

PROBATION BOARD FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

BOARD MEETING – FRIDAY 16 OCTOBER 2020

9.30 AM – WEBEX VIDEO CONFERENCE

427th MEETING – 23rd 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
Ms C Teggart, Head of Finance
Ms G McGreevy, Head of Communications
Ms J Mercer, DP Statistician
Mr M Cox, Board Secretary
Mrs W Rodgers, Secretariat (Minutes)

OBSERVER

Mr N Hill, Assistant Director, Programmes and Interventions

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.

Members were advised that the presentation by Graham Walker had to be postponed but he will be attending the November Board. Members were thanked for attending the Special Board meeting held on 2 October 2020 when the CJI(NI) Report and Action Plan were discussed.

Mr Nigel Hill was welcomed to the meeting as an observer. Mr Hill had recently been appointed as Assistant Director, Programmes and Intervention.

No potential Conflicts of Interest were declared.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies recorded.

3. MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING HELD ON THE 18 SEPTEMBER 2020 (M09/20)

The minutes of the Board Meeting held on Friday 18 September 2020 were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

4. MINUTES OF SPECIAL BOARD MEETING HELD ON THE 2 OCTOBER 2020 (M10/20)

The minutes of the Special Board Meeting held on Friday 2 October 2020 were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting with one minor change to the apologies recorded.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES (PAPER 82/20)

The action from the Special Board was noted as completed. There were no other actions recorded.

The Board noted the paper.

6. BOARD CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Board Chair advised that the Accountability meeting with the Minister had been postponed until 21 October 2020.

The Board Chair had attended a budget review meeting with Ms Teggart, Head of Finance, with no concerns arising from it.

The Board Chair informed members of a discussion by the Public Sector's Chairs Forum on Partnership Agreements, which was useful.

Annual appraisals are ongoing but to comply with the Executive's updated guidance, all meetings will now be carried out via Zoom.

The Board Chair attended a number of events since the last Board meeting. A 'Virtual Masquerade Ball' to mark Mental Health Day which was hosted by Psychology on 2 October 2020. He also attended a NICON conference.

The Committee Chairs' Working Group met on 18 September and the Action Plan from this will be circulated to members.

The Board Development Day is scheduled for 13 November 2020; however following the Executive's updated guidance, the Conference Room in the DOJ is no longer available. Discussion ensued on the postponing of the Development Day.

All members agreed that the Board Development Day, scheduled for 13 November 2020, should be postponed until the Spring 2021. The Board Chair will write to Dr Harrison to advise her as she was due to present at the meeting.

Action: The Board Chair to write to Dr Harrison reference the postponement of the Board Development Day. (Board Chair).

Mr Bodger provided a paper entitled 'Can the socio-economic effects of the South Yorkshire pit closures during the 1980's help us look into Northern Ireland's post Covid-19 economic landscape and crime'. The Board Chair presented this to the Permanent Secretary who has shared it with other departments. The Board Chair thanked Mr Bodger for the report.

Action: Mr Bodger's report to be uploaded onto Decision Time for members' information. (Secretariat).

The Board noted the update.

7. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S UPDATE

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

The Chief Executive advised that she had received a copy of the 'Foreword' to the CJI(NI)'s Inspection Report that is for the attention of the Minister. The Report remains embargoed until the Minister authorises publication. The Chief Executive welcomed the 'Foreword' for its positivity and balance, which reflects the body of the Report.

The Chief Executive took members through the foreword highlighting a number of changes made to the narrative.

Publication is scheduled for early November. In preparation for publication, there is a communication strategy in place and a briefing pack has been prepared for both internal and external stakeholders.

Members agreed that it was a fair and balanced report with the language used being fair.

The Chief Executive advised that both she and Ms McGreevy, Head of Communications, would be presenting at a CEP Webinar on Communications / Stakeholder engagement.

The Board noted the update.

