

PROBATION BOARD FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

BOARD MEETING – FRIDAY 19 FEBRUARY 2021

9.30 AM – WEBEX VIDEO CONFERENCE

431ST MEETING – 27TH OF THE TWELFTH TERM OF OFFICE

ATTENDANCE

Mr D Ashford, Chair
Mr N Bodger
Dr J Byrne
Dr K Clark
Dr T Donaldson
Mr K Donaghy
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
Mrs G Robinson, Head of HR (Items 1-7)
Ms C Teggart, Head of Finance
Mrs G McGurnaghan, Deputy Head of HR (Item 7)
Ms G McGreevy, Head of Communications (Items 1 – 10)
Mr M Cox, Board Secretary
Mrs W Rodgers, Secretariat (Minutes)

1. WELCOME, OPENING REMARKS AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

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

He advised that the agenda would be reordered to ensure there is sufficient time to discuss a number of important items.

He advised members that Dr Clark has resigned from the Board with effect as at 31 March 2021. The Board Chair thanked her for her work with the Board and wished her well.

No potential Conflicts of Interest were declared.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were recorded from Dr G O'Hare, Director of Rehabilitation

3. MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING HELD ON THE 22 JANUARY 2021 (M1/21)

The minutes of the Board Meeting held on Friday 22 January 2021 were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES (PAPER 8/21)

The Board Chair said he would follow up with individual members any outstanding appraisal. Action 1 from 16 October 2020 may be marked as completed. The Chief Executive will provide members with an update on Action 1 from 22 January 2021 at this meeting. All other actions were noted as completed.

Action: Board Chair to contact members about outstanding appraisal forms. (Board Chair)

The Board noted the paper.

5. BOARD CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Board Chair provided members with an update of his meetings and events attended since the last Board meeting.

He thanked Mr Wall for hosting the Webinar on Domestic Abuse held on 3 February 2021. The event was successful and well attended.

Mr Cox, Board Secretary, Dr O'Hare, Director of Rehabilitation will be meeting next week to discuss the response to the Programme for Government Consultation.

The Board Chair advised that with the resignation of Dr Clark the Board membership is below the statutory level. He had raised this with Dr Harrison of the DOJ, who undertook to advise him of the preferred way forward for the remainder of this Board's tenure. He will then inform Members of her decision.

The Board noted the update

6. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S UPDATE

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

The Chief Executive provided an update on the current position of the pay remit issue. She advised that there had been some progress including a good meeting with the Head of the PBNI's Sponsor Branch. She had agreed that the strong case had been well made. The Department have sought some legal advice and the question of affordability has to be discussed with FSD. The Chief Executive informed that she would keep the Board advised of progress. Discussion ensued with Mrs Gillespie, as Chair of the Corporate Resources Committee, advising the Board of the Committee's concerns but she welcomed the progress made. The Chief Executive thanked Mrs Robinson, Head of HR

and Ms Teggart, Head of Finance, for their professionalism and skill in progressing this matter.

The Board noted the update.

7. PRESENTATION - CORPORATE RESOURCES COMMITTEE – PEOPLES STRATEGY – HEAD AND DEPUTY HEAD OF HR

The Board Chair welcomed Mrs McGurnaghan, Deputy Head of HR to the meeting.

Mrs Gillespie introduced the presentation. As 88% of the PBNI budget is taken up with payroll, the People's Strategy is key. The Committee had agreed that it should link to the Strategic Risks and the CJI(NI)'s recommendations in its recent report. She thanked Mrs Robinson and Mrs McGurnaghan for their work on the presentation.

Mrs Robinson advised that the presentation would look at the high-level approach with the background documents providing the detail behind the Strategy. Mrs Robinson went through the three main areas included in the Strategy; the Corporate Plan, the Strategic Risk Register and the CJI(NI)'s Recommendations. Mrs McGurnaghan took the members through the 'four pillars' giving details on each. Mrs McGurnaghan confirmed that the Strategy will be thematically led, which will lead to a thematic review in due course. The pay issue is clearly coming through from the focus groups as a pivotal issue. Looking ahead, the proposed L & D centre will provide an opportunity for delivering new ways of learning and will be advantageous to the Organisation.

Discussion ensued on both how to attract social work qualified staff and how to retain them. Secondment opportunities were discussed as was mentoring. The current percentages of male and female staff qualifying in social work was highlighted as background to the shortage of males in probation. How more males could be attracted to the profession and the justice system were discussed.

Mrs Gillespie as Chair of CRC thanked Mrs Robinson, Mrs McGurnaghan, Mrs Andrews and Mrs Monahan for their work on the strategy. The Board Chair added his thanks for a useful and informative presentation.

8. CORRESPONDENCE (PAPER 9/21)

There were two items of correspondence to note and discuss.

8.1 A letter received by the Chief Executive from Ronnie Armour about Gillian Robinson's work on the Review of Support Services for Operational Prison Staff.

