

Board Meeting – 28 April 2023

PROBATION BOARD FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

BOARD MEETING – FRIDAY 24 MARCH 2023

09.30 AM – Conference Room, PBNI HQ

454th MEETING – 11th 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
Dr M Keady
Ms A Lloyd-Stevens
Mrs C Magee
Ms B Mongan
Mr J Byrne (Items 1 – 10)
Ms L Crothers
Mr N Bodger

OFFICIALS

Ms A Stewart, Chief Executive
Ms G Montgomery, Director of Operations (CC)
Mr P King, Head of Finance & Estates
Ms G McGreevy, Head of Communications
Mrs C Sweeney, Head of HR & OD
Ms J Fitzsimons, Board Secretary
Mrs A Abraham, Business Support Manager

IN ATTENDANCE

Ms M Spence, Assistant Director - Prisons

1. WELCOME, OPENING REMARKS AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The Board Chair was joining the meeting remotely. The Deputy Chair chaired the meeting in his absence. She welcomed everyone to the meeting and congratulated Ms Spence on her appointment as Assistant Director – Prisons and Ms Fitzsimons on her appointment as Board Secretary. The Deputy Chair set out the schedule for the day.

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

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were recorded from Mr Johnston, Ms Magee, Ms Crothers and Mr Hamilton.

3. MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 24 FEBRUARY 2023 (M02/23)

The minutes of the Board Meeting held on Friday 24 February 2023 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 21/23)

The Chief Executive asked Members to refer to items 1, 3 and 5 in the paper.

- 1 The Well-being presentation will be brought to a future Board after the Board's Theme Day in May.
- 2 There has been no notification on the budget from the Department.
- 3 The Board Secretary will be progressing a review of the Scheme of Delegation and bring to a future meeting.

Other items had been completed.

The Board noted the paper.

5. BOARD CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Board Chair informed Members that annual appraisals would be completed by the next meeting.

The Board Chair, Mr Hamilton, Ms McGreevy and Mrs Sweeney had attended the NI Leadership and Governance Conference on 1 March 2023. The theme was Collaboration and Creativity with various sessions on approach to risk aversion, hybrid working and complaint handling.

The Board Chair and Board Secretary will be meeting with Mark Goodfellow, Acting Director of Safer Communities, DoJ in early April to discuss policy development, governance and the suitability of PBNI being part of the Department of Communities, as is PSNI.

Discussion took place on the introduction of half hour sessions led by statutory partners at the start of each Board meeting. Members were asked to feedback to the Board Chair.

Action: Members to feedback views on pre-Board sessions

The Deputy Chair reported on the meeting of the Strategic Partnership Forum which she had attended along with other ALB representatives. A presentation on the budget process explained how NI Budgets usually mirror Westminster Budgets. However, in the past PBNI has not had a similar level of funding as mainland Probation Service. The Chief Executive advised that a one-year budget is anticipated.

The Board noted the update.

6. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S UPDATE (PAPER 22/23)

The Chief Executive updated the Board on key engagements and issues since the last Board meeting and asked Members to refer to the Paper.

Senior officials from PBNI and the Probation Service (E&W) participated in a joint senior leaders meeting. Areas for discussion included strategic priorities, challenges, blended/hybrid working, workload management and probation work in prison.

The Chief Executive co-chaired the Intergovernmental Agreement Public Protection Advisory Group on 7 March 2023 which focussed on Bail and Remand in Custody. Mr Hamilton is representing PBNI at a meeting today.

Engagement with MLAs continues. PBNI will be contributing to reviews of the Irish Probation Journal and the Reducing Offending Partnership Model. The Criminal Justice Inspection NI report on Leadership, Development and Well-being Support within the Criminal Justice System had been circulated to Members on 28 February 2023. PBNI has received the draft inspection report on PBNI Approved Premises, for factual accuracy checks. The final report will be available and circulated in the next few weeks.

