

PROBATION BOARD FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

**BOARD MEETING – FRIDAY 22 APRIL 2022**

**9.30 AM – VIA VIDEO CONFERENCING**

**444<sup>th</sup> MEETING – 2<sup>nd</sup> OF THE THIRTEENTH TERM OF OFFICE**

ATTENDANCE

Mr M Murray, Chair  
Ms M Brunt  
Dr J Byrne  
Mr K Donaghy  
Mr B Ingram  
Mr J Johnston (Presentation)  
Dr M Keady  
Ms A Lloyd-Stevens  
Ms C Magee  
Ms B Mongan  
Ms E Patterson

Ms D Gilchrist, Boardroom Apprentice

OFFICIALS

Ms A Stewart, Chief Executive  
Ms G Montgomery, A/Director of Operations  
Dr G O’Hare, A/Director of Rehabilitation  
Ms G McGreevy, Head of Communications  
Mr P King, Head of Finance & Estates  
Ms D Grant, Area Manager (Item 1)  
Mr M Cox, Board Secretary  
Mrs W Rodgers, Secretariat (Minutes)

The meeting opened with the Board Chair welcoming Ms Grant, Area Manager, to the meeting who presented on the work of the Performance and Practice Review Unit (PPRU).

Ms Grant provided background into why the Unit had been set up and its aims. Areas that the Unit has focused on are assessment, pre-sentence reports, and case planning with attention to collective learning and victim issues. Areas of learning have been identified particularly in relation to the management of Risk of Harm cases i.e. those that fall below the SROSH threshold and Serious Further Offences (SFOs). The area of GDPR and consent has been highlighted from the point of sharing information with other agencies. The Unit has engaged with staff and has taken their comments into account moving forward.

The Board Chair thanked Ms Grant for providing reassurance that staff, performance, Standards and practice improvement are being addressed in a supportive way. The management of risk is important and it is everyone’s business. It is right to push the boundaries and addressing the risk of GDPR . The Board Chair thanked Ms Grant for her impressive presentation and opened the floor to questions.

There was a full and in-depth discussion and questions. Members commented that it was an excellent presentation with an emphasis on of continuous improvement and gatekeeping in respect of the 'why' and 'what' risks require to be addressed here are.

The Chief Executive thanked Ms Grant and her team for the value they are providing to the Organisation. The work of the PPRU links to the CJINI report with the follow up inspection being carried out to ensure that the recommendation made are being acted upon.

Ms Grant invited members to visit the PPRU team and the Board thanked Ms Grant for her presentation.

## **1. WELCOME, OPENING REMARKS AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

The Board Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised that this meeting was being held by video conferencing in accordance with the well-established practice. He made reference to Ms Grants presentation and recorded his thanks to her. Members were advised that there would be a short closed session at the end of the formal meeting. He emphasised that now the majority of members had received their secure tablets, correspondence will be via probation email to ensure GDPR guidance is met.

There were no conflicts of interest advised. A quorum was confirmed.

## **2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were recorded from Mrs C Sweeney, Head of HR & OD and Ms D Gilchrist, Board Apprentice. Mr Barnes sent his regrets that he was unable to attend the meeting.

## **3. MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING HELD ON THE 25 MARCH 2022 (M04/22)**

The minutes of the Board Meeting held on Friday 25 March 2022 were approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting. Dr Keady proposed approval and Ms Mongan seconded. The minutes were approved by the Board.

## **4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES (PAPER 38/22)**

The Board Chair advised that there were no actions recorded from the meeting held on 25 March 2022. It was also noted that there were no 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 and the Chief Executive met with the Permanent Secretary when they discussed the challenges in the year ahead, the stability of the Executive and budget pressures. The Permanent Secretary commented on 'getting on with business', accountability, delivering the service and ensuing accountability at all levels. The meeting was on day two of the Permanent Secretary's day in post and the Board Chair looks forward to good working relations going forward.

The Board Chair met with the representative of NAPO which, he advised, was a positive meeting. The Representative commented of the reassurance and feedback from members and the changes seen since the Chief Executive had come into post. Pay Modernisation continues to be the main issue with NAPO members. A meeting with the NIPSA representative has been arranged.