8.2 A letter received from the Assembly by the Chief Executive on PBNI budget and her reply

Item 8.1 – The Chief Executive received a letter from Mr Ronnie Armour, Director General, Northern Ireland Prison Service, thanking Mrs Robinson for her work on the Review of Support Services for Operational Prison Staff. He appreciated her work and wished to thank her.

Item 8.2 – will be discussed under agenda item 23 of this agenda

The Board noted the correspondence.

9. BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN (VERBAL)

Mr Hamill provided an update on the Business Continuity Plan. The Plan is updated annually and the Internal Audit provided a 'satisfactory' assurance.

The Board noted the update.

10. COVID 19 UPDATE (VERBAL)

Mr Hamill advised that the Organisation remains in phase 1 of the Recovery Plan. High Risk service users continue to be seen face-to-face. Community Service continues to operate outside only. Public Health guidance continues to be followed.

Ms McGreevy provided an update on communications related to Covid with updates from the Northern Ireland Executive being communicated to staff. The Chief Executive has recorded a Pod Cast for staff this week. Feedback from staff on communications continues to be positive.

The Board noted the update.

11. MANAGEMENT INFORMATION PAPER (PAPER 11/21)

The Board Chair invited the Executive Team to take members through the Report.

Mr Hamill informed members that there had been two Serious Further Offences to report since the last Board meeting. He provided details of the cases. He confirmed that there were no practice learning points in either case.

The Electronic Case Management System project has now been completed and the last meeting of its Oversight Board will take place in March. The ICT Strategy 2021-2024 was presented to CRC at its meeting on 5 February 2021 and is being brought to this meeting for approval.

There was discussion on the learning points during Covid on supervision of service users and the different ways of working. Mr Hamill commented that virtual supervision is not ideal but currently under Phase 1, all high risk offenders are seen face to face. The Chief Executive advised that feedback from staff and service users had been noted. A member asked if an impact of Covid had been an increased re-offending. Mr Hamill advised that SFOs had not increased nor had reportable incidents. Given the time lag on producing re-offending data, we will not know the impact for several years. Members were advised that Pre-Sentence Reports had returned to similar levels to those before Covid, and new orders made have also returned to pre-covid levels,

Mr Hamill advised that the Communications update was as laid out in the paper.

The Chief Executive advised members that there had been no significant change in HR since the last meeting.

Ms Teggart provided an update on Estates and Business Cases. She advised that the Crawford Square sale had fallen through. There will be an impact on the Capital budget, as the receipts from the sale will not be received this financial year. Members were previously advised of the Antrim Road sale falling through. The Department is aware of

the resulting pressures. Work on business cases and leases continues as laid out in the paper and the business case for a new L & D facility is close to being secured.

The Board noted the paper.

12. BOARD SECRETARY'S BUSINESS (VERBAL)

Mr Cox, Board Secretary provided members with a number of points of information.

He advised that Board and Committee meeting dates had been put in the diary until May 2021. The reasoning behind this was that it is still unclear when face-to-face meetings may take place. He advised that meetings for the remainder of the year will be put in the diary as a prompt and venue or platform will be added later.

Members were informed that the latest addition of Probation News is available to view on Decision Time and approved committees minutes from 2020 to date are also available.

Mr Cox reminded members of the invitation, extended by the PPC Chair, for them to attend a presentation by Professor Siobhan O'Neill at the PPC meeting on 26 February 2021. If members wish to attend, they are to advise Mr Cox who will arrange for an invitation to be sent.

Action: Members to advise Mr Cox if they wish to attend the presentation by Professor O'Neill so an invitation can be issued. (Board Members)

Mr Cox informed members that the response to the Programme for Government Consultation was being prepared. The consultation period closes on 22 March 2021. The draft response will be taken to the PPC at its meeting on 26 February for review and then to March Board for approval.

The Board noted the update.

13. REGISTER OF INTEREST (PAPER 12/21)

Mr Cox advised that the Registers of Interest are scheduled to be updated in January each year and then placed on the website. All Board Members and the Senior Leadership Team have received a request for the information. The information provided in both registers is based on information received.

The Board and Officials approved the Register of Interests to be published on the PBNI website.

14. BOARD WORK PLAN (13/21)

Mr Cox advised that the Work Plan shows the scheduled work going to the Committees and Board up to 31 March 2022. This Board's tenure ends as at 30 November 2021 and therefore the Work Plan shows the work that must be completed by then.

The Board noted the paper.

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

Mr Bodger, Committee Chair, provided a summary of the ARAC meeting that took place on 29 January 2021. A number of papers are being brought to this meeting for approval and noting. There was discussion on the ARAC's role for the CJI(NI) recommendations and it was agreed that the Committee would have an oversight role and, in doing so, ensure there was no overlap or duplication with any other committees. The External Auditor, Deloitte, presented the Audit Strategy for 2021/22. It was advised that the 'Pay Remit and Terms and Conditions' Risk had been removed from the Audit Strategy for 2021/22, however following discussions between Ms Teggart and the auditors, the Risk would be reinstated as it was accepted as a more complex issue

The Board noted the update.

