

PROBATION BOARD FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

BOARD MEETING – 14 FEBRUARY 2014

345th MEETING – 16th OF TENTH TERM OF OFFICE

1. ATTENDANCE

Mrs V Patterson (Chairman)

Mr R Mullan (Deputy Chairman)

Mr D Brown

Mr D Rose

Mr E Jardine

Ms P Shepherd

Mrs L Jennett

Mr M Wardlow

Mr B McAllister

Mr R Wilson

Mrs M O'Rourke

Ms C Lamont, (Acting) Director

Mr P Doran, Deputy Director

Mr H Hamill, (Acting) Deputy Director

Mr D van der Merwe, Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services

Ms L Cooper, Head of Business Planning and Development (Item 6)

Ms R Muldoon, Assistant Director Prisons (Item 10)

Mrs G Robinson, Head of Human Resources (Items 6 and 17)

Mr P Moss, Board Secretary

Mrs J Murray, Personal Secretary (Minutes)

2. OPENING REMARKS AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and stated that the item on Budget Scenarios would be given priority. Members would also have the opportunity to discuss the Management Information paper in more detail.

As a result of the extended duration of recent meetings, the Chairman proposed to conclude this meeting by 12.30 pm. As a further step, she had requested to be informed of all future communication between staff and Members regarding Board business.

There were no Board Observers in attendance.

Mr Wardlow expressed a possible Conflict of Interest for the discussion on Diversity Champion but the Chairman stated that the purpose of the item was to request nominations and, therefore, Mr Wardlow could be present for that discussion.

3. APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Mrs Erskine and Mr O'Hanlon.

4. CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17 JANUARY 2014 (M1/14)

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 January 2014 were approved with the following amendment at paragraph 6 on page 3:

replacement of “with the exception of one Member” by “with Mr McAllister dissenting”.

The Minutes and Annex 1, which detailed proposed changes to the Draft Corporate Plan document, were signed as a correct record of the meeting.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES (Paper 14/14) tabled

The Matters Arising from the previous Minutes had been listed for Members’ attention and the following additional information was reported:

Proposal for TV Documentary on Reducing Offending in Partnership – the Deputy Director Operations informed Members that the TV Company would not be proceeding with the documentary.

Domestic Violence Intervention (Q3 Business Plan Report) – the (Acting) Director informed Members of a meeting she had with Ronnie Armour, Deputy Director, Community Safety Unit (DoJ). Mr Armour would keep PBNI informed on progress with the revised Business Case which had previously been submitted to the Department of Health for final sign-off.

Action: (Acting) Director to update Members on progress of Business Case for Domestic Violence Intervention

Meeting with NIPS Director General (PBNI/NIPS Interface on PRT Recommendations) – the (Acting) Director would provide an update at the next Board Meeting as the Director General had been on annual leave.

Action: (Acting) Director to contact NIPS Director General to discuss possible meeting

Emerging Issues (PBNI/NIPS Interface on PRT Recommendations) – the (Acting) Director informed Members of two forthcoming meetings she would be attending: the PRT Steering Group on 26 February 2014 and the PRT Oversight Group on 12 March 2014. In addition, a meeting was to be arranged between the (Acting) Director, Karen Pearson, Deputy Director, DoJ and Mark Adam, HR and Organisational Change Director, NIPS.

Action: (Acting) Director to provide update at March Board Meeting on PRT meetings and meeting with Karen Pearson and Mark Adam

Notification of Travel Outside the UK to the DoJ – further to discussion at the previous Board Meeting, the Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services had contacted the DoJ to seek clarification but was awaiting their reply. The Chairman confirmed that PBNI would send notification to the DoJ when travel had been arranged.

Action: Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services to notify DoJ when travel outside UK was planned

6. CORRESPONDENCE (Paper 15/14) tabled

Three items of correspondence had been tabled for Members' consideration:

- Letter of 29 January 2014 from NILGOSC Pensions Manager about new date of 1 April 2015 for the reformed Local Government Pension Scheme (NI)
- Letter of 30 January 2014 from NILGOSC Pensions Manager about Employee Contribution Rate Bands and Employer Contribution Rates from 1 April 2014
- Criminal Justice Board Communique January 2014.

FOR DECISION

7. BUDGET 2014/15: SCENARIOS FOR SAVINGS (Paper 21/14)

The Scenarios for Savings paper approved by the Board had been submitted to the DoJ as requested by 7 February 2014. Following this submission, the Chairman informed Members that the DoJ had requested revised scenarios to be submitted by 12 February 2014. The Senior Management Team had worked extremely hard to facilitate this request which was re-submitted within the requested timeframe.

