

PROBATION BOARD FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

BOARD MEETING – 16 September 2016**9.30 AM – PBNI HQ****377th MEETING – 9th of THE ELEVENTH TERM OF OFFICE**ATTENDANCE

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| Mrs Vilma Patterson (Chairman) | Mrs J Erskine |
| Mrs J Gillespie | Mr E Jardine |
| Mr I Jeffers | Ms A Matthews |
| Mr R Mullan | Mr G OhEara (Items 1 – 11) |
| Mrs P Shepherd | |

Officials

Ms C Lamont, (Acting) Director
Mr P Doran, Deputy Director
Mrs C Teggart, Head of Finance
Mrs G Robinson, Head of HR
Ms G McGreevy, Head of Communications (Item 9.7)
Mr M Cox, Board Secretary
Mrs W Rodgers, Personal Secretary (Minutes)

Guest

Prof Neil Gibson, Director of Ulster University Economic Policy Centre

Observers

Ms Jill Grant, (Acting) Area Manager
Ms Maria Bowers, Accountant
Mr Tom Gilliland, Accountant

1. PRESENTATION BY PROF NEIL GIBSON – HOW DOES PROBATION ADD VALUE TO THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

The Chairman welcomed Prof Neil Gibson, Director, Ulster University Economic Policy Centre, to the meeting and provided background into Prof Gibson's work within economics and strategy both inside and outside the public sector.

Prof Gibson's presentation looked at the current context including the impact of Brexit, the Northern Ireland labour market and the need for change and measuring policy effectiveness. The presentation looked at economics and the potential relationship to crime. He also explained the consequential impact on the work of Probation and the wider Criminal Justice System, an example of increased domestic violence was an outcome of social deprivation was given.

The Chairman opened the floor to questions. The Chairman asked about the social economic challenges facing the Probation Service. Discussion ensued around the use of language and getting the probation 'story' to politicians and influencers. The setting of the Assembly budget was discussed and what would cause pressures, for example, the transfer of corporation tax, the levy of student fees and the potential introduction of water charges. Prof Gibson suggested that there would be capital budget available and therefore forward planning with prepared business cases should be ready to be submitted without delay. The effects of poor economic conditions were discussed. It was suggested a risk was a rise in crime rates with the likely impact on the work of Probation.

Brexit was discussed and the challenges that this would have on the Northern Ireland economy.

The use of the media was discussed and how to promote the 'value' of Probation. The effectiveness of Probation within the Criminal Justice System should be provided to all interested stakeholders.

The Chairman thanked Prof Gibson for his presentation adding that it had provoked useful discussion and debate. It was noted that the use of language is an important area. It should be reviewed to ensure the probation 'story' is reaching key stakeholders.

2. OPENING REMARKS AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. The three observers, Jill Grant, Area Manager; Maria Bowers, Accountant and Tom Gilliland, Accountant, were welcomed to the meeting. There was a sizable agenda with five policies coming from the Policy & Practice Committee. The Members were advised that the meeting would end at 12.15 pm.

No conflicts of interests were declared.

3. APOLOGIES

Apologies received from Mr D Brown, Member; Mrs B Stuart, Member; Mr D Wall, Member; Mr T O'Hanlon, Member and Mr H Hamill (Acting) Deputy Director.

4. CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES (M07/16)

The minutes of the Board meeting held on 19 August 2016 were accepted as an accurate account of the meeting with one amendment to agenda item 8.1, 'mental/behavioural disorders was the main cause of sick absence which was noted as a concern'.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES (Paper 94/16)

The Chairman advised that there were a number of duplications as actions had come out of both the June and August meetings. It was requested that the Members respond to the actions.

Action 2 and 12 – Compliance Booklet

Action 4 and 13 – Minutepad software update

Action 5 and 15 – Communications – levels of engagement

Action 16 – Driving Licences and Insurance documentation

All other actions were noted.

Action: Members to respond to actions, Board Members.

The Board noted the Matters Arising.

6. CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE – VERBAL

The Chairman reminded members that the next Board meeting will be in Ballymena. Following the governance part of the meeting there will be a strategic session with an opportunity to have broader discussion on board matters including the Corporate Plan. The Consultation will have just closed so this discussion will be timely.

The Justice Committee visited the Ballymena Office where Mrs Erskine represented the Board. Mrs Erskine gave a brief summary of the visit. She wished to pass on her thanks to the staff for their professionalism on behalf of the Board. The (Acting) Director advised that there was a growing level of understanding of Probation.