16. REVISED TOR for ARAC (Paper 14/21)

Mr Cox advised that the Committee Members had requested a change made to point 1.3.1 to reflect that ARAC would review any reports from statutory bodies referred to it by the Board. Mr Cox confirmed that the change had been made and the Committee agreed to present the revised TORs to the Board for approval.

The Board approved the ARAC TORs

Action: ARAC's revised TOR should be included in the Standing Orders (Board Secretary)

17. STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER (SRR) Q3 2020/21 (PAPER 15 /21)

Mr Bodger summarized the changes made to the Q3 SRR, which were discussed in detail at the ARAC meeting. He recommended the revised SRR to the Board for approval.

The Board approved the Q3 SRR 2020/21.

18. FINAL REPORT ON RTTCWG (PAPER 16/21)

Mr Bodger advised that the final Report to those charged with Governance (RTTCWG) was being brought to the Board for noting. Ms Teggart confirmed that there had been no changes since the Board had last reviewed the Report.

The Board noted the Report.

19. NIAO PROCUREMENT FRAUD RISK GUIDE (PAPER 17/21)

Mr Bodger advised that the Guide is being brought to the Board for information. Ms Teggart confirmed that Probation's Policy and Practice meets the guidance.

The Board noted the Guide

20. ANNUAL ACCOUNTS – INTERNAL AUDIT FINAL REPORT (PAPER 18/21)

Ms Teggart informed the Board that the Final Report had found no issues nor made any recommendations. Work has started in preparation of the 2020/21 Annual Report.

The Board noted the Report.

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

Mrs Gillespie, Committee Chair, provided a summary of the Committee meeting held on 5 February 2021. It was noted the Committee's concern on the impact of the pay remit issue which has been discussed under this agenda item 7.0. The Committee had discussed the Budget 2021/22 in some detail and she congratulated Ms Teggart on her comprehensive response to the Assembly. Due to receipts not being received for the sale of the two properties, there is an overspend in Capital monies; one result of this is having to delay the purchase of a 'graffiti bus' until next financial year. The IT Strategy was discussed and is a comprehensive strategy. It is being brought to the Board with the Committee's recommendation for approval.

The Board noted the update.

22. IT STRATEGY 2021 – 2024 (Paper 19/21)

Mr Hamill presented the Strategy to the Board and advised that the cover note accompanying the Strategy summarises the rationale for the strategy. A member asked if 'Causeway' link up was included and Mr Hamill advised that it was one of the action points.

Mrs Gillespie commented that it was an ambitious strategy and congratulated Mr Hamill and Ms Colhoun on it.

The Board approved the IT Strategy 2021 – 2024

23. FINANCIAL OUTTURN – JANUARY 2021 (PAPER 20/21)

Ms Teggart provided an update on the January Financial Outturn as laid out in the paper. She took members through the causes of the underspend and overspend within the report. The sale of two properties falling through has caused pressures in capital expenditure, which the Department have been notified of.

The Chief Executive received correspondence from the Justice Committee requesting detail on the implications, risks and impact of the 2021/22 PBNI 'flat-line' budget. The correspondence is provided under agenda item 8.2 of this agenda. The CRC discussed the letter received and the comprehensive response in detail at its meeting on 5 February 2021.

The Justice Committee was meeting last week and it appears that there are pressures across Justice due to flat line budgets. Ms Teggart explained there is a meeting next week with FSD to clearly set out the pressures linked to the pay remit. The one-year budget settlement is still in draft but it is expected to be confirmed at the end of this month. Ms Teggart commented that the level of the pressures is concerning.

Discussion ensued with Mrs Gillespie commenting that it is a bleak picture. With 88% of the budget being staff, to reduce costs would require reducing headcount and it was agreed that this would not happen through natural attrition alone but there is no process or budget for a redundancy scheme. The Chief Executive talked through the next steps to be followed.

The Board agreed that after the Executive Team's meetings with the DOJ, the Board may require a further meeting to agree its next steps.

Prompt payment performance has reduced in January 2021 due to an increase in internal delays handling invoice notifications. A reminder has been issued to all staff regarding the need to take appropriate action in a timely manner.

The Board noted the paper and correspondence.

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

Mr Wall advised that there had not been a meeting since the last Board and there were no emerging issues. The next meeting of the Committee is 26 February 2021 when Professor Siobhan O'Neill, Interim Mental Health Champion, will be presenting to the Committee. He again extended an invitation to members who wished to attend the presentation. Mr Wall and Dr O'Hare attended an event with an expert panel on Educational Disadvantage. Mr Wall gave background into the event and the post event follow up. He will be raising the subject at PPC for discussion. The Board Chair thanked Mr Wall for being involved in the subject.

The Board noted the update

25. OTHER BUSINESS

The Board Chair thanked everyone for attending and advised that the next meeting will be via WebEx.

The next meeting of the Board will be 19 March 2021 via WebEx.

Meeting ended at 11.50 am

D Ashford QFSM
Board Chair

Date _____