

PROBATION BOARD FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

**BOARD MEETING – FRIDAY 19 JUNE 2020**

**9.30 AM – WEBEX VIDEO CONFERENCE**

**422<sup>nd</sup> MEETING – 19<sup>th</sup> OF THE TWELFTH TERM OF OFFICE**

ATTENDANCE

Mr Dale Ashford, Chair  
Mr Neil Bodger  
Dr Jonny Byrne  
Dr K Clark  
Mr Kieran Donaghy  
Dr Theresa Donaldson  
Mr Paul Douglas  
Mrs Judith Gillespie  
Ms Patricia Keenan  
Mr Max Murray  
Mr G OhEara  
Mr Dave Wall

Ms Sarah Bruce, Boardroom Apprentice

OFFICIALS

Ms Cheryl Lamont, Chief Executive  
Mr, Hugh Hamill, Director of Operations  
Dr Geraldine O'Hare, Director of Rehabilitation  
Mrs Gillian Robinson, Head of HR  
Ms Catherine Teggart, Head of Finance  
Ms Gail McGreevy, Head of Communications  
Mr Michael Cox, Board Secretary  
Mrs Wendy Rodgers, Secretariat (Minutes)

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

The Board Chair welcomed everyone to the third Board meeting conducted via video conferencing. He set out the protocol for those members or officials wishing to speak or comment on an item during the meeting. He advised members that Aideen McLaughlin has been appointed to the post of Assistant Director, Aideen comes to Probation from Extern. The Committee Chairs' meeting will continue directly after this Board meeting.

No potential Conflicts of Interest were declared.

**2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies to note.

**3. MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING HELD ON THE 15 MAY 2020 (M05/10)**

The minutes of the Board Meeting held on Friday 15 May 2020 were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

#### **4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES (PAPER 48/20)**

All actions have been completed.

The Board noted the paper.

#### **5. BOARD CHAIR'S UPDATE**

The Board Chair advised that 'Covid 19' issues continue to dominate. He advised that he appreciated the steps that have been taken by the Executive Team and the staff during this time.

The Board Chair has attended two events via video conferencing since the last Board meeting, namely the Chairs' Forum event on the Programme for Government and a QUB event on the Context of Covid. The Board Chair met the Chief Executive and Director of Operations in Headquarters and had a tour of the revised operating environment including a one way system.

Mr Wall had attended a conference via video on behalf of the Board Chair on 'Good Governance during the Pandemic'. Mr Wall will forward notes to members.

Members were advised that the Board Chair had discussed office visits with the Chief Executive. When circumstances allow, this will be revisited. The NIAO was planning to launch its Guide to Whistle blowing. He also mentioned that the impact of 'Brexit' remains a potential risk. A further presentation has been organised for the October Board meeting.

The Board noted the update.

#### **6. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S UPDATE**

The Chief Executive advised members that she had attended the Senior Civil Service Forum, which Mr Peter May, Permanent Secretary, DoJ, chairs. The meeting's focus was on Covid and the recovery plan.

There was a full meeting of the JNCC with the Chief Executive, Head of HR and Director of Operations attending. The meeting was positive. The Senior Leadership Team has worked hard to collaborate and engage across the Organisation. The Chief Executive thanked the Head of HR and the Director of Operations for their input.

The Chief Executive informed members that she had participated in the 'Five Nations' Probation meeting. It meets a number of times each year, via video. She informed members of the topics discussed at the meeting, including the 'renationalisation' of probation in England and Wales.

The Board noted the update.

#### **7. CORRESPONDENCE (PAPER 49/20)**

There was one item of correspondence presented to the Board to note

7.1 Letter received by the Chief Executive from Peter May Coronavirus future planning: update for strategic partnership forum.

Following a brief discussion the Board noted the correspondence.

## 8. BUSINESS PLAN 2020/21 REVISION (PAPER 50/20)

The Director of Rehabilitation, Dr O'Hare, presented the revised Business Plan 2020/21 to the Board. The reason for revising the Business Plan is to take account of Covid and the effect that it has had on the Organisation. The revision has taken account of feedback received. It resets the front line development, practice and delivery of services to ensure nothing is lost. In the previous document, there were 32 measurable actions while the revision has 48. Most of the additional actions relate to the response to the pandemic. The document is intended to be sufficiently flexible to allow it to be adapted to circumstances if they change.

Dr O'Hare took members through each Strategic Priority, their Key Outcomes, Indicators of Achievement and the Measurable Actions and highlighted the changes made.

Detailed discussion ensued. Under Strategic Priority 6, the annual PBNI Seminar was discussed and it was suggested that the next seminar should be on 'Domestic Abuse'. A paper is to be brought to the next PPC for discussion.

**Action: Paper on Domestic Abuse being the theme of the next PBNI Seminar to be brought to the next PPC for discussion (Director of Rehabilitation).**

There was discussion on diversity. The Chief Executive advised that this needs to come from the Centre but it was agreed that discussion had to start somewhere. The recovery from Covid and the legacy effect it will have on crime was discussed. Dr O'Hare advised that the focus at present is on the increase in cases of Domestic Abuse but the Organisation is set up to adapt to any changes required and how the Courts will deal with crime over the short and medium terms.

A member asked for the reference to 'co-production' in Strategic Priority 3 to be made clearer on what this means in practice. Dr O'Hare agreed to consider the reference to co-production within the context of Strategic Priority 3..

Following a question on where the People Strategy sat in the Business Plan, Mrs Robinson, Head of HR, advised that it will be covered in two areas.

It was agreed to approve the document with the minor amendments suggested.

The Board approved the paper.