The revised submission had then been posted to Members for their review in advance of the Board Meeting but it was brought to the Chairman's attention that Members had not received the papers. The (Acting) Director apologised to Members and would review the process for circulating papers to Members.

Action: (Acting) Director to review process for circulating papers to Members

The revised template was copied for Members' review and the Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services outlined the changes made as requested by the DoJ in relation to context, impact and savings. He explained that savings in respect of the estate and community grants had been repositioned within different scenarios.

The DoJ would forward the information onto FSD prior to submission to the DoJ Strategic Resourcing Committee to be held on 18 March 2014. Members expressed their concern at the short timeframe which remained to plan for the 2014-15 budget and the impact this has to forward planning. The (Acting) Director stated that she had raised this concern with the DoJ but the timeframe was not within their control.

Members also raised concern regarding the impact of savings on staff and the Board offered their support to the senior team. In reply, the Head of Human Resources referred to the related work currently ongoing through the Organisational Development Programme Board to achieve short term savings and further work would be carried out to identify sources for longer term savings.

The Chairman informed Members that she would reinforce PBNI's message at the various meetings she would be attending over the coming weeks.

Members agreed in principle to the revised submissions for the 4%, 6% and 8% scenarios. Members also gave approval, in principle, to close L&D and the Victims Unit with additional closures of four reporting centres within the 6% and 8% scenarios and the Inspire Women's Centre specifically for the 8% scenario.

8. COMMUNITY GRANTS ALLOCATION 2014-15 (Paper 16/14)

The Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services presented the paper and proposed that, in light of the revised savings scenarios paper, decisions in respect of the allocation of grants should be deferred. If required, the Panel would reconvene when the budget was known and a revised paper would be presented to the Board for approval. A Member suggested that Equality Impact Assessments should be carried out.

In the interim the Board gave approval for a letter, based on legal advice received from the Crown Solicitor's Office to be sent to grant applicants to inform them of the delay in decision making in respect of awarding grants for 2014-15.

Action: Secretary to write to applicants to inform of the delay and possible impact in awarding grants for 2014-15

The Chairman enquired regarding the status of the request to the DoJ to increase PBNI's delegated limit for awarding community grants from £50,000 to £100,000. The Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services confirmed he would follow up with the DoJ and report the outcome at the March Board Meeting.

Action: Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services to follow up on request made to the DoJ to increase the community grants delegated limit and report back to the March Board Meeting

The Board gave approval for the Community Grants Allocation Panel to defer making decisions on the allocation of grants for 2014-15 until the PBNI budget allocation for 2014-15 had been advised by DoJ.

9. APPOINTMENT OF BOARD DIVERSITY CHAMPION (Paper 18/14)

The Chairman presented the proposal for one Board Member to act as Diversity Champion with the general role of promoting the Board's commitment to Equality and Diversity. The duties associated with the role were discussed and it was agreed that further work needed to be undertaken to develop the role description. Members were asked to forward their expression of interest to the Board Secretary with a view to appointing a Diversity Champion at the March Board Meeting.

Action: Members to forward expressions of interest to the Board Secretary in advance of the March Board Meeting and further work would be undertaken to develop the Role Description

10. EARLY RETIREMENT REQUEST (Paper 19/14)

The Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services presented a paper that referred to a previous request from a staff member for early retirement. The Board had approved this request in April 2012 for an intended retirement date of 30 November 2013. Subsequent to a re-evaluation by NILGOSC at the date of retirement, which was 30 November 2013, the actuarial cost to PBNI had increased from £3,609 to £4,833 and the Board was asked to approve the increased cost, subject to approval from DoJ.

The Board approved the increased payment of £4,833 to NILGOSC subject to the approval of DoJ.

Action: Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services to process payment subject to DoJ approval

The Chairman said that equivalent papers in the future should indicate that the figure presented for approval was liable to change.

11. PBNI RESTORATIVE INTERVENTIONS STRATEGY (Paper 17/14)

A draft Restorative Interventions Strategy was presented by the Assistant Director Prisons. In discussion, Members referred to the conceptual basis of the Strategy, the distinction between restorative interventions and restorative practice, evidence given to the Blue Skies Seminars and the recent visit to restorative practitioners in the community. Members agreed to refer the Strategy to the General Purposes Committee on 28 February 2014 for a further and fuller discussion with a view to a recommendation being made to the March Board meeting.