Jacqui Durkin, Chief Inspector of Criminal Justice in Northern Ireland, visited the office for an update meeting with the Board Chair. She reinforced the messages around the 2020 inspection report.

Board induction will continue and a programme of visits will be arranged for Board Members to visit offices and departments so they can be more familiar with the work of the Organisation.

The Board Chair advised that in the Autumn there will be a Board Effectiveness Review when members will have been on the Board for 6 months.

The Board noted the update.

## 6. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S UPDATE

The Chief Executive provided a paper by way of an update on meetings, visits and key issues since the last Board meeting highlighting a number of points.

Pay differential continues to be the single biggest issue with staff and retention of staff is a significant risk. The Chief Executive has had a number of constructive meetings with the Community and Voluntary Sector, understanding the key issues impacting on other organisations and the benefits of joint working, allowing for recognising difficulties at an early stage. The Chief Executive and the A/Director of Operations attended a meeting with the DOJ and HMPPS on a review of the arrangements in place for managing Terrorist Related Offenders (TRO) since the change in legislation in September 2021 when the function moved to England.

There are two Judicial Reviews now listed for hearing mid May 2022 and a brief is awaited. The Chief Executive will update the Board at its next meeting. It was agreed that the Board should get an in-depth briefing to get a sense of the issues and impact going forward from the DOJ and HMPPS. The Chief Executive provided background into why the management of TRO had been moved from PBNI to England.

**Action: Chief Executive to update the Board on Judicial Reviews at the next Board Meeting (Chief Executive)**

**Action: The Board to receive a briefing to get a sense of the issues and impact going forward from the DOJ and HMPPS**

There was discussion on risks and the Risk Register. The A/Director of Operations advised that a newly formatted Register (RR) will be presented to the ARAC at its meeting 6 May and then brought to the next Board meeting to get input and challenge from the Board.

**Action: The slides on governance used at the SLT Development Day on Governance / Risk Management to be circulated to members. (Secretariat)**

**Action: presentation by Steve Mungavin to be arranged for the Board before the summer. (Secretariat)**

The Chief Executive informed the Board that she had also attended a refresher course for Accounting Officers.

The Board noted the update.

**7. CORRESPONDENCE (PAPER 39/22)**

There were two items of correspondence to note.

7.1 Letter received by the Chief Executive on Historical Institutional Redress Board

7.2 Chief Executive's reply to the Historical Institutional Redress Board

The Chief Executive advised that the correspondence is being brought to the Board so it is aware of the request and has sight of the reply sent. The Chief Executive advised that there is no record of the hostel referred to in the letter in any of PBNI's records and we do not believe that PBNI had any responsibility for this institution.

The Board noted the correspondence.

**8. MANAGEMENT INFORMATION PAPER UPDATE (PAPER 30/21)**

The Board Chair invited the Officials to summarise the Report for members.

The Head of Finance & Estates advised that the key highlights on the budget 2022/23 will be covered under agenda item 11.1. He advised that the base line budget is equivalent to the 2021/22 opening budget. It was noted that all pressures, including inflationary costs will be managed within the envelope however no new programmes are to be started.

A Capital Budget has not been provided to date but it is anticipated that monies will be available for contractual commitments and routine capital maintenance programs.

An update was provided on Estates with the current situation of the Dungannon and Armagh Offices advised.

The Head of Finance & Estates provided an update on legal cases as noted in the paper.

The Chief Executive provided a summary of the Human Resources update.

Mr Donaghy asked what the role of the Board would be in the Project and Implementation of Pay Modernisation. The Chief Executive invited Mr Donaghy to participate the Project Board. Mr Donaghy confirmed that he was happy to do this.

Attention was drawn to 5.4 of the update on staff recruitment. The Chief Executive explained the risks and challenges at present when recruiting. Following discussion, it was agreed that the CRC would discuss recruitment in detail.

**Action: CRC to discuss recruitment challenges and risks at its next meeting (CRC)**

The A/Director of Operations advised members that the Risk Register had been reviewed in detail and a new format will be brought to the ARAC at its meeting on 6 May 2022 for consideration and then onwards to the Board for approval.

