

PROBATION BOARD FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

BOARD MEETING – FRIDAY 20 NOVEMBER 2020

9.30 AM – WEBEX VIDEO CONFERENCE

428th MEETING – 24th 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

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 (Items 1 – 11)
Ms G McGurnaghan, Deputy Head of HR (Items 18 – 21)
Ms J Mercer, DP Statistician (Items 27 and 28)
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 Board meeting, which continues to be conducted via video conferencing.

No potential Conflicts of Interest were declared.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies recorded from Ms C Lamont, Chief Executive.

3. MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING HELD ON THE 16 OCTOBER 2020 (M11/20)

The minutes of the Board Meeting held on Friday 16 October 2020 were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES (PAPER 87/20)

The actions from the Board meeting held on 16 October 2020 were noted as completed. Board Members were reminded that any outstanding self-assessment questionnaires were to be returned to the Board Secretary. There were no other actions recorded.

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 advised that the last number of weeks had involved working on members' appraisals. Most have been returned but he asked if any members who had yet to return their forms could they do so. He thanked members for their time and contribution to the process.

Action: Any members who have not yet returned their appraisal forms are asked to forward them to the Board Chair. (Board Members)

During the Accountability Review, the Board Chair had the opportunity to raise a number of issues with the Minister. The Minister was complimentary on how Probation was carrying out its work.

The Board Chair attended a QUB and Chairs Forum event on Brexit. He also attend the Policy and Practice Committee held on 6 November 2020.

The Long Service Awards event was held via WebEx on 18 November 2020 when the Board Chair made a speech to the staff attending. Mr Peter May, Permanent Secretary, joined the call and the Minister recorded a speech for the event. A link to the Minister's speech has been uploaded onto the Document Library on Decision Time.

Mr Bodger's report on 'Covid-19, the Yorkshire mine closures and crime' has also been uploaded onto Decision Time for members' information. The Board Chair again thanked Mr Bodger for his work on this.

Members were advised that the approved minutes from the three committees' have been uploaded onto Decision Time so all members have access to them for information and to provide openness and transparency.

The Commissioner for Public Appointments is carrying out a consultation on skills audits for board members. The Board Chair will provide members with information when it is received.

The Board noted the update

6. PRESENTATION BY MR GRAHAM WALKER ON AN UPDATE ON BREXIT

The Board Chair welcomed Mr Walker to the meeting. Mr Walker apologised for not being available for the last Board meeting due to circumstances outside his control. He set out the areas that he would cover in his briefing, including an update of developments since his last presentation to the Board.

Mr Walker set out the current position of Justice in the negotiations with Europe. Areas of note are the European Arrest Warrants, cyber security and extradition. The Memorandum of Understanding with Ireland is a governmental agreement and not an European agreement. It runs to March 2022. Following Mr Walker's briefing there was a question and answer session. Bilateral deals and comparison deals were discussed.

The Board Chair thanked Mr Walker for his briefing, which provided the Board with a good understanding of the current position and the areas still to be resolved.

7. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S UPDATE

The Board Chair invited Mr Hamill, Director of Operations, to provide the Board with the Chief Executive's update in her absence.

The commentary from The Independent Reporting Commission's (IRC) Report on the Fresh Start Agreement was positive in respect of the Aspire Project for younger men and the Engage Women's Project. This is the third report that Probation has received positive feedback.

Mr Hamill advised that the Minister had given the CJI(NI) permission to publish its Inspection Report on Probation. When the Report will be published is the responsibility of the CJI(NI) although publication is likely to be week commencing 7 December 2020. Once the Report is published then the Action Plan update will be circulated with Board papers and discussed at committees'.

Members' attention was drawn to the Correspondence, under agenda item 8.1 of this meeting, received from Mr Peter May, where he referred to the transitional period in legislation for Terrorist Related Offenders (TROs). The Minister will be writing to Executive colleagues to progress the required legislation. The correspondence also requested the Probation be involved in a number of work streams. PBNI have confirmed participation within the work streams.

In response to a member's concern on the description of staff as 'counter terrorism staff' in the letter, Mr Hamill commented that the wording did not sit comfortably with him. However, as part of PBNI's contribution to the work streams, we will request more nuance around language.

The Board noted the update.

8. CORRESPONDENCE (PAPER 88/20)

The correspondence was noted and discussed under agenda item no 7 of this meeting.

The Board noted the correspondence.

