

PROBATION BOARD FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

BOARD MEETING – FRIDAY 21 MAY 2021

9.30 AM – WEBEX VIDEO CONFERENCE

434th MEETING – 30th OF THE TWELFTH TERM OF OFFICE

ATTENDANCE

Mr D Ashford, Chair
Dr J Byrne
Mr K Donaghy
Mrs J Gillespie
Mr M Murray
Mr G OhEara
Mr D Wall

Mrs J Anderson, Boardroom Apprentice

OFFICIALS

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

Observer

Ms J Grant, AD Programmes and Interventions

1. WELCOME, OPENING REMARKS AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The Board Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, which on this occasion was a 'hybrid' meeting with the Board Chair and the Senior Executive Team meeting in person in the Conference Room and all other participants by video conference.

The Board Chair welcomed Ms Sweeney, Head of HR and Ms Montgomery, Acting Director of Operations to their first Board meeting since their appointment to the Senior Executive Team. The Board Chair welcomed Ms Grant, AD Programmes & Interventions, as an observer to the meeting and trusted that she would find it interesting.

The closed session scheduled for the end of this meeting was no longer required.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were recorded from Mr Bodger, Member; Dr Donaldson, Member; Mr Douglas, Member; Ms Keenan, Member.

3. MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING HELD ON THE 23 APRIL 2021 (M04/21)

The minutes of the Board Meeting held on Friday 23 April 2021 were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES (PAPER 44/21)

The Board Chair confirmed all actions had been completed.

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 number of meetings were starting to increase as the lockdown eases. He had had a number of meetings with Ms Kane, from 'Headstogether', on the Chief Executive's recruitment process. Members were informed that the Board Chair had an introductory meeting with the Head of HR. He had also attended the CRC meeting on 30 April 2021.

With reference to the letter received from the Minister on the extension of this Board's tenure by three months, the Board Chair advised that there was no confirmation of the extension to date. He advised that the Board would continue to work towards November as being the end of this Board's tenure.

The Board noted the update

6. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S UPDATE

The Board Chair invited the Chief Executive to update the Board on developments since the last Board meeting.

The Chief Executive referred to correspondence received from Mr Peter May, DOJ's Permanent Secretary, on the Northern Ireland Audit Office's (NIAO) intention to carry out an audit on Adult Re-offending. She provided background into the audit and advised that it would not solely be looking at NIPS and Probation. The Terms of Reference should be available in July. She wished to give members early warning of the upcoming audit.

The Board noted the update.

7. CORRESPONDENCE (PAPER 45/21)

There were two items of correspondence to note.

7.1 Response received from Dr Harrison re 2019/20 – Pay Remit

7.2 Email received by the Chief Executive from Mr May reference NIAO : Adult reoffending

Item 7.1 was a response from Dr Harrison on the subject of the Pay Remit. The Chief Executive advised that the Economists in DOJ had some queries, which the Head of

Finance had answered on the day. The turnaround for the DOJ is expected to be 15 days but the Head of Finance hoped that a response would be received sooner than that.

Item 7.2 was discussed under item 6 of this agenda above.

The Board noted the correspondence.

8. MANAGEMENT INFORMATION PAPER QUARTERLY UPDATE (PAPER 46/21)

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

The Acting Director of Operations advised that there had been one Serious Further Offence to report since the last Board and she provided details of the case.

The Director of Rehabilitation provided an update on the Covid arrangements for the Organisation as laid out in the paper. The Members noted that the Organisation had moved to phase two of the Recovery Plan on 26 April 2021, which allowed more clients to be seen; brief Interventions to take place in offices; and indoor Community Service placements to reopen (where 2 m social distancing requirements may be met).

- The Director of Rehabilitation reported on the Communications and Engagement activities, as laid out in the paper. She advised that since the last Board meeting, a response had been sent to a consultation from the Department for Communities on a new Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for NI.

The Head of HR provided an update on HR and attendance. The Pay Remit issue has been covered under agenda item 6 of this meeting. The Head of HR reported that there was no update on the NILGOSC legal challenge. Members were provided with a summary of the Sickness Absence Report for the year of 2020/21. The target for 2021/22 is to maintain and reduce absence with short-term absence being a particular focus. The Wellbeing initiative continues to be organised by the Health & Safety Department.

The Head of Finance provided an update on the Covid 19 related work. She also informed members that the two properties, which had been agreed for sale previously, are back on the market. One of them has been agreed again. An update on the key business cases and lease business cases were as laid out in the paper.

The Board noted the paper.

9. BOARD SECRETARY'S BUSINESS

The Board Secretary advised members that the target was to return to face-to-face meetings. He will be taking a proposal to the Committee Chairs Working Group on the way forward and then presenting the proposal to the June Board. The expectation is to hold the CRC meeting on 30 July 2021 as a 'hybrid' meeting with attendees in the conference room in North Street and participation by those who wished to by video conferencing. It is also intended to hold the PPC on 6 August 2021 in Shipquay Street, again using a hybrid method. Members were assured that the facility of joining meetings via video conferencing will remain.

The Board Secretary extended an invitation to non-PPC members to join the PPC meeting on 28 May 2021 when Mr Anthony Harbinson of the DOJ will provide an update on Problem Solving Justice initiatives.

