

PROBATION BOARD FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

BOARD MEETING – FRIDAY 12 APRIL 2019

9.30 AM – PBNI HEADQUARTERS

408th MEETING – 5th OF THE TWELFTH TERM OF OFFICE

ATTENDANCE

Mr Dale Ashford (Chair)	Mrs Judith Gillespie
Mr Neil Bodger	Ms Patricia Keenan
Dr Kelly Clark	Mr Max Murray
Mr Gearoid OhEara	Dr Jonny Byrne
Dr Theresa Donaldson	Mr Alastair Ross
Ms Brenda Henderson (Boardroom Apprentice)	Mr Dave Wall

Officials

Ms Cheryl Lamont, Chief Executive
Mr Hugh Hamill, Director of Operations
Dr Geraldine O'Hare, Director of Rehabilitation
Mrs Gillian Robinson, Head of Human Resources
Mrs Catherine Teggart, Head of Finance
Mr Michael Cox, Board Secretary
Ms Fiona Quail, Personal Secretary (Minutes)

Apologies

Paul Douglas
Kieran Donaghy

1. OPENING REMARKS AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The Chair welcomed members and officials to the meeting. A quorum was confirmed. No conflicts of interest were declared but the Chair noted his continued involvement with the NIPS Board will be finished in the near future.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Paul Douglas and Kieran Donaghy.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING – 15 March 2019 (M03/19)

The minutes of the previous Board Meeting held on Friday 15 March 2019 were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES (Paper 26/19)

- (1) The Chair advised the launch of the Guide on Arms Length Bodies would be discussed later in the meeting
- (2) PPC – The approach to the Corporate Plan 2020-23 would be covered later in the meeting.
- (3) Information Systems. A presentation on Cyber Security will be arranged. The tablet training will take place after the meeting.

- (4) Office Visits – Feedback has been received and will be discussed later in the meeting

5. BOARD CHAIR’S UPDATE (verbal)

ALB Sponsorship Review -The Chair advised he had attended the launch of the Good Practice Guide on ALBs. He stated he believed it had the potential to improve the arrangements.

Meetings – The Chair has had a series of meeting including; Pauline McMillan (Pre-Sentence reports), Brian Whalley OBE (Governance Training) and with Anthony Harbinson (Department of Justice, Director of Safer Communities). The Chair and the Chief Executive are in the process of attending a series of meetings with political representatives

Social Media – The Chair highlighted the importance of a positive online presence and asked members where they find it appropriate to retweet from PBNI Twitter.

Remuneration Committee – The Chair advised a meeting had taken place prior to today’s Board Meeting. The Committee approved a Flexi Retirement Case which was presented to them.

6. CHIEF EXECUTIVES UPDATE (verbal)

The Chief Executive and the two Directors’ met with the Welsh Commission on Justice to outline the current arrangement in Northern Ireland.

The Permanent Secretary attended the ‘Aspire’ Project and spoke with the staff.

Other Conferences attended by senior management included; Beltech 2019 conference on Artificial Intelligence and the Addiction NI Conference where Dr Geraldine O’Hare was a key note speaker.

The Chief Executive has been invited to attend the Council of Europe’s Annual Conference of Prison and Probation Directors in May in Cyprus. Ms Lamont will be accompanied by Director of Rehabilitation, Dr O’Hare and Paul Doran, Director of Rehabilitation, Department of Justice. The Probation Board and Prison Service will give a joint presentation focusing on ‘Resettlement’.

The Chief Executive advised that the DAO letter in respect of the Guide on ALBs will be referred to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee at its next meeting.

The Chief Executive noted that the British Psychological Society have awarded Director of Rehabilitation Dr O’Hare the BPS Award for Innovation in Practice for her research into problem-solving Courts and the adoption of new approaches to Criminal Justice in Northern Ireland. The meeting congratulated Dr O’Hare.

