

PROBATION BOARD FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

BOARD MEETING – FRIDAY 23 APRIL 2021

9.30 AM – WEBEX VIDEO CONFERENCE

433rd MEETING – 29th OF THE TWELFTH TERM OF OFFICE

ATTENDANCE

Mr D Ashford, Chair
Mr N Bodger
Dr J Byrne
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
Ms C Teggart, Head of Finance
Ms G McGreevy, Head of Communications (Items 1 – 8)
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 members that May's Board meeting would be the last Board meeting for the Chief Executive before her retirement. He wished her well for the future and thanked her for her work for Probation and the wider criminal justice system.

Members were advised that there would be a closed session at the end of this meeting.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were recorded from Mrs Robinson, Head of HR

3. MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING HELD ON THE 19 MARCH 2021 (M03/21)

The minutes of the Board Meeting held on Friday 19 March 2021 were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES (PAPER 38/21)

The Board Chair confirmed that the action had been completed. Action 1 is included under 7.1 of this meeting's agenda. There were no other outstanding actions.

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 he had sat on the interview panel for the replacement position of Head of HR. He wished to thank Mr Donaghy for also participating in the process. Catherine Sweeney has been appointed.

The Board Chair advised that he had written to Dr Harrison of the DOJ and followed up the letter with a telephone call. He confirmed that the 'pay remit' business case has now been sent to DOF.

Ms J Kane of 'Headstogether' will be the external HR provider running the process for the Chief Executive post.

The Board Chair, the Board Secretary and Head of HR had attended a meeting with the Trade Unions. The main item of discussion was the Pay Remit issue. The Board Chair was able to advise that the DOJ had now approved the business case.

The results of the Culture Survey will come to the Board

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 wished to record her congratulations to Mr Hamill who will be taking over as the interim CEO after her retirement. She advised that Catherine Sweeney had been appointed to the post of Head of HR; she comes to Probation with extensive experience from a background in local councils and the private sector. An induction programme has been put in place and Ms Sweeney will be attending the next Board in May. Ms Gillian Montgomery has been appointed to the post of acting Director of Operations as backfill for Mr Hamill. The Chief Executive thanked Mr Murray for chairing the interview panel for this post. Interviews for AD to backfill Ms Montgomery's post will take place next week.

The Head of Finance provided an update on the Terms & Conditions review. She had met with officials who agreed to the direction of travel as set out in the outline business case. Work can now progress on the substantive business case.

The Director of Operations provided an update on the proposed change of legislation, which would remove Probation from the management of TPMOs. It will be laid before the Assembly under the negative resolution process. If there is no substantive challenge it will come into law in June 2021. The Unions have been advised that the new arrangements for managing TPMOs will commence in September 2021.

The Director of Operations and Director of Rehabilitation met with Mr Harbinson and Mr Capper of the DOJ on the continuing use of the ECOs as a pilot with the inherent equality risks of doing so. Members discussed the economics of Problem Solving Justice and if the DOJ had undertaken a Section 75 screening of the continued use of the pilot. Screening could not be confirmed. Members were informed that Probation had made the Department aware of their concerns about the potential equality issues.

The Board Chair commented that there had been good progress made on Probation's role in the management of TPMOs and this was welcome. The Chief Executive reported that Mr Hamill will continue to lead on this matter after her retirement. The Board Chair also noted the process made on the review of Terms & Conditions.

The Board noted the update.

7. CORRESPONDENCE (PAPER 39/21)

There were two items of correspondence to note.

7.1 Letter from Board Chair to Dr J Harrison re PBNI Pay Remit 2019/20

7.2 Letter from the Chief Executive to Mr A Harbinson re Rollout of PSJ Initiatives

The Members were briefed on each item presented, the Board noted the correspondence.

8. COVID 19 UPDATE (VERBAL)

The Director of Rehabilitation and Head of Communications provided an update on the Recovery Plan and communication activity for the information of staff.

Members were advised that the Organisation would be moving to phase 2 of the Recovery Plan on 26 April 2021. In preparing staff for returning to their workplace, a video has been produced to show the office environment and the changes that have been made to provide assurance to staff. The survey conducted in December continues to be used and the next issue of the Probation News will have an article on the learning points from the survey.

Weekly communications to staff continues as do the contact with the DOJ.

A member asked if there had been any impact on Service Users not having face-to-face appointments. The Director of Operations advised that within the Recovery Plan returning to Home Visits and face-to-face appointments are included in the recovery plan's timeline.

Prisons have now two members of staff each day working on a rota basis.

The Board noted the update.

9. MANAGEMENT INFORMATION PAPER QUARTERLY UPDATE (PAPER 40/21)

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

The Director of Operation advised that there had been two Serious Further Offences to report since the last Board. He provided details of the cases.