Meetings with MLAs and key stakeholders continues. A meeting with Les Allamby of the NIHRC was positive. The Chairman had had an informal meeting with the Minister which was useful. A meeting with the Minister's Special Advisor was productive with her listening to what Probation does, the current challenges and our position within Criminal Justice System. A visit to the Coleraine office by the Minister has been scheduled for 14 December 2016. The Accountability Review meeting on 10 November 2016 will be the first opportunity for the Board Members to meet the Minister.

The launch of the Corporate Plan is set for the 27 March 2017 in Parliament Buildings, timings to be confirmed.

Action: Members were asked to note this date for their diaries.

The Board noted the update.

7. DIRECTOR'S UPDATE – VERBAL

The (Acting) Director had nothing further to add but would cover visits in the Programmes of Visits and Business paper, agenda item 15.

The Board noted the update.

8. CORRESPONDENCE (Paper 61/16)

The Chairman advised members that there was one piece of correspondence for members to note. This item will be further discussed under agenda item 12 of this meeting.

- 8.1 Correspondence received from Glyn Capper on NI Budget – Information Gathering Exercise

The Board noted the correspondence

9. POLICY & PRACTICE COMMITTEE

9.1 Committee Update

The Chair of the Committee gave members an update on the Committee meeting held on 26 August 2016. There were a number of policies discussed with recommendation of some wording amendments. There were two presentations to the Committee; RESET Final Evaluation Report by NISRA and Time after Time - A study of women's transitions from custody by Jean O'Neill, Area Manager. Both presentations were interesting and invoked discussion within the Committee. A paper on the findings of Stratagem Research of MLAs was discussed and is agenda item 9.7 of this meeting.

9.2 Career Break Policy (Paper 96/16)

The Deputy Head of HR had presented the Policy to the Committee and following an in-depth discussion a number of wording amendments were agreed. These have now been incorporated into the Policy presented to the Board. The Committee agreed to recommend approval of the Career Break Policy to the Board.

The Board approved the Career Break Policy.

9.3 Flexible Working Policy (Paper 97/16)

The Deputy Head of HR had presented the policy to the Committee. Due to recent legislative changes this policy required amendment. Following an in-depth discussion a number of wording amendments were agreed. These have now been incorporated into the Policy presented to the Board. The Committee agreed to recommend approval of the Flexible Working Policy to the Board.

The Board approved the Flexible Working Policy.

9.4 Amendment to the Retirement Policy (Paper 98/16)

The Deputy Head of HR had presented the policy to the Committee. This policy required amendment because of changes made to the Flexible Working Policy. Following an in-depth discussion a number of wording amendments were agreed. These have now been incorporated into the Policy presented to the Board. The Committee agreed to recommend approval of the Amendment to the Retirement Policy to the Board.

The Board approved the Amendment to the Retirement Policy.

9.5 Learning & Development Policy.

Following discussion at Committee it was agreed that there was a requirement for this policy as it gave a sense of commitment to training. The Committee agreed to recommend approval of the Learning & Development Policy to the Board.

The Board approved the Learning & Development Policy.

9.6 Ex-Gratia Policy (Paper 100/16)

The Committee discussed this policy and accepted the Head of Finance's recommendation to discontinue the Policy. The Policy has a value of under £500; this amount is provided for under the Management of Public Money Guidance.

The Board approved the discontinuation of the Ex-Gratia Policy.

9.7 Summary of discussion by Committee on MLA Survey (Paper 101/16)

The Chairman welcomed Ms McGreevy to the meeting. The Chair of the Committee advised that the Survey had received an in-depth discussion with an action that the Board be given a summary of the report. The Members were given background into the survey and how it was conducted. There had been, on the surface of it, disappointment in the results but following discussion it was concluded that the question should be 'what was the expectations of the survey and MLA's knowledge of PBNI's work'? Ms McGreevy advised that following the survey the engagement with MLAs will be more targeted to Justice Committee Members, geographical areas, Health and Communities. Ms McGreevy thanked Mr OhEara for his assistance in setting up a meeting at Stormont. Discussion ensued on engagement with MLAs and managing the relationship with the Department in this regard, ensuring they understand these are designed to build confidence in the Criminal Justice System and PBNI's work.

The Chairman thanked Ms McGreevy for her work in the area.

The Board noted the paper

9.8 Draft Minutes – 26 August 2016

The Chair of the Committee advised that draft minutes of the meeting held on 26 August 2016 were included for members' information and these would be agreed at the next Committee meeting.

The Board noted the draft minutes.