Action: Assistant Director Prisons to present an amended Strategy at the February General Purposes Committee

AUDIT COMMITTEE

12. REPORT FROM THE COMMITTEE ON 10 JANUARY 2014 (Paper 20/14)

The Chair of the Audit Committee presented the draft Minutes from the meeting held on 10 January 2014 and stated that it was not necessary to discuss the Minutes in detail as a verbal report had been provided at the January Board Meeting. The Chair drew Members' attention to the Action List on pages 10 and 11 and the following update was provided:

Internal Audit Report: Electronic Appraisal System – The Chair stated that this Report remained outstanding and the (Acting) Director stated that she would ensure it was forwarded to him as a matter of urgency.

Action: (Acting) Director to forward Report to Committee Chair

Prompt Payment Results – KPMG had completed an internal audit and was to forward the report.

Action: Senior Management to consider internal audit report when received

Strategic Risk Register – the Chairman confirmed that, in order to avoid duplication of work carried out by the Audit Committee and due to in depth discussion of each risk at Board meetings in 2013, individual risks would not be presented for discussion at Board Meetings. It was agreed that the full Register would be added to the Board Workplan and would be discussed in detail at one Board Meeting during the year.

Action: Strategic Risk Register to be added to the Board Workplan

DoJ Internal Audit – it was hoped that the Service Level Agreement and Audit Plan would be signed off in the near future.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business to report.

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

14. REPORT FROM THE COMMITTEE HELD ON 31 JANUARY 2014 (Verbal)

The Chair of the General Purposes Committee reported on an interesting and useful presentation made by Professor Shadd Maruna from the Institute of Criminology at QUB. The Chair also reported that the attendance of area managers had enhanced the quality of the meeting and it would be a useful resource to have presentations from area managers at future meetings to avail of their knowledge and expertise.

The future direction of Committee meetings was discussed and it was suggested that the meetings could provide a forum to elevate policy, practice and communication within PBNI and also provide an opportunity to have more detailed strategic discussions as directed by the Board, whilst ensuring the content of discussions was not repeated at different meetings.

Action: the Committee Workplan should include policy reviews and presentations from internal/external speakers

15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business to report.

FOR NOTING

16. BUDGET 2013/14: SCENARIOS FOR SAVINGS (Paper 21/14)

The Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services presented the Scenarios for Savings paper for the 2013-14 Budget and reported on the £446,000 (94%) of the total savings that had been realised up to 31 January 2014 with a further £27,000 (6%) of savings to be achieved.

The Board noted the paper.

17. DECEMBER 2013 OUTTURN

The Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services updated Members as follows:

Corporation Tax - HMRC was to provide a valuation of the former Falls Road property in 1982 before the final amount of tax could be calculated. In the interim, a payment based on the best case scenario (£104,000) was being considered in order to limit further interest charges.

Portadown Office – PBNI was waiting on CPD to provide an exact cost for the project but had been notified in November 2012 of increased costs. As the cost would be a capital pressure, consideration was being given to deferring forthcoming IT capital expenditure into the next financial year.

NILGOSC Admin Employee Contributions – a meeting had been held with the DoJ to consider the objectives of the business case. A version had been agreed internally and testing would be carried out on calculations.

VAT – documentation had been submitted to HMRC in relation to the PBNI staff working in Prisons with further documentation to be submitted in respect of secondments. It was not known at this stage if PBNI would be subject to VAT liability.

PAYE on Admin Back Pay – prior to information being circulated to staff, further clarification was being sought from HMRC regarding their advice that monies could not be claimed back until April 2014.

The Chairman requested that more detailed information on outstanding pressures be provided at the next Board Meeting.

Action: Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services to provide greater detail on outstanding pressures at the March Board Meeting

The Board noted the paper.

18. MANAGEMENT INFORMATION

The Management Information paper was presented and the following discussions ensued:

Human Resources

The Head of Human Resources reported that sickness absence figures had not been as high as the same reporting period in the previous year but there was representation from unions that staff had been feeling pressure. The Carecall Activity Report showed the significant rise in uptake from staff compared to the same reporting period the previous year. A staff survey would be carried out at the end of March 2014.

The Head of Human Resources also reported that the unions had raised the issue of high levels of TOIL but previous analysis carried out by the organisation had shown low levels of TOIL. This issue would be re-addressed to ensure that TOIL levels were being captured correctly.

A Member requested information to be presented at a later date on the breakdown of sickness absence for mental/behavioural reasons in relation to probation officers compared to other staff.

Action: Head of Human Resources to provide analysis on the mental/behavioural rate of sickness absence of probation officers compared to other staff

The frequency of presenting the graphical data in relation to sickness absence was raised. The Chairman stated that this information was captured and produced monthly and was available on a monthly basis for noting but it would be presented to the Board on a quarterly basis for detailed discussion.