Members were advised that at its last meeting, the Project Board has closed the ECMS project as the plan has been completed. The Head of IT will report on the delivery of the IT Strategy each quarter.

The Director of Rehabilitation reported on the Communications and Engagement activities, as laid out in the paper. She commented that officials continue to receive and respond to consultation requests.

The Director of Rehabilitation provided a summary of the Q3 2020/21 statistics. She highlighted that females represent one in ten on the current caseload which is a decrease of 23% on the previous year. The age profile of the caseload continues to be monitored. Lockdown due to Covid has had an effect on PBNI, NIPS and PSNI statistics. There has been a decrease of 47% in new Orders compared to last year; recorded crime is down by 9.8%; and the remand population now accounts for 40% of the prison population. The paper reported on Complaints, Requests for Information and Legal Cases for the period of January – March 2021. It was noted that Judicial Reviews continues to remain high at 15 cases.

The Human Resources update was noted as laid out in the paper, as was the Health and Safety report.

The Head of Finance provided an update on the Covid 19 related work. Regarding the sale of the two properties that had fallen through, one is back on the market and one is agreed for sale. An update on business cases was as laid out in the paper.

The Board noted the paper.

10. BOARD SECRETARY'S BUSINESS

The Board Secretary reminded members of the ARAC to return the Customer Satisfaction Survey to the Head of Internal Audit by the 30 April 2021.

10.1 Board Work Plan 2020/21 and Board Annual Accounts Report (41/21)

The Work Plan for 2020/21 is a factual summary of the work completed by the Board and Committees during the year; this informs the Annual Accounts together with Attendance Records. The Members were asked to approve the paper.

The Board approved the paper.

10.2 Board Work Plan 2021/22 (Paper 42/21)

The Board Secretary advised that the focus of the Work Plan was to ensure that all work is concluded by November 2021. This includes the approval of committees' minutes at the November Board meeting.

The Board noted the paper,

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

Mr Bodger, Committee Chair, informed members that there had not been a meeting of the Committee since the last Board meeting and he confirmed that there were no emerging issues to bring to the Board's attention. The next meeting of the Committee is 7 May 2021.

The Board noted the update.

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

Mrs Gillespie, Committee Chair, informed members that there had not been a meeting of the Committee since the last Board meeting and there were no emerging issues to bring to the Board's attention. The next meeting of the Committee is 30 April 2021.

The Board noted the update.

12.1 Financial Outturn – March 2021 (Paper 43/21)

The Head of Finance advised that this was a provisional outturn for the year and the Finance team are currently working on the year-end accounts and adjustments. She took members through the potential underspend and overspend within the report. The sale of two properties falling through had caused pressures in capital expenditure, although the Department has confirmed that additional funding will be covered by the Department to cover the net capital pressure of £121k.

The Head of Finance provided an update on the 2021/22 budget, advising that funding had been received for Covid related spending and funding has also been confirmed for the 'Aspire' and 'Engage' programmes. A bid for additional funding to cover the remaining pressure of £650k in respect of staff costs will be made at the June 2021 Monitoring Round.

The Capital budget allocated is sufficient to allow the planned works to proceed.

Prompt payment performance has returned to being on target.

A member congratulated the Finance Team on their management of the budget

The Board noted the paper.

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

Mr Wall, Committee Chair, informed members that there had not been a meeting of the Committee since the last Board meeting and he confirmed that there were no emerging issues to bring to the Board's attention. The next meeting of the Committee is 28 May 2021. Members were advised that Mr Anthony Harbinson of the DOJ will be attending the May meeting to provide an update on the rollout of Problem Solving Justice initiatives. Mr Wall advised that he and the Director of Rehabilitation would meet prior to the meeting to discuss economics and equality issues.

The Board noted the update.

14. OTHER BUSINESS

Mrs Gillespie asked if office visits could be scheduled into the Recovery Plan. The Chief Executive advised that it would be premature for Board Members to carry out office visits until further into the Recovery stage. However if the Board Chair and Board Members were content, she would discuss with the Board Secretary to see if some of the bigger offices at Shipquay Street, L&D Ballymena and the Conference Room at Headquarters could host some Committee meetings. It was agreed that some suggestions would be put forward at the next Board meeting and it would also be for the Board Secretary to agree with members their preference with regards to joining the meetings which may entail attending in person or remotely.

Action: Chief Executive and Board Secretary to discuss and inform at next Board Meeting

The Board Chair thanked the officials for their papers and everyone for attending the meeting.

The next meeting of the Board will be 21 May 2021 via WebEx.

D Ashford QFSM , Board Chair

Date