9. UPDATE ON CJI(NI) ACTION PLAN (VERBAL)

Mr Hamill provided an overview on the CJI(NI) Report's Action Plan, the Action Plan was approved by the Board at its special meeting on 2 October 2020.

Members were reminded that there were 11 recommendations, 5 strategic and 6 operational. Although the final report has not been published, the SLT have been working through the Plan and have added an 'update' column. He provided assurance to the Board that work continues on the Action Plan.

A member asked if the delivery of the People Strategy had started and was there any feedback from staff? Mrs Robinson, Head of HR, advised that focus groups would comprise using set questions and open questions with the groups starting during January 2021. She also reminded members that the CJI(NI) Report referred to a year ago and significant positive progress has been made over the last year between senior management and staff. Unions had outlined this at recent meetings with the Board Chair.

The Board noted the update.

10. COVID 19 UPDATE (VERBAL)

Mrs Robinson advised that the Organisation will remain at Phase 1 of the Recovery Plan into the New Year. This was welcomed by staff and provided them with certainty. The use of IT and on screen messages are being used to remind staff of Covid symptoms and what they must do if they experience any of them. Screens have been erected between desks and PPE is in plentiful supply. Temperature taking machines have been placed in each office. Mrs Robinson advised that the Inspire counselling service is being used by staff to help with any mental health and wellbeing issues. A number of staff events are being planned (a virtual coffee morning was used as an example).

Dr O'Hare, Director of Rehabilitation, advised that one Probation Officer will be in attendance on each of the 3 prison sites each day.

Ms McGreevy, Head of Communications, provided an update on the communications and engagement with staff, with the podcasts from the Chief Executive being well received. A survey of staff is planned for December and then again before Easter. External partnerships continue with the CEP holding Probation up for its good practice.

The Board noted the update.

11. MANAGEMENT INFORMATION PAPER (PAPER 89/20)

The Board Chair invited the Executive Team to take members through the Report. He commented positively on the new format of the Report.

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

Mr Hamill provided an update on the ECMS and IT. The next phase of ECMS will be rolled out from 7 December. He also advised that a 3-year IT strategy is being drafted so IT can continue to evolve in the Organisation. There was discussion on providing the Board with a presentation on the ECMS. Mr Hamill will discuss this with the Project Manager on how best to present this to the Board

Action: Mr Hamill to check the possibilities and practicalities of providing a presentation for members. (Director of Operations)

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

Dr O'Hare provided an update on consultations. She advised that Mr Wall had brought to her attention that a panel had been set up to look at the links between educational underachievement and social disadvantage. She had submitted a response from Probation on this. Mr Wall had suggested that he would arrange a meeting between the Panel and Probation. Members were taken through the consultations that Probation are

providing a response to and the deadlines.

Mrs Robinson advised that the pay remit for 19/20 had been submitted. There was a potential risk regarding the business case as it is over 2% Public Pay Policy level but the Management Side and Unions had agreed that this was a fair deal. Mrs Robinson confirmed that this was a pay increase for probation grades only. Administrative grades are agreed centrally in line with the NICS. There was discussion around affordability, as the Head of Finance has had to declare the pay increases as a pressure for the next financial year. There was also discussion on car parking provision. Mr Donaghy asked if there was any movement on selecting a job evaluation system. Mrs Robinson advised that she did not know which type of structure she needed as it depended on the pay scales.

Action: Mrs Robinson and Mr Donaghy to further discuss re Job Evaluation System. (Head of HR and Mr Donaghy).

The Attendance Report and Well-Being Report provided an update on the current sick absence rate, which has fallen by 27% equating to 12.2 days. Working remotely appears to be a factor in the decrease in absence. The Board Chair welcomed the decrease in absence.

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 continue to work on Covid measures. She has identified a potential property in Enniskillen, which she has viewed. The sale of Crawford Square has fallen through but there is interest in the property resulting in a higher price potentially being achieved. There are a number of business cases for leases being prepared. As previously advised to the Board, the process for these business cases is time consuming, but deadlines should be met before the current leases end.

The Board noted the paper.

12. BOARD SECRETARY'S BUSINESS

Mr Cox, Board Secretary, advised members on the process for issuing invitations for meetings when WebEx is to be used. He confirmed that the invitations are sent to both members' personal and probation diaries, therefore enabling members to join meetings using their calendars. The three month email retention policy does not therefore apply.