The Chief Executive invited Ms Spence, Assistant Director – Prisons, to update Members on concerns raised by the Chief Commissioner, Paul Mageean, on behalf of the Parole Commissioners requesting that PBNI and NIPS take immediate action to address the recent deterioration of standards and co-operation from both organisations. Ms Spence advised that the issues identified were relating to 22 cases covering performance during the period these with NIPS / PCNI, , put in place a workload monitoring system and further December 2022 to January 2023, when there were significant reduced resources due to sick absence. Meetings with NIPS PDU Managers had taken place. It has been agreed to request holding joint workshops with the Parole Commissioners and quarterly meetings with PBNI and NIPS Managers. In addition, templates will be reviewed to prevent duplication and these will be agreed with NIPS/PCNI and include staff training for oral hearings. The SLA is also under review. The Chief Executive will be meeting with the NIPS Director General prior to updating the Chief Commissioner on actions taken.

The Board noted the update.

7. CORRESPONDENCE (PAPER 23/23)

There were three items of correspondence to note.

7.1 Letter received by Board Chair from Nicole Lappin, Chair Housing Executive NI

The Board Chair will be content to meet the Chair of the Housing Executive following the Chief Executive's meeting with Grainia Long on 31 March 2023.

7.2 Letter received by Chief Executive from Aine Morrison, Chief Social Worker, DoH

The Chief Executive had confirmed that Directors - Ms Montgomery or Mr Hamilton, will be representing PBNI at future meetings of a regular social work forum with NISCC, NIGALA, the Probation Service, the Youth Justice Agency and the Education Authority.

7.3 Letter received by the Chief Executive from NIPSA - Notice of Ballot on Industrial Action

The Chief Executive informed members that management continue to monitor any impacts.

The Board noted the Correspondence.

BOARD BUSINESS

8. MANAGEMENT OF INFORMATION REPORT (PAPER 24/23)

FINANCE AND ESTATES UPDATE

Mr King advised that there had still been no confirmation of the budget for 2023-24. He updated Members on the current position in respect of judicial reviews.

HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING & ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Mrs Sweeney informed Members that the DoJ had issued a second set of queries in respect of the Pay Modernisation Business Case. PBNI responded on 9 March 2023. The key issue of affordability remains. She confirmed that a series of constructive meetings (3.5 days) with Unions in relation to pay modernisation had been held at the beginning of March. A draft Pay Modernisation Agreement, a new set of T&Cs and a policy on Starting Pay are being progressed.

Due to the current budgetary uncertainty, all vacancies are being considered by the Chief Executive and Directors before appointments are made. Staff absence is fluctuating, mostly due to long term absence. The number of leavers has declined but may possibly rise again due to the Trusts currently advertising social work posts.

A Training Needs Analysis is currently being undertaken by senior managers to identify mandatory and developmental training in line with mandatory requirements.

PBNI's L&D staff are working with Ulster University in March and April 2023, interviewing candidates for the Social Work degree through the Admissions Process.

Mrs Sweeney confirmed business continuity plans were in place, in the event of industrial action.

DIRECTORS' UPDATES

Ms Montgomery advised that there had been no update on a timeframe for the follow up report on the CJINI inspection of Probation Practice.

Teams continue to use the approved deviations from Standards when there are vacancies or long term sickness absence or unfilled maternity leave but these remain no more than 20% of staffing levels.

There has been good feedback on piloting short adjournment reports. There may also be the possibility of introducing similar short adjournment reports for Crown court. The pilot will be evaluated in August 2023.

There are no serious offences to report.

COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

Ms McGreevy provided an update on internal and external communications. There had been a good response to the internal Communications survey (77% return). Feedback included staff requesting increased visibility of Board Members and Senior Managers in local offices and having the time to engage with others/complete surveys due to work pressures. This feedback will help inform the Communications Strategy for the next 3 years. Area Managers continue to be proactive in engaging with businesses/organisations in their locality.

There has been positive feedback from various briefings with local political representatives, PBNI's engagement with PCSPs and a visit to PBNI from Joanne Bunting, DUP MLA and Justice Spokesperson.

Social media campaigns were developed for International Women's Day and EU Victims of Crime Day.