Corporate Services

The Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services reported that, dependent on outcomes from the Estates Strategy, work was being progressed to identify an alternative location for the IT Disaster Recovery Site.

The Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services also reported that, IT staff had been working with colleagues in DoJ and IT Assist to identify the cause of the recent poor performance with internet browsing which also affected the performance of the Account NI System.

Operations

The Deputy Director Operations reported that the number of Pre-Sentence Reports completed in the 12 month reporting period had increased and the number of Short Sentence Reports completed in the same reporting period had decreased. Further discussions with Judges would take place in order to address the balance of reports being produced.

The Chairman stated she would welcome further discussion at a General Purposes Committee on caseload trends and delivery of the range of probation work with input from staff including area managers.

Action: to be discussed further at a General Purposes Committee in the near future

Further to a request from a Member, it was agreed to review the presentation of non-statutory case work in prisons in the reporting tables.

Action: Deputy Director Operations to review the presentation of non-statutory case work in prisons in the reporting tables

The (Acting) Deputy Director Operations reported that greater detail on complaints would be presented to a future Board Meeting.

Action: Complaints to be discussed in greater detail at a future Board Meeting

The Deputy Director Operations had attended the JNCC Meeting in January 2014 and the (Acting) Deputy Director Operations would attend the February Meeting. It was noted that attendance would alternate on a monthly basis.

Hate Crime training with input from the NI Human Rights Commission and Hate Crime Advocates (funded by PSNI, NIHE and others) commenced on 6 February 2014 for operational staff. There was no cost, beyond staff time, to PBNI for this training.

19. ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (Verbal)

The Head of Human Resources updated Members on work that had been ongoing with the four workstreams and the Programme Board including:

- the estates project
- outworkings of the Systems Review to be presented in April 2014
- Proposal for Quick Wins paper to be circulated to staff and unions in February 2014
- meetings with unions specific to Organisational Development were held twice a month
- all Project Initiation Documents would be signed off by the end of February 2014
- the next Organisational Development Programme Board was scheduled for 27 February 2014

- work to date had concentrated on front line services with work to be commenced in relation to back office provision
- a paper outlining a forward plan would be presented at the March Board Meeting.

Action: Head of Human Resources to present paper at the March Board Meeting

20. PROBATION GRADES PAY SETTLEMENT (Paper 25/14)

The Deputy Director Finance and Corporate Services presented the pay settlements agreed for the (Acting) Director, senior managers and probation grades.

The Board noted the paper.

21. PROGRAMME OF VISITS AND BUSINESS (Paper 26/14)

The Board noted the paper.

22. BOARD OBJECTIVES AND WORKPLAN (Paper 27/14)

The Board noted the paper.

OTHER BUSINESS

23. CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

Members agreed to a proposal by the Chairman to streamline future Minutes whilst retaining prominent points and actions.

24. DIRECTOR'S/SECRETARY'S BUSINESS

Head of Finance – the (Acting) Director hoped to be in a position to confirm details for the start date for the Head of Finance at the next Board Meeting.

Presentation to Financial Services Team – the (Acting) Director informed Members of a presentation she had made, at the request of Glyn Capper, Deputy Director, Financial Services Division (DoJ) to their Team meeting.

Ministerial Visit to Omagh Team – the Minister of Justice had visited staff in the Omagh Team on Wednesday 12 February 2014 and the (Acting) Director wanted to acknowledge the work by the (Acting) Deputy Director Operations and his staff which made for a successful visit.

NIPS Capital Estate Reference Group – the (Acting) Director informed Members that she was a member of the newly established Reference Group which had been established to oversee the whole estate programme going forward. Other organisations represented on the Group are the DoJ, Criminal Justice Inspectorate NI, Independent Monitoring Board, Health and Social Care Trust, Prison Reform Trust and Prisoner Ombudsman.

Social Work Strategy Steering Group – the (Acting) Director had been invited to sit on the Social Work Strategy Steering Group and would represent DoJ.

Expenses Forms – the Board Secretary reminded Members that expenses should be submitted before the end of the financial year and thanked those Members who had kept their claims up-to-date.

Register of Board Member Interests – the Board Secretary confirmed that two forms remained outstanding and those Members agreed to forward their forms as soon as possible.

25. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business to report.

26. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Friday 14 March 2014 at 9.30 am in the Conference Room, PBNI Headquarters.

The meeting closed at 12.35 pm.