Mr Cox informed that he is working on meeting dates for the 2021/22 year and a schedule will be circulated to members for comment during December.

The Board noted the update.

13. BOARD WORK PLAN (90/20)

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. He asked for any updates to be informed to him.

The Board noted the paper.

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

Mr Bodger, Committee Chair, provided members with a summary of the ARAC meeting held on 30 October 2020. The Terms of Reference for the Committee will be discussed at its next meeting. He advised that the Administration of Grants audit received a 'satisfactory' rating and congratulated staff on this achievement. The Annual Closed Session with the Auditors was held after the formal meeting. The Internal, External and NIAO had only praise for Probation staff and had no concerns to report. Mr Bodger wished his thanks and congratulations to be sent to staff. The Board Chair also congratulated staff on behalf of the Board.

The Board noted the update.

15. STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER Q2 2020/21(SRR) (PAPER 91/20)

Mr Hamill presented the SRR Q2 2020/21 to members and provided a summary of the paper. The ARAC had reviewed the SRR at its meeting on 30 October and agreed to recommend approval to the Board.

Following discussion the Board approved the SRR Q2 2020/21.

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

Mrs Gillespie, 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 Committee will be on 5 February 2021.

The Board noted the update.

17. FINANCIAL OUTTURN – OCTOBER 2020 (PAPER 101/20)

Ms Teggart provided an update on the October Financial Outturn as laid out in the paper, highlighting a number of points. Members were advised that £448K has been released back to the Department. The Problem Solving Justice team's work is now being invoiced. Monies for Covid have been ring-fenced and a request to move Covid monies to Capital has been submitted to the Department. There is an over spend on Capital but the Department is aware of this. The January monitoring return has been submitted and this will allow for an opportunity to transfer funding.

The Board noted the paper.

18. ANNUAL EQUALITY AND GOOD RELATIONS ANNUAL REPORT

The Board Chair welcomed Ms McGurnaghan, Deputy Head of HR, to the meeting. Ms McGurnaghan presented the Report to members. Due to Covid, the submission date had been put back from August to December by the Equality Commission. Members were advised of the work and achievements of the Plan. The new ECMS will allow for more detailed analysis on equality issues in respect of service users. There were four policies screened and members were advised of a number of projects that will be worked upon. Staff have received extensive training on disability.

Mr Wall had a query on page 9 of the Report and Ms McGurnaghan agreed to come back to him on this. Mr Wall congratulated Ms McGurnaghan on the comprehensive report. Mrs Gillespie also congratulated Ms McGurnaghan on the work of the Report and advised

that as the 'Good Relations Champion' she raises questions on behalf of Board Members at the meetings of the Good Relations Group. If any members wishes to raise a query for the Group, Mrs Gillespie will do this on their behalf.

Action: Ms McGurnaghan to respond to Mr Wall's query. (Deputy Head of HR)

The Board noted the paper.

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

Mr Wall, Committee Chair, provided members with a summary of the PPC meeting held on 6 November 2020. He commented that it had been a full agenda and a productive and useful meeting. The Committee had reviewed a number of policies and reports, which have been brought to Board for consideration. He congratulated the HR team on the work that had been done on the HR policies presented to the Committee. He also thanked all staff for their input and provision of papers.

There had been discussion on the annual seminar, which will take place on 3 February 2020, via WebEx. The Minister's attendance has been confirmed and the panel members have all agreed to take part. Mr Wall and Dr O'Hare will be having further discussion on the practicalities of running the seminar and the timing of it.

The Committee will be discussing future topics for seminars and would welcome any suggestions from Board Members.

Professor Siobhan O'Neill, Mental Health Champion, has agreed to attend the PPC in February. Mr Wall invited any Board Members who wished to join for her presentation.

The Board noted the update.

20. DISABILITY ACTION PLAN (PAPER 96/20)

Ms McGurnaghan advised members that the PPC had reviewed the Action Plan at its meeting on 6 November 2020. Subject to some minor changes, it agreed to recommend approval to the Board.

Ms McGurnaghan highlighted a number of points. Probation has trained staff on the use of JAM cards. All properties are now DDA compliant and there has been changes to the recruitment, induction and training processes. She informed the meeting that if a member of staff has a disability passport; it is their responsibility to advise their line manager.

The Board was advised that the Disability Action Plan was a five-year process but it has now been brought into line with the timing of the Corporate Plan. Consequently, this action plan will next be reviewed in 2023.