7. CORRESPONDENCE (Paper 27/19)

The Chair mentioned the letter from the Director General of NIPS, Ronnie Armour inviting The Board to hold a Board Meeting in the newly constructed Davis House Maghaberry Prison and the reply from Chief Executive, accepting the invitation. It is envisaged June’s Board meeting will take place in Maghaberry’s Davis House.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

8. POLICY AND PRACTICE COMMITTEE

8.1 The Committee Chair advised the Board the PPC took place on the 5 April 2019. Mr Wall acknowledged the focus of the Corporate Plan taking place on the 17th May in Ballymena (Learning and Development Suite). The focus will be at a high level. He also advised the Board the PPC discussed the benefits of the new Research Group. Dr Byrne will be the Board's representative on it.

FOR DECISION

8.2 Equal Opportunities Policy (Paper 28/19)

The Board approved the Equal Opportunities Policy

Anti-Fraud Policy – Mr Wall advised this was discussed at the Committee meeting and agreed that this Policy should be brought to the Audit and Risk Committee before going to the Board for approval.

8.3 Health & Safety Policy (Main) (Paper 29/19)

The Board have approved this Policy

8.4 Health & Safety Policy (Personal) (Paper 30/19)

The Committee Chair appreciated the work that went in to the approach set out in this document. Mr Wall noted it reflected the serious and often dangerous work that staff are doing on the ground. This assessment was endorsed by Board Chair. It was agreed that a future Board meeting should include a presentation on this subject.

A Board member did believe the concerns of staff dealing with TPMO cases was not prominent in the Policy, Head of HR, Gillian Robinson confirmed Chief Executive, Cheryl Lamont plans to send a cover letter with the Policy which will address the concerns of the Staff.

The Board have approved this Policy

FOR NOTING

8.5 MANAGEMENT INFORMATION REPORT (31/19)

Caseload Trends Director of Rehabilitation, Dr O' Hare presented this paper. The overall caseload for this year is lower than last year. (About 1.1% compared to the same period last year) It was also noted there is a rise in Female offenders in the caseload and the reduction in the prison population.

After considering other statistics, Dr O'Hare emphasised the need to have further discussions on the use of Community Service

A Board member commented on the positive results flowing from Early Intervention in the Youth Justice System.

Serious Further Offence Director of Operations, Hugh Hamill advised the Board there was 1 Serious Further Offence to report.

The Board noted this paper.

8.6 ANNUAL SEMINAR

The Board Chair confirmed, in addition to the Head of Northern Ireland Civil Service, David Sterling, 5 Permanent Secretaries have confirmed their attendance to the Annual Seminar. Namely;

- Permanent Secretary, Department of Communities, Tracy Meharg
- Permanent Secretary, Department of Finance, Sue Gray
- Permanent Secretary, Department of Health, Richard Pengelly
- Permanent Secretary, Department of Education, Derek Baker
- Permanent Secretary, Department of Justice, Peter May

The Board noted this paper.

8.7 BUSINESS PLAN 18/19

The Director of Rehabilitation summarised the Business Plan 18/19 Paper by acknowledging the significant achievements over the last year. The Board Chair also welcomed the significant achievements.

The Board noted this paper.

9.0 CORPORATE RESOURCES COMMITTEE BUSINESS

9.1 Financial Outturn (Paper 33/19)

The Head of Finance, Catherine Teggart, invited the Board to review the Financial Outturn Paper. Mrs Teggart highlighted that the provisional outturn was an underspend of £150K (0.89%), subject to year-end adjustment which will likely lower the underspend. She acknowledged it had been difficult to manage expenditure levels with the level of temporary funding.

Deloitte, the external auditors, will start pre audit testing on 6th May.

The Head of Finance noted that underspend in capital relate to the delay in the fit-out of the premises in Shipquay Street..

A Board Member noted that it had been a very challenging year for managing expenditure. The Member stated that the Outturn paper demonstrated the success in doing so in the circumstances. She did however ask if there was an exposure to risk in respect of the number of temporary staff and if there were any comparable statistics of levels across the wider Justice System.

Mrs Robinson advised that the department were working on a Paper on this subject which had already been requested by the Chief Executive. Mrs Robinson noted that not all departments were sharing the information requested.

