format of the Board Work Plan showed the reporting line between the Board and Committees. It also showed what had to happen and by when. It put into context and set out a better understanding of the process.

**Actions: Mrs Erskine and the Head of Finance will advise on Audit and Risk Assurance items and when they are to come to the Committee.**

The Board noted the paper.

**14. FINANCE OUTTURN – FEBRUARY 2016 (PAPER 27/16)**

Members were advised that the Finance Outturn paper will be discussed further at the Corporate Resources Committee (CRC). The Head of Finance highlighted a number of areas to the Members. Underspend is currently sitting at 1.65% but it is envisaged that the underspend will come in at around 1% at the year end. This is dependent on maintenance works being completed by 31 March. Discussion ensued on the procurement of laptops and that these will replace desktop PCs, thus enabling more mobile working. The issues of the tablets were discussed and an explanation given for the current issues.

The Chairman advised that this would be a good time to review the Board Members thoughts on the tablets and deferred further discussion to the CRC. A suggestion on video conferencing was also deferred to the CRC.

The Board noted the paper.

**15. PROGRAMME AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT UPDATE (PAPER 28/16)**

Items were taken by exception. The Head of Finance updated Members on the Crawford Square / Limavady Road properties, advising that a business case will be coming to the Senior Management Team and then onward to the Board in the near future for approval.

The Board noted the paper.

## **16.MANAGEMENT INFORMATION REPORT (PAPER 29/16)**

The Chairman advised that items will be taken on an exception basis with items being deferred to the Corporate Resources Committee (CRC) - HR, IT and Policy & Practice Committee (PPC) - Caseload.

Members' attention was brought to page 12 of the Report. An update on the current situation with the Case Management System (CMS) was given. Discussion ensued and it was agreed that CMS should be deferred to the CRC for fuller discussion around the options that can and may be considered. It was noted that the CMS is on the Department's Risk Register, however, the (Acting) Director advised that she will be writing to Anthony Harbinson to express her concerns and the risk that the CMS poses. The (Acting) Director also paid tribute to the IT Department who, so far, have managed to keep the system running.

The Chairman gave Members a brief background into the timescales on the issues of procuring a replacement system and the reasons for the delays in approval by the Department, thus leading to the current position. She expressed concern over the sequence of events which have not moved this further despite best efforts of the staff and suggested that this may need to be escalated to the Minister if the outcome of current discussions does not provide a viable solution.

The Deputy Director advised Members of one Serious Further Offence (SFO). Members were given background into the case. An independent review of practice in the case will be commissioned. It was noted that at the time of the SFO, the offender was not under probation supervision but it was important to have a review of the case to ensure practice was appropriate.

A Member asked about the 'mobile app'. It was explained that this was an 'app' that clients could download to obtain information on PBNI and their process of supervision.

**Action: (Acting) Director to write to Anthony Harbinson on the Case Management System**

The Board noted the paper.

## **17.PROGRAMME OF VISITS AND BUSINESS (PAPER 30/16)**

The Chairman presented the paper to the Members. She thanked Mr O'Hanlon for attending the Staff Engagement Day in Armagh on her behalf on 2 March 2016. Also on 2 March 2016 Mr Brown, Mrs Erskine and Mr Jardine attended a meeting with CJINI on behalf of the Board and the Chairman thanked them for this.

The Board noted the paper.

## **18.ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- I. The Chairman advised members of the Pod Casts that are now being tweeted and asked that these be re-tweeted by Members to increase the exposure of these.
- II. It was advised that the agenda items as mentioned in previous agenda items will be deferred to the Committees for fuller discussion
- III. The Chairman advised that April Board will be a strategic meeting. An hour will be given to normal business which will cover governance items and then it is hoped to spend two hours for strategic discussion.

#### **19. BOARD SECRETARY'S BUSINESS**

- I. The Board Secretary advised Members that there was an outstanding action from Matters Arising on Assembly Questions. Members were advised that the Board Secretary is looking at the most effective way of providing the information on the significant questions to keep Members informed. He will keep them informed of developments.
- II. Office visits for Members is being collated and Members will be contacted to arrange suitable dates for the visits. The Management Executive Team will provide input into the most suitable offices for visit.
- III. There are a number of Register of Interest forms outstanding and the Board Secretary advised that he will be in contact directly with those who are outstanding. It was advised that it was important for the Register to be completed in due process and to ensure openness and transparency.

#### **20. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will take place on Friday 15 April 2016 at PBNI HQ, Conference Room at 9.30 am.

---

Vilma Patterson  
Chairman

---

Date