

PROBATION BOARD FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

BOARD MEETING – TUESDAY 24 JANUARY 2023

9.30 AM – CRUMLIN ROAD GAOL

452nd MEETING – 10th OF THE THIRTEENTH TERM OF OFFICE

ATTENDANCE

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

OFFICIALS

Ms A Stewart, Chief Executive
Ms G Montgomery, Director of Operations (CC)
Mr S Hamilton, Director of Operations (PPPP)
Mr P King, Head of Finance & Estates
Ms G McGreevy, Head of Communications
Mrs C Sweeney, Head of HR & OD
Mrs W Rodgers, Secretariat (Minutes)
Ms A Carlisle, Secretariat

Guests

Senior Leadership Team

1. WELCOME, OPENING REMARKS AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The Board Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting which was being held in the Crumlin Road Gaol. The Board Chair welcomed Ms Somerville, Head of IT and Ms Loughran, Assistant Director to their first Board meeting. He congratulated Ms Loughran on her appointment to Assistant Director.

The Board Chair set out the schedule for the day. The formal Board Meeting will be followed by the Board Development Day.

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

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were recorded from Mr Bodger, Board Member; Dr Byrne, Board Member; Mrs Crothers, Boardroom Apprentice and Mr Barnes, who has currently stepped aside as a Board Member.

3. MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING HELD ON THE 16 DECEMBER 2022 (M12/22)

The minutes of the Board Meeting held on Friday 16 December 2022 were approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

The minutes were approved by the Board.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES (PAPER 01/23)

The Board Chair advised that there were two actions from December's Board Meeting. Both actions were confirmed as completed.

There are no other outstanding actions.

The Board noted the paper.

5. BOARD CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Board Chair advised on his events and meetings attended since the last Board. He advised that he and the Chief Executive had met with the Permanent Secretary for the Annual Accountability Review Meeting. Members were provided with a summary of the meeting and the areas of business discussed. Among the topics discussed were funding, the Pay Modernisation Outline Business Case (OBC) and the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) draft Corporate Plan for 2023-26. The Permanent Secretary suggested the Board reconsider the outcome for the resources priority and consider the potential to review the PBNI Estate.

The Board noted the update.

6. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S UPDATE

The Chief Executive updated the Board on key engagements and issues since the last Board meeting.

The Corporate Plan has been further developed by the Senior Leadership Team in advance of the Board Development Day to include indicators/measures and actions to support achievement of the outcomes.

The Lord Mayor of Belfast visited PBNI Headquarters and met with a group of staff and had the opportunity to meet with staff and service users involved in the Belfast Graffiti Removal Scheme.

The Chief Executive and Head of Communications also met with Women's Aid following on from a visit to PBNI to meet staff as part of the 16 days of action in December 2022. The Chief Executive has agreed to input to a Bar Library Seminar on the new Domestic Abuse legislation and the meeting was a useful opportunity to discuss other areas to work together in the future.

The Chief Executive also met with the new social work student cohort on placement with PBNI and attended the staff induction day at Ballymena. All staff and the students were very positive about the support and opportunities for development that they are receiving. The Chief Executive also advised that she had attended office visits and will be visiting offices in a more informal basis in the time ahead.

The Chief Executive has also asked Policy Practice and Research Unit (PPRU) to provide support in preparation of the CJINI follow up inspection of Probation Practice which is likely to take place later this year.

On key issues the Chief Executive advised that the Head of HR & OD is evaluating the hybrid working pilot and a report and recommendations will be developed and brought to Senior Leadership Team and Board in due course. The budget for PBNI next year remains a key issue and planning work continues on different options. A paper on the roll-out of Enhanced Combination Orders (ECOs) was discussed with the Corporate Resources Committee (CRC) to seek views in advance of further discussion with the Department of Justice (DOJ).

The draft Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) report on Adult Re-offending has been received from the DOJ Permanent Secretary with a request for a factual accuracy check to be provided to NIAO. An update would be provided in due course, although it is expected that publication is planned in the Spring 2023.

Action: Members to be provided with further details of the NIAO Inspection of Adult Re-offending in due course (Chief Executive).

The Board Secretary's post has been advertised. Both the Board Chair and Deputy Chair will be part of the recruiting panel. The recruitment will be processed as quickly as possible.

The Chief Executive invited the Director of Operation (CC) to provide the members with an update on Short Reports and deviations from Standards. Discussions with courts on short reports has been positive and it is planned to run a pilot from February 2023. Also, deviations from Standards continues to be monitored.

The Chief Executive invited the Director of Operations (PPPP) to provide members with an update of ongoing discussions with DOJ Reducing Offending Directorate and Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) on the Service Level Agreement between PBNI and NIPS. He provided context around the Prison, Probation model and how it is currently working. The PCNI reports were also discussed. Members discussed the media coverage of the English Probation Service and the challenge around maintaining experienced staff working in probation.