## 9. BRIEFING ON CJINI INSPECTION REPORT (VERBAL)

Item was referred to Board closed session to be held after this meeting.

## 10. COVID 19 UPDATE (VERBAL)

Mrs Robinson advised members that the update on Covid is verbal as opposed to written on this occasion as the Recovery Plan is out for consultation. Mrs Robinson advised on the meetings that are held each week on Covid: the Senior Leadership Team; unions; the Task and Finish Group and the Department among others. All PPE and safety arrangements are in place for the phased return to offices on 6 July 2020. The work with staff who are in the vulnerable, shielding and those with caring responsibilities groups were advised. The feedback from the Unions continues to be positive.

Ms McGreevy, Head of Communications, informed members of the continuing communications around Covid and the external communications being undertaken. Members were informed of an interview with the Press Association on work with higher risk service users. The Irish News are keen to do another piece.

Mr Hamill, Director of Operations, advised that the Recovery Plan covers 5 areas, Operations, Health and Safety, Human Resources, Estates and IT. The Recovery Plan has been sent to staff for consultation. Currently there are 6 operational offices open with all offices to open from 6 July 2020. Phase 1 is for high risk service users to be seen in offices and community service will also commence in July. In August, medium risk service users will be seen in offices and by September all service users will be seen in offices. Ms Teggart, Head of Finance, confirmed that all PPE was in place and Estates has ensured that offices are fit to be open.

It was advised that laptops have been ordered for all staff to allow for remote working. The Members will receive their tablets back over the next few months.

The Board Chair commented that it had been a comprehensive update and asked if the Board could see the consultation when ready. The recovery will be slow but the well-being of staff will be at its core.

**Action: Recovery Consultation to be brought to the Board when available (Head of HR/Director of Operations)**

The Board noted the update

## 11. MANAGEMENT INFORMATION PAPER (PAPER 52/20)

Dr O'Hare advised that there were no Serious Further Offences to report since the last Board meeting.

Mrs Robinson advised that the business case for the SCCOG pay remit has been approved and arrears will be paid at the end of this month. Pay negotiations for 19/20 20/21 have commenced with the unions having submitted a pay request. Mrs Robinson is the lead on this. Pay reform negotiations have also commenced with the Board being represented by Mr Cox, Board Secretary. The Board will be kept informed on negotiations. There are no updates on NILGOSC.

Ms Teggart provided an update on Business Cases and Estates from the paper.

Mr Hamill provided an update on the Electronic Case Management System (ECMS). The feedback remains positive from the users with super users still in place to help with user queries. Phase 2 is due to be completed by no later than 30 November 2020. A member noted the progress and thanked all those involved. She drew a comparison with the position previously when a Gateway Review had flagged 'red'.

Ms McGreevy provided an update on communication activity and the different platforms being used with stakeholders, both internally and externally. Members were advised that there has been an approach from a production company to make a documentary on the Substance Misuse Court. A similar request from the company had been rejected previously but, on this occasion, there is support from the Presiding Judge and the Lord Chief Justice. Ms McGreevy advised that she was content that the company is reputable and will deal with the subject empathetically. Members will be kept informed of developments.

Dr O'Hare informed the meeting that Probation are responding to two consultations at present.

The Board noted the paper.

## **12. UPDATE ON ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS (VERBAL)**

Ms Teggart, provided a verbal update on the preparation of the Annual Report and Accounts. The DOF has pushed back the laying of the Accounts by two months. The provisional outturn for 2019/20 is £197k which is 0.9% underspend on budget. There are no adjustments and ARAC will be provided with more detail at its meeting on 3 July 2020. Members were informed that there had been a £14m negative impact on the pension fund, which has mainly been caused by the downturn in investments due to Covid. Auditors are continuing their work remotely and there have been no issues identified at present.

The Board noted the update.

## **13. FINANCIAL OUTTURN (PAPER 53/20)**

Ms Teggart presented the May Outturn to the Board and highlighted a number of points. There is a projected underspend of £32k or 1%, which is mainly due to underspend in travel & subsistence and accommodation costs because of Covid. The underspend has been reallocated to fund Voluntary and Community sector programmes later in the year. It has also been used to partially offset the pressures arising from additional cleaning and PPE requirements of approximately £24k. Members were advised of the bids submitted to the Department for the June Monitoring Round. It was confirmed that the ECMS shortfall is a contractual expense and therefore is a priority for the Department. The Department has asked for any saving that could be made and Ms Teggart has advised of £40k that may be available. Prompt Payment performance remains within the tolerable level taking in to account working from home.

The Board noted the update.

## **14. BOARD WORK PLAN (PAPER 46/20)**

Mr Cox introduced the paper. He advised members that the Work Plan had been revised to reflect the current position and it will include the review of policies when the timing of each is confirmed. He asked for the work plan to be formally reviewed at each Committee and Board meeting to ensure its accuracy as it is the basis of the agenda going forward.

The Board Chair agreed that it was a useful tool and it will be reviewed formally at every meeting.

The Board noted the paper.

## **15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Board Chair advised members that Ms Bruce is coming to the end of her tenure as Board Apprentice. He thanked Ms Keenan for her support and work with Sarah as the 'Board Buddy'. The Board will be continuing with the scheme and a new Board Apprentice will commence, hopefully, in September. If members wish to volunteer as a future 'Board Buddy', they should contact the Board Chair directly. Ms Bruce was asked if she would provide the Board with some of her thoughts on her journey as an Apprentice at the August Board. Ms Bruce is happy to do this.

The Board Chair thanked members and officials for attending the meeting.

Meeting ended at 11.20 am.

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D Ashford QFSM  
**Board Chair**

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_