8. CORRESPONDENCE (PAPER 83/20)

There were no items of correspondence to note.

9. POLICY & PRACTICE PRESENTATION - PROBLEM SOLVING JUSTICE (PSJ)

Mr Wall, PPC Committee Chair and Dr O'Hare, lead official for PPC, provided a presentation on Problem Solving Justice to the Board.

Mr Wall provided his thoughts on the role of the Board with five themes and how the Board can assert influence, both now and into the future, by using networking. Dr O'Hare took the Board through the presentation slides.

Discussion ensued on a number of points from the presentation. Working and engaging with Health was seen as critical as there is a crossover between responsibilities of Health and Justice. Providing evidence through research was discussed and providing case studies would be powerful evidence. Probation's core work accounts for 95% of its work with PSJ accounting for 5%. The cost of the increasing PSJ work would be £25 million over the 5 year strategy. There was discussion on how success would look and how the pie chart on budget would change.

Mr Wall concluded with commenting on the value of influencing and therefore developing an influencing plan would be important.

Action: Board Chair to write to the Chair of the HSCB regarding partnership working with Probation. (Board Chair)

The Board Chair thanked the PPC for their presentation.

The Board noted the presentation.

10. COVID 19 UPDATE

Mrs Robinson, Head of HR, provided an update on the measures in place to ensure the safety of staff and service users together with the procedures followed when Covid cases are reported. Homeworking procedures have been updated and circulated to staff with risk assessments being reviewed weekly. Staff receive communications when any Executive guidance is issued or updated. Mr Hamill advised that all Corporate Services staff are working from home. The recovery phase has reverted back to phase 1, 'high' risk service users will continue to be seen in offices with 'medium' and 'low' risk service users being contacted by telephone or secure social media.

In respect of the return to phase 1 community service indoor placements have been stood down with only outdoor placements being provided. This will reduce community service provision by up to 50%. Arrangements are in place with the Court Services to extend Community Service Orders effected by the restrictions.

Dr O'Hare, Director of Rehabilitation, provided an update on Covid measures for Probation in prisons. A Probation Officer will be in each prison site and parole hearings are continuing remotely.

A member asked if there was any evidence that the current management of service users has had an impact on reoffending rates. Mr Hamill, Director of Operations, advised that there was no evidence available, as service users have been compliant, through recovery phases 1 and 2 with attendance being high. He advised that contact with people remotely is not as good as face-to-face. In the future under phases 3 and 4, Probation will return to seeing every service user face-to-face and this will include returning to carrying out home visits.

There was discussion on collecting anecdotal data. The Chief Executive advised that this data is supplied by the Department but she would raise this with the Criminal Justice Recovery Group, which she sits on.

The Board noted the update.

11. MANAGEMENT INFORMATION PAPER (PAPER 84/20)

Mr Hamill advised that there were no Serious Further Offences to report since the last Board meeting.

The Board Chair welcomed Ms Mercer, DP Statistician, to the meeting. Ms Mercer took members through the Statistics and Research update for Q1 as laid out in the paper. The report is caveated with the statistics provided covering the period April to June 2020, during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic period, when court capacity was reduced and only the most serious cases were being heard. The highlighted issues of female

offenders, older people in the Justice System, the temporary decrease in court business and Criminal Justice Recovery Phase will all be discussed at PPC.

Mrs Robinson informed that the pay settlement for 19/20 is nearing a conclusion with the submission of a pay remit. The Department advised that 2.6% was outside the pay parameters of the Public Pay Policy. The PBNi management and union officials agree that the offer is a fair one and therefore the pay remit will be submitted on that basis.

There are no updates to report on NILGOSC.

The Attendance Report and Well-Being report provided an update on the current sick absence rate, which is currently sitting at 12.7%, and the well-being initiatives that have been taken to support staff during Covid and working remotely. Mr Donaghy asked Mrs Robinson if the wellbeing report could be referred for further discussion at CRC and she advised she would.