The A/Director of Rehabilitation advised that PBNI continues to operate within Phase 3 of the Covid Recovery Plan and continues to respond to the NI Executive guidelines. The plan for Hybrid working is currently out for consultation with staff and the Organisation continues to work towards the hybrid method of working. The A/Director of Rehabilitation also provided an update on Court Reports, Business Plan Q4, Mental Health and Domestic Homicide Reviews, as detailed in the paper. Members were advised of Professor Siobhan O'Neill's input as Mental Health Champion and her work on Mental Health Strategy. It was suggested that Professor O'Neill should be invited to a Board meeting to give an update on her work.

**Action: Professor O'Neill to be invited to a future Board meeting (Secretariat)**

The A/Director of Operations provided an update on the Operations Directorate. Members were provided with information on the Criminal Justice Inspectorate (NI); Public Protection Arrangements in N Ireland; Service User Involvement and Serious Further Offences. Members were informed that there will be a joint CJINI and RQIA inspection on Child Protection with the Terms of Reference expected early summer and fieldwork in September. PBNI's involvement is likely to be with parents rather than children. The Board will be kept informed of the status of the inspection.

There was one Serious Further Offences to report in this period. Members were provided with details for the case.

The Head of Communications provided details of internal and external communications, highlighting a number of events. The Chief Executive continues to meet with staff informally and there has been positive feedback from staff. The Chief Executive carried out an interview with 'Agenda NI' providing an insight into Probation and her vision for the Organisation, it also received positive feedback. The Communications Department continue to co-ordinate a number of initiatives to recognize the Organisation's 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

Members were advised of seven low risk data incidents from January to date. Members were assured that staff continue to be supported with information and guidance to prevent data incidents. In response to a question from a member, the Members were advised of the types of incidents that have taken place.

It was noted that 'sickness absence' has started to increase, it was informed that the previous Board had spent some time discussing the area of absence. It was suggested that the Head of HR & OD should present a paper for the next Board, the Board agreed to this.

**Action: A report on 'sickness absence' to be presented to the next Board meeting. (Head of HR & OD).**

The Board noted the paper.

## **9. BOARD SECRETARY'S BUSINESS**

### **9.1 Board Submission to the Annual Report & Accounts (Paper 42/22)**

The Board Secretary advised members that the presented paper was a factual account of the work carried out by the Board and Committees during the financial year 2021/22. The submission also details the attendance of members at Board and Committees as required for the report. Board Secretary advised that the completed draft report will be brought to ARAC for scrutiny and to Board for approval. The Board was asked to note the paper.

The Board noted the paper.

#### **9.2 Board Work Plan 2022/23 (Paper 43/22)**

The Board Secretary advised that the work plan covered the financial year 2022-2023 and provided information on the work of Committees and Board. The Work Plan ensures that the Committees and Board have forward notice of their work going forward and the Plan works on the principal of no surprises

The Board noted the paper.

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

The Board Chair advised that there has not been a meeting of the ARAC since the last Board meeting. Mr Bodger is returning as the Chair of the Committee. The next meeting is scheduled for the 6 May 2022 when the main business will be the Draft Annual Report and Account for 2021/22

The Board noted the update.

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

The Board Chair advised that there has not been a meeting of the CRC since the last Board meeting. Mr Johnston has been appointed as Chair of the Committee. The next meeting is scheduled for the 10 June 2022.

The Board noted the update.

#### **11.1 Financial Outturn Report – Draft March 2022 (Paper 44/22)**

The Head of Finance and Estates advised that the provisional outturn position, as stated in the paper provided, is likely to change but not significantly. He is waiting for the information on pensions from the actuaries. Members were advised that the total resource DEL expenditure for the 2021/22 year was £749k or 3.3% under budget. The reasons for this were explained in the paper provided. The change in forecast from the February's positing now shows an easement of £650k. Capital underspend is sizeable at £834k and the paper details the reasons for this. Some projects planned for 2021/22 will be bid for in the new financial year. Members were advised that Prompt Payment Performance Targets had improved significantly and were back to the target levels.

The Board noted the paper.

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

The Board Chair advised that there has not been a meeting of the PPC since the last Board meeting. Dr Byrne has been appointed as Chair of the PPC. The next meeting is scheduled for the 20 May 2022.

The Board noted the update.

**13. OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business discussed or reported

The meeting ended at 11.55 am.

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Mr Max Murray CBE  
Board Chair

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Date