The Board Chair thanked Ms McGurnaghan for the paper and the Board approved the Disability Action Plan.

21. L & D POLICY (PAPER 97/20)

Ms McGurnaghan presented the L & D Policy to members and advised that the PPC had reviewed the Policy at its meeting on 6 November 2020 and agreed to recommend approval to the Board.

Ms McGurnaghan informed members that the Policy took account of modernising the ways of learning particularly using on-line learning in light of Covid. There was discussion on point 8.5 and Ms McGurnaghan agreed to change the wording to include reference to 'compulsory' training rather than have a broader term.

Action: Ms McGurnaghan to amend 8.5 as above.(Deputy Head of HR)

The Board approved the L & D Policy with the one amendment to point 8.5.

22. ACCESSING SOCIAL MEDIA OF SERVICE USERS POLICY (PAPER 92/20)

Mr Hamill introduced the Policy to members. He advised that the Policy had come out of a Serious Case Review (SCR) with a recommendation for all Criminal Justice agencies to have a policy and procedures on this matter for their staff. The Policy is an additional tool in verifying compliance of offenders. Mr Hamill advised that the PPC had reviewed the Policy at their meeting on 6 November 2020 and agreed to recommend approval to the Board.

Discussion ensued on compliance and use of the Policy.

The Board approved the Accessing Social Media of Service Users Policy.

23. PERFORMANCE CAPABILITY POLICY (PAPER 93/20)

Mrs Robinson introduced the Policy and advised that the PPC had review the Policy at its meeting on 6 November 2020 and agreed to recommend approval to the Board.

The main changes were in the timescale and 'informal' arrangements have now been included in the process.

The Board approved the Performance Capability Policy.

24. CAREER BREAK POLICY (PAPER 94/20)

Mrs Robinson advised members that the Career Break Policy was due its review. The PPC had reviewed the Policy at its meeting on 6 November 2020 and had agreed to recommend approval to the Board.

There was discussion on 4.0 Purpose and Mrs Robinson provided clarification for members.

The Board approved the Career Break Policy with one amendment to point 13.10.

25. RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION POLICY (PAPER95/20)

Mrs Robinson introduced the Policy to members. Members were advised that the Policy was due review and it had been updated with learning on internal and external selection. The Policy & Practice Committee had reviewed the Policy at its meeting on 6 November 2020 and agreed to recommend approval to the Board.

The Board approved the Recruitment and Selection Policy.

26. 2020/21 BUSINESS PLAN Q2 (PAPER 98/20)

Dr O'Hare reported on the progress of the 2020/21 Business Plan in Q2. The Policy & Practice Committee reviewed the paper at its meeting on 6 November 2020 and agreed to recommend approval to the Board. The Plan had been revised in April to take account of Covid. The six Strategic Priorities all have a rating of 'green'. Dr O'Hare advised of the considerable work completed over the quarter by staff to achieve this result.

The Board Chair paid tribute to the work of staff to achieve this outcome. The Board approved the 2020/21 Business Plan Q2.

27. 2020/21 CASELOAD STATISTICS (PAPER 99/20)

The Board Chair welcomed Ms Mercer, DP Statistician, to the meeting. Ms Mercer advised that the Policy & Practice Committee was briefed on the paper at its meeting on 6 November 2020, followed by discussion and review. The paper is being brought to the Board for its information and noting.

Ms Mercer highlighted a number of points. New Orders had decreased by 63% but this was due to the Courts not operating through Covid. Female offenders had decreased by 30% but the ratio remains the same by gender offending with females continuing to account for 1 in 10 offenders. There has been an increase in registrations on the Victim Information System, the Board Chair welcomed this increase.

The Board noted the paper.

28. CRIMINAL JUSTICE TRENDS (PAPER 100/20)

Ms Mercer presented the paper to members, advising that Policy & Practice Committee was briefed on the paper at its meeting on 6 November 2020, followed by a review of the paper. The paper is being brought to the Board for its information and noting. The Members were provided with a summary of the paper and noted that, because of timing, the impact of Covid had not been reflected in this paper. The impact will be reflected in next year's data.

The Board noted the paper.

29. OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other items of business reported. The Board Chair thanked members and officials for attending the meeting.

The next meeting of the Board will be 18 December 2020.

Meeting ended at 12.05 pm

D Ashford QFSM
Board Chair

Date _____