10. CONSULTATION ON VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISE SECTOR FUNDING MODEL (Paper 102/16)

The Head of Finance took the Members through the background to the consultation. The purpose of the consultation is that the Department wishes to strengthen its relationship with Community and Voluntary Sector. The paper had been presented to the Policy & Practice Committee on 26 August 2016 where a helpful discussion had ensued. It was advised that the Consultation has a return date of the 23 September 2016. Mr Wall and Mr Jardine had made some comments which had now been incorporated into the response. The Chair of the PPC commented that this was an

important paper and could show a move towards outcome funding. Board Members discussed co-design with the need for proportionality. The Board agreed approval of the consultation return.

The Board approved the paper.

11. MANAGEMENT INFORMATION REPORT (Paper 103/16)

The Report was due its quarterly review by the Board. The Deputy Director provided a summary of the Report for the Members. The caseload remains at its recent level. There has been a reduction in the number of appearances at court and work is proceeding with providing tailored reports for Magistrates Courts. There will be a recruitment process which will help to ease the current use of agency staff.

Members were advised that Strategic Outline Case (SOC) for the Case Management System, following approval from CRC, had been sent to the Department who had some queries. The SOC has now been returned to the Department and the (Acting) Director as the SRO will continue to pressurize the Department for approval through the various stages.

Members were advised of one security incident which is currently under disciplinary investigation. The incident will be reported to the Information Commissioner's Office.

There was one Serious Further Offence to report and not two as reported in the Report. The Deputy Director advised that he was content with the supervision of the licence in this case.

The Sick Absence Report was deferred to Corporate Resources Committee for discussion. The Head of HR advised that a recruitment competition was ongoing for Probation Officers and that the response from prospective candidates was excellent.

The Board noted the paper.

12. NI BUDGET – INFORMATION GATHERING EXERCISE (Paper 104/16)

This item is referenced to correspondence received from Glyn Capper and noted under agenda item 8.1 of this meeting. The Head of Finance gave members background into the letter received and the process laid out within the three stages. The Head of Finance expressed her concern that any cuts would affect the statutory duties of Probation. The scenario for cuts of 3 and 6% had been asked for even though pressures currently already exist. Members were advised of the reduction in staff required to meet the 3 and 6% cuts scenario. The (Acting) Director and Head of Finance will be meeting with Anthony Harbinson to discuss the effect on statutory duties that the cuts would have.

Discussion ensued on providing an 'Adequate and Efficient' service as to where an adequate service sits and the cost benefit of Probation to the justice system. The use of language and its importance was discussed. It was agreed that budgetary constraints would form part of the strategic discussion at the October meeting of the Board.

The Chairman thanked the team for their work on completing this piece of work.

The Board noted the paper

13. FINANCE OUTTURN – August 2016 (PAPER 106/16)

The Head of Finance advised that a bid for monies from the October Monitoring Round had been successful with money being allocated for RESET and ECO for this financial year. Underspend for the year to date is 0.45%. The paper was deferred to the Corporate Resources Committee for discussion.

The Board noted the paper.

14. PROGRAMME AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT UPDATE (PAPER 106/16)

The Head of Finance updated members on the Crawford Square / Limavady Road business case which had been previously approved by the Board and Department. Due to issues with a rear exit to the premises in Shipquay Street the property was no longer suitable and had been ruled out. The Head of Finance thanked Mr O'Hara who has been helpful in trying to locate alternative premises. An update will be provided at the next Board meeting

Action: Update on the Crawford Square / Limavady Road business case to be provided at the October Board.

The Board noted the update.

15. PROGRAMME OF VISITS AND BUSINESS (PAPER 107/16)

The Board noted the paper.

16. BOARD WORK PLAN 2016 – 2017 (PAPER 108/16)

The Board noted the paper.

17. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman thanked the observers for attending the meeting and hoped that they found it interesting and informative.

18. BOARD SECRETARY'S BUSINESS

The Board Secretary reminded members of a number of items:

Office Visits – Dates have been sent for members to visit three locations, Andersonstown Road, Newtownards Road and Maghaberry. Correspondence will be sent to members with arrangements for the visits.

Action: Correspondence to be sent to members on arrangements for office visits, Board Secretary.

Meeting Schedule - A draft schedule for Board and Committee meeting dates for 2017 will be sent to members prior to the October Board

Action: Draft schedule of meetings for 2017 to be sent to members, Board Secretary.

Driving Licences and Insurance – Members to send a copy of their driving licence and insurance to Secretariat. It was advised that insurance is the responsibility of the Member to ensure that they are correctly insured.

Accountability Review – Members were reminded of the Ministerial Accountability Meeting on 10 November 2016.

19. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will take place on Friday 21 October 2016 at PBNI Ballymena Office, 9.30 am.

Vilma Patterson
Chairman

Date