The Head of Communications provided a presentation on the development of the Corporate Plan. Members were advised that the focus for next year will be more concentrated around internal themes and local engagement. A staff conference/development day has been arranged to cover trauma issues with staff, all staff and Board Members have been invited to attend.

The Board noted the update.

7. CORRESPONDENCE (PAPER 2/23)

There were three items of correspondence to note, all related to correspondence with the Chair of NIHE.

- 7.1 Letter sent by the Board Chair to Ms Lappin (Chair of the NIHE) requesting a meeting
- 7.2 Letter sent by Ms Lappin in reply to the Board Chair's letter
- 7.3 Letter sent by the Board Chair to Ms Lappin as a follow up

The Board noted the Correspondence.

8. BOARD BUSINESS

The Board Chair advised members of a change to committee membership. It is proposed that Mr Ingram will take up position as Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) from the 1 February 2023 and step down from membership of the CRC. Mr Bodger will step down from ARAC and join the CRC as a member, also from the 1 February 2023. The Chair thanked Mr Bodger for his support and commitment as chair of ARAC for several years.

The Members were asked to ratify the changes. The Board agreed to the proposed changes to membership of ARAC and CRC.

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

The Deputy Committee Chair advised that there had not been a meeting since the last Board Meeting and there are no papers to be brought to this Board. He advised that there were no emerging issues to report as a concern. The next meeting is scheduled for 3 February 2023.

The Board noted the update.

10. COMMITTEE CHAIR'S UPDATE – CORPORATE RESOURCES COMMITTEE (CRC)

10.1 Committee Chairs Update (Verbal)

The Committee Chair provided members with a summary of the CRC meeting held on 20 January 2023. He advised that there were several important papers which are listed on the agenda of this meeting. The main actions from the previous meeting were on the Pay Modernisation Outline Business Case (OBC) which had been actioned. The Committee Chair also invited the Head of HR & OD to provide members with an update on the progress of the OBC. Members were informed that the OBC was submitted at the end of November with some queries coming back from DOJ. Responses to the queries have been returned and the Head of HR & OD advised that there were no major issues identified at this stage.

The Committee Chair advised that the Committee supported the proposal for a further roll-out of ECOs was that it should be progressed with caution pending further detail on the future financial position, with timing of submitting the proposal being critical.

The Director of Operations (CC) provided an update on Strategic Risks. The Committee agreed that Risk 1 was of particular concern.

The Head of Health & Safety provided the Committee with a presentation on the Well-being Strategy. It was an informative and impressive presentation. The Committee Chair requested that it be brought to a future Board meeting. There was an update on the Culture Strategy. Sick Absence continues to be a concern; however, the Committee were satisfied that HR and managers are managing this in line with the policies.

Action: Well-being presentation to be brought to Board (Secretariat)

The Director of Operations (PPPP) presented a useful paper on development of Workload Measurement Guidance for PBNi operational staff.

Finally, the Committee Chair thanked Mr Ingram for his input to CRC and wished him well as Chair of the ARAC.

The Board noted the update

10.2 Estates Update (Paper 03/23)

The Head of Finance & Estates drew attention to the paper, and he provided members with a high-level update. Members were advised that work is currently being carried out on the Estates Strategy, with a slight change in focus. He is looking at what we have and what we need. External input has been sought to provide advice. The Belfast Estate has issues around the state of repair of offices and the economics of bringing the buildings up to standard. The Strategy will be brought back to the Board for review

The Board noted the paper

10.3 ECO Proposal (Paper 04/23)

The Director of Operations (PPPP) provided context on the coverage of the court areas. This paper looks at rolling out of ECOs to the third area subject to DOJ approval and continuation of current funding. He advised that it had been helpful to discuss the paper at CRC before taking it to the Department. Members expressed their concern on the potential equality implications, although noted that the DOJ own the Problem-Solving Justice Strategy.

The Board noted the paper.

10.4 Financial Outturn (Paper 05/23)

The Head of Finance & Estates advised that the paper had been discussed at CRC. There has been some slippage in overspend but noting of significance to report.

The Board noted the paper.

10.5 Update on Budget Allocation (06/23)

The Head of Finance & Estate referred members to the paper. The information gathering exercise has changed direction from what was asked for. The information requested is now asking Arms-Length Bodies to provide the cost of their activities e.g., delivering services, programmes, and functions.

The Board noted the paper.

11. COMMITTEE CHAIR'S UPDATE POLICY & PRACTICE COMMITTEE (PPC)

The Deputy Committee Chair advised that there had not been a meeting since the last Board Meeting and there are no papers to be brought to this Board. She advised that there were no emerging issues to report as a concern. The next meeting is scheduled for 10 February 2023.

The Board noted the update.

12. OTHER BUSINESS

The Board Chair thanked members and officials for attending. The next Board meeting will be on 24 February 2023, PBNI Conference Room, 4th Floor at 10.00 am.

The meeting ended at 11.15 am


Mr Max Murray CBE
Board Chair


Date