Ms Robinson also noted a large percentage of temporary staff are employed because of the temporary nature of the funding attributed to ECO Project Ms Robinson assured the Board that the department are fully aware of the issues and these are being worked on.

Chief Executive advised that she will be writing to Anthony Harbison regarding additional funding and the need to stabilise Probation's baseline going forward. Ms Lamont offered her thanks to Mrs Teggart and her team, for their hard work.

The Board noted this paper.

9.2 Balanced Budget Paper (Paper 34/19)

Head of Finance, Catherine Teggart presented the Balanced Budget paper. It was noted that the baseline funding was a flat settlement. Additional temporary funding of £4.5m or 27% was received for pressures, on-boarding to IT Assist and for programmes.

The assumptions in the pay and no-pay budgets were provided and the potential financial issues to be addressed in 2019-20 including: NILGOSC pension issue, terms and conditions review, potential corporation tax charges on sale of properties and the issue with temporary funding not being sustainable and impacting on PBNI's ability to secure staff on short term temporary contracts. HMRC are still considering PBNI's request to become VAT Registered.

A Board member asked if any Intervention had to be stopped due to budget restraints. The Chief Executive advised that to date no intervention had been cancelled. Ms Lamont acknowledged the good work of the finance staff in delivering the budgetary position set out in the paper. The Board Chair also thanked Head of Finance for the comprehensive paper.

The Board noted this Paper.

9.3 MANAGEMENT INFORMATION REPORT (31/19)

(C) Human Resources – Sickness Leave

The Head of Human resources presented the Analysis of Sickness Absence Paper (March 2019). Ms Robinson noted March's Sickness absence was recorded at 12.3 average working days lost down from 19.3 average working days lost 2 years ago. The figure for the last year has decreased by 30%.

Ms Robinson was pleased with this return and credited the collaborative work between Senior Management Team, middle managers and the Human Resources Team.

Responding to a Board Member's question about the reasons behind the success, Ms Robinson advised a more focused managing attendance policy had

been introduced and clarification was given around the understanding of the use of the 'Improvement Notice'.

Ms Robinson was congratulated on the achievements.

(D) Estates and Business Cases

The Head of Finance provided an update, which was noted.

(E) Information Systems

The Director of Operations provided an update on the Electronic Case Management System and the programme on the move to IT Assist.

(F) Communication update

The Director of Rehabilitation informed members that contact is continuing with representatives from various political Parties. This may be affected by the forthcoming local elections.

A Board member commented on the recent article in the Economist. He advised the collaborative work between the Probation Board for Northern Ireland and the Prison Service was commendable.

Action – Secretariat to send an electronic version of the Publication to the Board.

10. DRAFT MINUTES OF CRC MEETING 11 MARCH 2019 (Paper 35/19)

The Board noted the minutes

11.0 BOARD SECRETARY BUSINESS

(11.1) Board Workplan (Paper 36/19)

The Board Secretary noted there was room to improve the Work plan by ensuring it is comprehensive and the timing of the Committee meetings match more closely to needs. He used the example of changing the timing of the Policy and Practice Committee to match in to the publication of caseload Statistics. Revised timetable of meetings will be sent to Board members.

Action – Secretariat to send Board Members revised dates of future meetings.

(11.2) Office Visits

Board Secretary has advised further Office Visit feedback has been received.

Action – Secretariat to forward additional feedback received to Board Members.

Board Secretary, Michael Cox has also suggested both the CRC and PPC Committee would benefit from an offsite meeting.

12.0 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Board Secretary advised the Board there is one outstanding request to allow staff members to observe the Board. Mr Cox believes this is an excellent staff development initiative and staff should be encouraged to avail of the opportunity. Members discussed the merits of transparency and supported observer status as appropriate to agenda.

13.0 TRAINING ON USE OF TABLETS

The Board Secretary reminded members that Training on tablets and Minutepad will take place directly after this meeting.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next Board Meeting will take place on Friday 17 May 2019 at 9.30 am in Ballymena, Learning and Development Office.

Dale Ashford QFSM
Board Chair

Date