Ms Teggart, Head of Finance, provided a comprehensive update on estates and business cases as laid out in the paper. She advised that the Estates Team was working on Covid measures such as deep cleans and ensuring there is sufficient PPE. The main priority of the estates work will be securing a property in Enniskillen as the property previously being negotiated had fallen through. Members were also advised of the key business cases and the leases currently being work upon.

Mr Hamill provided an update on ECMS. He advised that phase 2 had been brought forward a week to 23 November 2020 and testing was taking place at present. The bid for Probation to 'onboarding' onto Causeway has been approved. Mr Hamill advised of the benefits on this.

Ms McGreevy provided an update on Communications and Engagement as laid out in the paper.

Dr O'Hare, provided an update on: consultations, quarterly complaints report, formal and internal review investigations, requests for information, Health and Safety, employee relations and cases and tribunals and current legal cases, as laid out in the paper.

Discussion ensued on the physical and mental well-being approach to working from home. Members also asked that the Senior Team also ensure that they look after their well-being.

The Board noted the paper.

12. BOARD SECRETARY'S BUSINESS

Mr Cox, Board Secretary, advised that the first draft of the Partnership Agreement has been forwarded to the Department, members will be kept informed of progress.

The Board Secretary will be sending members the Annual Self-Assessment Questionnaire. If members could return this to the Board Secretary by 6 November 2020, he will then consolidate the responses. He will also be asking the Senior Leadership Team for their opinion.

Action: Board Members to return Self-Assessment Questions to the Board Secretary by 6 November. (Board Members)

The Board noted the update.

13. BOARD WORK PLAN (85/20)

Mr Cox introduced the paper, which shows the scheduled work for the Committees and Board. The Work Plan is to ensure that there are no surprises and meetings can keep focused on what is coming up.

The Board noted the paper.

14. 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 next meeting of the ARAC will be on 30 October 2020.

The Board noted the update.

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

Mr Wall, Committee Chair, advised that there had not been a meeting since the last Board and there were no emerging issues to report. The next meeting of the PPC will be 6 November 2020.

The Board noted the update.

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

Mrs Gillespie, Committee Chair, advised that there had been a meeting of the CRC on 2 October 2020. She provided the Board with a summary of the discussions that took place.

The Committee agreed that the topic for the Committee led Board meeting would be the 'People Strategy'. The 'Pillars' of the strategy are now a standing item on the Committee's agenda. There was discussion around Health & Safety remaining on the SRR. Following discussion, the suggestion of the Committee was to be taken to the Audit Risk Management Committee (ARM). Mr Hamill advised Board Members that following discussion at ARM it was agreed that, during Covid, the risk would remain on the SRR and will be reviewed at a later date. The October Monitoring Round was a concern for the Committee but this has been addressed in the Financial Report to this meeting. Other areas discussed were sick absence, ICT, caseload and forecasting, Terms and Conditions and the Sentencing Review.

The Committee had agreed to bring their concerns on the business case approval process to the Board's attention as it is long and time consuming. It was suggested that this process could form part of the Partnership Agreement. Ms Teggart provided the Board with an update on the matter since the Committee meeting and the DOJ have agreed to discuss the issue with DOF.

The Board noted the update.

17. FINANCIAL OUTTURN JULY 2020 (PAPER 86/20)

Ms Teggart presented the September Outturn to the Board as laid out in the paper and highlighted a number of points. Members were advised that the underspend would be reduced to £152k and how this would be achieved. Additional capital budget has been approved therefore the overspend on ECMS will be eliminated. Bids in the October

Monitoring Round have all been approved. There is no update to report on VAT and prompt pay remains within tolerance during the Covid period.

The Board noted the paper.

18. OTHER BUSINESS

The Board Chair thanked PPC for their presentation on Problem Solving Justice.

The next meeting of the Board will be 20 November 2020.

Meeting ended at 12.15 pm

D Ashford QFSM
Board Chair

Date _____