9.1 Board Work Plan 2021/22 (Paper 47/21)

The Board Secretary advised that the focus of the Work Plan was to ensure that all work is concluded by November 2021. If the Board's tenure is extended, then the Work Plan will be revised accordingly.

The Board noted the paper,

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

Mr Murray, Committee Member, provided members with a summary of the meeting held on 7 May 2021. He advised that there were three papers coming to the Board for approval and two papers for noting. Performance against objectives was noted as all being 'green'. The Cyber Security Audit received a 'satisfactory' assurance with no recommendations made. It was noted that this was the final Internal Audit report of the 2020/21 year. The ECMS has been fully implemented and Internal Audit are due to carry out a follow up audit. Significant progress has been made against the CJI (NI)'s recommendations Action Plan. There were no fraud or losses reported and the Audit Control Log was satisfactory.

10.1 Q4 Strategic Risk Register (SRR) 2020/21 (Paper 48/21)

The Committee Chair advised that the Committee had discussed the Q4 SRR report and agreed to recommend approval to the Board. Following a discussion at the CRC on Risk 3 (Health & Safety) remaining on the SRR, the Interim Chief Executive agreed to advise the ARAC of the CRC's suggestion that the risk can be covered by the Departmental Risk Register. If the Risk became a matter of concern then it may be escalated to the SRR again.

The Board approved the Q4 Strategic Risk Register 2020/21.

10.2 Draft Strategic Risk Register (SRR) 2021/22 (Paper 49/21)

The Committee discussed the draft SRR 2021/22. The 'Finance' Risk has been raised to 'red' in the 2021-22 draft SRR due to the consequences arising from one-year budgets. The revised wording adequately reflects the risk. There were two risks with a 'red' rating, which is appropriate in the circumstances. The Committee agreed to recommend approval of the SRR to the Board.

The Board approved the Draft Strategic Risk Register 2021/22.

10.3 Draft Annual Report and Accounts to review (Paper 50/21)

The draft Annual Report and Accounts was discussed by the ARAC at its meeting on 7 May 2021. The Head of Finance advised the Board that the financial position remains unchanged at 0.5% underspend. The Auditors are progressing through their audit with no issues raised at this stage. Following a full discussion, the Committee agreed to recommend approval of the Draft Annual Report and Accounts to the Board. The Head of Finance asked members if they had comments on the Draft Accounts to contact her before the next meeting scheduled for 18 June 2021.

Action: Board Members to provide any comments on the Draft Account to the Head of Finance before 18 June 2021. (Board Members)

The Board Chair congratulated the Head of Finance and her team on the 0.5% underspend of budget.

The Board approved the Draft Annual Accounts for 2020/21.

10.4 Pension Valuations and Assumptions (Paper 51/21)

The Head of Finance provided a summary of the paper for members. She advised that the overall reduction was due to loss in the pension discount rate. Probation's age demographic is that of more people coming up to pension age. There is a £9.5m increase in the pension liability. Internal control issues were highlighted to the auditors to ensure that actuarial report is reported in the Annual Accounts, The Board was asked to note the paper.

The Board noted the paper on Pension Valuations and Assumptions.

10.5 Revised PBNI Audit Strategy (Paper 52/21)

The Head of Finance advised that the External Auditors provided a Revised Audit Strategy. It was noted that three significant risks and a number of other risk factors had been identified. These other risk factors do not represent a likelihood of risk or a material misstatement in the financial statements but are matters that will continue to be monitored and responded to as appropriate throughout the audit.

The Board noted the Revised Audit Strategy.

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

Mrs Gillespie, Committee Chair, provided the Board with a summary of the CRC meeting held on 30 April 2021.

The Committee discussed the SRR with a number of actions coming out of the discussion. The Director of Operations will take these actions forward. The Committee commented on the risk of one year funding and the issues of this with the notified NIAO audit on Adult Re-offending.

The CJI (NI) actions under the remit of the CRC were confirmed as being closed. The words of 'comfort' received from the Department about the pressure on the capital budget being addressed at the June Monitoring round were welcomed. The Committee reviewed the Estates and Business Cases and noted that lessons were learnt from the pandemic about staff working remotely, which had been factored into the Estates Strategy.

The Sickness Absence Report for April 2021 and Year-end Absence for 2020/21 were discussed. The Committee noted that 76.5% of staff did not have any sick leave during the year and they should be acknowledged.

The Committee received a comprehensive update on the implementation of the IT Strategy from the Head of IT.

It is envisaged that the next CRC meeting will be a hybrid meeting but no member should feel under pressure to attend in person as the option of video conference will be available.

The Board noted the update and Sick Absence reports presented.

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

Mr Wall, Committee Chair, advised that there had not been a meeting of the Committee since the last Board meeting. The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled for 28 May

2021. As previously advised Mr Harbinson of the DOJ will be attending the meeting to provide an update on Problem Solving Justice, the Committee Chair would encourage members to attend for this item. He suggested that the Board could discuss operating on 'pilots' and short term funding at its next meeting.

The Board noted the update.

13. OTHER BUSINESS

The Board Chair made a presentation to Ms Lamont on behalf of the Board for her retirement.

The next meeting of the Board will be 18 June 2021 via WebEx. The meeting will commence at 10.30 am after the ARAC meeting.

D Ashford QFSM , Board Chair

Date