

PROBATION BOARD FOR NORTHERN IRELAND
BOARD MEETING – FRIDAY 18 SEPTEMBER 2020

9.30 AM – WEBEX VIDEO CONFERENCE

425th MEETING – 21st OF THE TWELFTH TERM OF OFFICE

ATTENDANCE

Mr D Ashford, Chair
Mr N Bodger
Dr J Byrne
Dr K Clark
Dr T Donaldson
Mr P Douglas
Mrs J Gillespie
Ms P Keenan
Mr M Murray
Mr G OhEara
Mr D Wall

Mrs J Anderson, Boardroom Apprentice

OFFICIALS

Ms C Lamont, Chief Executive
Mr, H Hamill, Director of Operations
Dr G O'Hare, Director of Rehabilitation
Ms G McGreevy, Head of Communications
Ms C Teggart, Head of Finance
Mr M Cox, Board Secretary
Mrs W Rodgers, Secretariat (Minutes)

OBSERVER

Ms A McLaughlin, Assistant Director, Rural

1. WELCOME, OPENING REMARKS AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The Board Chair welcomed everyone to the Board meeting, which continues to be conducted via video conferencing.

No potential Conflicts of Interest were declared.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Mr K Donaghy, Member; and Mrs G Robinson, Head of HR.

3. MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING HELD ON THE 21 August 2020 (M08/20)

The minutes of the Board Meeting held on Friday 21 August 2020 were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting with two minor amendments.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES (PAPER 77/20)

All actions have been completed.

The Board noted the paper.

5. BOARD CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Board Chair advised that the Recovery Plan was progressing well and feedback from staff remains positive.

The Deputy Chair's position has been advertised and all Board Members will have received a letter advising them of this. Any member who has not received a letter should advise the Board Chair. He encouraged members to apply.

Board Chair reported that he had a useful meeting with Dr Julie Harrison of the DOJ. Among the current topics discussed, were his concerns around how the Arm's Length Body Review will be conducted. Dr Harrison reported that a number of ALBs share the same concerns.

The Board Development Day has been scheduled for the 13 November 2020. Members were advised that the DOJ's Conference Room at Castle Buildings has been provisionally booked. The room has the capacity to meet social distancing requirements of 16 attendees and has all the technology required to conduct the meeting both in person and virtually. How the meeting will be conducted depends on the Executive's Covid guidance prevailing at that time. Dr Harrison has agreed to attend the meeting to provide her views on the likely context for the Criminal Justice System, staff's Terms and Conditions and the potential impact of Brexit.

Both the Board Chair and the Chief Executive have been visiting offices and he reported the positivity of staff whom they had met. The Chief Executive continues to reinforce social distancing in offices and keeping everyone safe.

The Board Secretary will be circulating a self-assessment questionnaire to members to help in the development of the next Governance Action Plan.

The Board Chair advised that he had met with the Permanent Secretary, Peter May. Mr May commented that he was pleased to see there had been positive progress by Probation. He also commented that there may be budget difficulties in the future following Covid. The proposed change in legislation in relation to TPMOs was also discussed. It was informed that the Minister will lead on this. The Board Chair advised Mr May if the business case approval process and he agreed to review this. A member asked if Mr May had discussed the CJINI review, the Board Chair advised that he appeared to be aware that the Review was completed and was being checked for factual accuracy.

The annual appraisals for members will be conducted in October. Secretariat will be in touch to set up these meetings. There will be a change this year with the DOJ form being used.

The Board Chair noted that members tablets have been returned and are working and thanked Wendy and the IT staff for facilitating this.

The Board noted the update.

6. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S UPDATE

The Board Chair invited the Chief Executive to provide the Board with her update.

The Chief Executive advised that the response to the accuracy check has been received for the CJI(NI) Review. The Action Plan is being developed. She requested that the Board Chair schedule a meeting so members can be fully briefed on the main issues. CJI(NI) will write to the Minister to ask permission for the Review to be published. This is likely to happen in late October or early November. The Board will receive a full briefing prior to the publication.

The Chief Executive provided an update on TPMOs. The Board had approved the proposed approach at its meeting in July 2020. The guidance was published on 8 September by the DOJ setting out the function of MARA (Multi-Agency Review Arrangements). There had been a call with the Minister on 3 September when she thanked all parties for their cooperation on this complex and sensitive matter. She stated that she believed that good progress had been made but she accepted that the MARA was not a long term solution. The Minister committed to move forward as a matter of urgency.

The Board Chair commented on the importance of getting the TPMO legislation through and asked if the likely timeframe was known. The Chief Executive informed members that the legislative change should be made by February 2021 with the new arrangements coming in effect in April 2021.

The Board noted the update.

7. CORRESPONDENCE (PAPER 78/20)

There were no items of correspondence.

8. COVID 19 UPDATE

Ms McGreevy, Head of Communications, provided the Board with an update on Covid 19 within Probation. She advised that Probation is continuing towards recovery and planning for the future together with acting on announcements from the Executive. Weekly bulletins to staff have resumed and clarification on points are being made throughout the week as needed. The communications continues to receive positive responses from staff. The visits by the Board Chair and Chief Executive have been met positively by staff who have welcomed their visits.

Phase 2 of the Recovery Plan commenced on 7 September; medium risk offenders are now being seen in offices. Phase 3 will commence in October when low risk offenders will start attending offices. The Plan continues to be reviewed.