The agenda for the PBNI Conference on 28 March 2023 will be circulated later today.

The Board noted the Paper.

9. PROPOSAL FOR THEMATIC BOARD MEETING IN MAY 2023 (PAPER 25/23)

The Chief Executive referred Members to the proposed format of the Board Theme Day: *Our People are supported through a positive and inclusive working environment to deliver an effective and stable probation service*. Three sessions had been suggested:

- 1 A view from senior leaders within the Five Nations of Probation with presentations from each representative
- 2 A presentation of the findings from the evaluation of the pilot hybrid working procedure
- 3 Engagement with Union representatives on developing culture and wellbeing support within PBNI. And / or discussion with Jacqui Durkin, CJINI on the Inspection of Leadership and Wellbeing Support within the Criminal Justice System.

Discussion ensued regarding the length/timing of each session and the proposed actions were agreed:

Action 1: Limit the format to 2 sessions, removing the session on the Hybrid Working Procedure, which will come to CRC in due course, remove the discussion with Jacqui Durkan and allow 30 minutes mop-up at the end for Board Members to discuss next steps.

Action 2: Members to feedback to the Board Chair on suggested partners/speakers for further theme days

Action 3: Jacqui Durkin to be invited to a future Board meeting following completion of the follow-up inspection

The Board approved the Paper with amendments.

10. IMPACT OF PUBLIC SECTOR POLICIES ON SUSTAINABILITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT (PAPER 26/23)

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Mr King took Members through the new legislative framework and departmental strategies impacting on public sector bodies in relation to sustainability and the environment.

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) is co-ordinating NICS Departments' response to the Climate Change Action (NI) 2022 and Public Sector Policies. There are 7 themes in DAERA's Estate Sustainability Action Plan: People, Carbon, Energy, Water, Buildings, Resources and Biodiversity, with People being the underpinning central theme.

PBNI as an ALB will set its own carbon targets but will comply with targets set generally by DAERA. Sustainability and carbon reduction will be a key theme of PBNI's Estates Strategy and PBNI Estates Programme Manager sits on the DOJ Sustainability Advisory Group.

Progress will be reported through the Corporate Resources Committee.

The Board noted the Paper.

11. BOARD SECRETARY'S BUSINESS

Ms Fitzsimons informed Members of plans to review the Scheme of Delegation, co-ordinate/provide a Spring Programme for Office Visits, in conjunction with operational Assistant Directors. Some Members have already committed to Prison Visits in the next few weeks.

Members were reminded to submit expenses as soon as possible.

The Board noted the update.

AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE (ARAC)

12. COMMITTEE CHAIR'S UPDATE (Verbal)

There had been no meeting since the last Board.

The Board noted the update.

12.1 GOVERNANCE TRAINING

The Board Chair, Committee Chair, 2 Members and the Board Secretary attended audit governance training on 15 March 2023.

The Board noted the update.

CORPORATE RESOURCES COMMITTEE (CRC)

13. COMMITTEE CHAIR'S UPDATE (Verbal)

The Deputy Committee Chair had nothing to report as there had been no meeting since the last Board.

The Board noted the update.

13.1 Financial Outturn Report – February 2023 (Paper 27/23)

Mr King confirmed PBNI is still anticipating a breakeven position at 31 March 2023.

The Board discussed the paper.

POLICY & PRACTICE COMMITTEE (PPC)

14. COMMITTEE CHAIR’S UPDATE (Verbal)

No update was noted as there had been no meeting since the last Board. Dr Keady advised that he had circulated a paper on Unconscious Bias to Members.

The Board noted the update.

15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Ms Patterson informed Members of a joint Probation, Housing Executive and Housing Associations Forum to look at gaps including lack of accommodation and sharing of information.

Action: The Chief Executive and Mr Hamilton to nominate PBNI representatives to attend this Housing Forum

The meeting ended at 11.45 pm

Date of Next Meeting – Friday 28 April 2023, 9.30 am, PBNI Conference Room, 4th Floor, HQ

Mr Max Murray CBE
Board Chair

Date