Members were informed that the CEP (Confederation of European Probation) continues to use PBNI's guidance and holds it up as good practice. The Chief Executive advised that she attended a 5 nations call and PBNI's guidance has been shared across the jurisdictions. It was noted that only Northern Ireland and England are looking to recommence home visits with Ireland only seeing high risk offenders.

The Board Chair asked if the Officials were confident that the Plan could be rolled back, if necessary. Dr O'Hare, Director of Rehabilitation, advised that work was almost complete on the Business Continuity Plan. Lessons learned from the last 6 months have

been incorporated with roles and responsibilities being set out. The Plan will be finalised soon.

The Board noted the update.

9. MANAGEMENT INFORMATION PAPER (PAPER 79/20)

Mr Hamill, the Director of Operations, advised that since the paper was published there has been one Serious Further Offence. Mr Hamill briefed members on the case.

The Chief Executive advised that the HR update remained largely unchanged from the last update to the Board in August. The Attendance Report showed the absence days at 13.1 against a target of 16.4. Attendance is showing an improvement but CRC will be having a fuller discussion at its meeting in October.

Ms Teggart, Head of Finance, provided an update on Estates as laid out in the paper. She advised that Covid work continues to ensure the safety of staff. Screens will be installed between desks. Once the prototype is agreed, the manufacture and fitting of them will have a short timeframe. There was discussion on post Covid and the requirements of offices. The impact of home working on the needs of offices was also mentioned together with IT systems security, Members were assured that staff have been reminded of the appropriate IT security processes.

There was discussion on the duration of the lease approval process. The Board Chair agreed that the process needs to be streamlined. The cost of leases against value of the property was also discussed. Ms Teggart assured members that the Land and Property Services has a process in place when signing off on the value of a property

Mr Hamill provided an update on ECMS. Members were advised on Change Control costs. These costs are built into the original business case and can be drawn down as needed. It was confirmed that the pattern for Change Controls is for there to be more drawdowns in the first year.

Ms McGreevy provided an update on Communications and Engagement as laid out in the paper. The Board Chair congratulated Ms McGreevy on communication and keeping people informed.

The Board noted the paper.

10. BOARD WORK PLAN (80/20)

Mr Cox, the Board Secretary, introduced the paper, which shows the scheduled work for the Committees and the Board. The Work Plan provides a simple view of the planned work for the next and subsequent meetings. It is a working document and needs to be kept informed of any changes. The Board Chair commented that the systematic process is a useful tool. A member noted that the annual seminar had been cancelled but could take place by using videoconferencing. Dr O'Hare advised that it was intended to hold a Webinar on Domestic Violence in January 2021.

The Board noted the paper.

11. COMMITTEE CHAIR'S UPDATE – AUDIT & RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE (ARAC)

Mr Bodger, Committee Chair, advised that there had been no meeting since the last Board and there are no emerging issues to report.

The Board noted the update.

12. COMMITTEE CHAIR'S UPDATE - POLICY AND PRACTICE COMMITTEE (PPC) (VERBAL)

Mr Wall, Committee Chair, advised that there had not been a meeting since the last Board but he had two items to inform the Board of.

The Board Seminar is due to take place in January 2021 with the focus being on Domestic Violence. It should have 45 to 50 attendees via Webinar. The date is depended on the Minister's availability as she is keen to attend. There will be a panel of speakers for the event.

The October Board will be led by PPC. It will be on Problem Solving Justice. Mr Wall will present the issues from other Departments' view point and Dr O'Hare will present from the operational perspective. Members will be asked how they can influence for Probation.

The Board noted the update.

13. COMMITTEE CHAIR'S UPDATE - CORPORATE RESOURCES COMMITTEE (CRC) (VERBAL)

Mrs Gillespie, Committee Chair, advised that there had not been a meeting of the CRC since the last Board meeting. There is a meeting of the Committee on 2 October 2020 where Terms and Conditions related to pay will be considered, as Probation needs to catch up with market rates.

The Board noted the update.

14. FINANCIAL OUTTURN JULY 2020 (PAPER 81/20)

Ms Teggart presented the August Outturn to the Board as laid out in the paper and highlighted a number of points. She explained the underspend and how any surplus will be used to make grants to the Community and Voluntary Sector.

The Capital overspend was discussed with Ms Teggart reminding members that much of the spend is contractual. The receipts from property sales will reduce the pressures on Capital. It is hoped that Health and Safety requirements arising from the pandemic will be funded by the DOJ.

The Board noted the paper.

15. OTHER BUSINESS

Dr O'Hare gave a brief update on the consultations, to which Probation have responded.

Mr Cox advised members that as their secure tablets have been returned, use of personal email for members will cease with their probation email addresses being used going forward. Members will receive notification by text message that an email has been sent.

In response to a query from a member on the use of a personal device for Webex calls, the Board Chair advised that WebEx is a secure platform and therefore members can use their individual devices for meetings.

Mr Cox informed members that the revised Register of Interests, approved at the August Board, has been published on the PBNI Website. If there are any changes to circumstances, members are asked to advise Secretariat.

Mr Cox advised that approved minutes from the Committees will be presented to the Board in future to ensure all members are kept informed.

The Board Chair thanked members and officials for attending the meeting. The next meeting will be on 16 October 2020 via Webex. It will be a full agenda with a presentation from Graham Walker, DOJ on Brexit and a discussion led by PPC. A special meeting will be set up for members to be briefed on the CJI(NI) Review. A date will be advised.

D Ashford QFSM
Board Chair

Date _____