

**PROBATION BOARD FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**

**BOARD MEETING – FRIDAY 28 APRIL 2023**

**09.30 AM – Conference Room, PBNI HQ**

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr M Murray, Chair  
Ms E Patterson, Deputy Chair  
Ms M Brunt  
Mr B Ingram  
Dr M Keady  
Ms A Lloyd-Stevens  
Ms B Mongan  
Ms L Crothers  
Mr N Bodger  
Mr Johnston  
Ms J Crothers

OFFICIALS

Ms A Stewart, Chief Executive  
Ms G Montgomery, Director of Operations  
Mr S Hamilton, Director of Operations  
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  
Ms A Carlisle, Executive Support Officer (minute taker)

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

The Board Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and 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 Byrne, Ms Magee, Mr Barnes and Mr Donaghy.

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

The minutes of the Board Meeting held on Friday 24 March 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**

The Board Chair asked Members to refer to items 1, 3 and 4 in the paper.

- 1 The Board's Theme Day in May will be taking place on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2023. Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJINI) were not included in the programme as the follow up inspection has not been completed.
- 2 It was agreed to invite the Chief Inspector to meet the Board at a later stage when the follow-up inspection of Probation Practice has been completed.
- 3 Ms Patterson advised that work has progressed regarding PBNI nominations to attend the Housing Forum. PBNI may take part in a partnership event this year with NIHE.

Other items had been completed.

The Board noted the paper.

## **5. BOARD CHAIR'S UPDATE**

The Board Chair and Board Secretary attended an annual meeting with Mark Goodfellow and had the opportunity to discuss issues around governance, the challenges of a reduced budget and the need to progress the business case for pay modernisation. The Board Secretary will renew and strengthen links through further meetings going forward.

The Board Chair visited the Ormeau Road Office recently for a local engagement event which was very positive. Ms Patterson also attended a session in the afternoon.

The Board Chair attended a Chairs Forum following the release of the Indicative Budget. The emphasis was on the impact on public services. A decision was taken to write to the Secretary of State to seek a meeting to discuss setting a Budget. This letter was endorsed by the Public Sectors Chairs Forum including the PBNI Board Chair.

The Committee Chairs Working Group minutes have been added to Decision Time. Further work will continue around streamlining and updating the work of the separate Board Committees. Separate access on Decision Time will be set up so all policies and papers will be available for all Board Members to look over.

The Board Secretary is starting to organise visits to local offices and approved premises, the next one is Omagh on the 24<sup>th</sup> May 2023.

**Action: Members can attend other upcoming engagement events and office visits.**

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 and asked Members to refer to the paper.

The staff conference on trauma informed practice took place at the end of March 2023, with positive feedback from both staff and partners in attendance. The Chief Executive has also attended several staff engagement events including with the team in Down and Ards, Maghaberry Prison and with Policy, Practice and Research Unit (PPRU). Further engagement with staff and external partners will continue considering the impact of the recently released Indicative Budget. Significant staff issues continue to be around pay modernisation and staff pressures. The Chief Executive and Mr Hamilton were able to discuss issues with staff in Maghaberry and the issues that have been raised by the Parole Commissioners. A day for PBNI and NIPS staff to come together will take place in the future and a follow up meeting with the Parole Commissioner is scheduled for June 2023.

The Corporate and Business Plan will be discussed along with the Budget in a Special Board Meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2023.

The Chief Executive also updated on the status and response to the CJINI and NIAO inspection reports that have been published or provided to officials for factual accuracy.

The Board noted the update.

## **7. CORRESPONDENCE**

There were four items of correspondence to note.

### **7.1 Letter received by Board Chair from Mark Goodfellow, DOJ**

The Board Chair advised this will be discussed at the Special Board Meeting.

### **7.2 Letter sent from Board Chair to Nicola Lappin, Chair Housing Executive NI**

The Board Chair, Deputy Board Chair and Board Secretary will attend a meeting in the future with the NIHE.

### **7.3 Letter received by Rt. Hon. Chris Heaton-Harris from NI Public Sector Chair's Forum**

### **7.4 Letter sent to NDPB Chief Executives from Head of Financial Services Division on 2023-24 Indicative Budget - Update Position**

The Board Chair asked Members to note the final paragraph which mentions to stop discretionary spend and not to fill vacancies. The Board discussed the possible impact and reputational damage that reduced budgets will have.

The Board noted the Correspondence.

## **BOARD BUSINESS**

## **8. MANAGEMENT OF INFORMATION REPORT**

### **FINANCE AND ESTATES UPDATE**

Mr King advised that PBNI has received an indicative budget for 2023-24. This will be discussed further under Agenda Item 9. The paper outlined the draft Estate Strategy which went to CRC last week with the emphasis on the Greater Belfast review which will go to the next SLT meeting. An update on legal issues was given, with one new case received which PBNI will be contesting. Work is still being completed with the Crown Solicitor's Office on the judicial review case previously noted to the Board.

### **HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING & ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT UPDATE**

Mrs Sweeney gave an overview of the People Strategy 2022-2023, which shows all of the progress that has been made. The Evaluation of the Hybrid Working Pilot will be brought to SLT and then Board in due course.

The integration of Payroll and HR Management Systems including Learning and Development and Health and Safety has been completed.

Mrs Sweeney gave an update on Pay Modernisation, with some queries with DOJ to still be addressed due to legal advice being sought and expected next week. An update was given to Unions in a meeting last week with further information to be disseminated to staff.

Mrs Sweeney confirmed that work on the relocation of the Learning and Development hub has been postponed and unlikely to progress due to Budget constraints.

The Board Chair wanted to note the recent Open University interviews taking place and the positive impact this will have on staff regarding career progression.

## **DIRECTORS' UPDATES**

Ms Montgomery updated the Board on the continued use of approved deviations from Standards when there are vacancies or long-term sickness absence or unfilled maternity leave, with the paper giving recent monthly figures providing more detail.

Ms Montgomery also gave an update on the pilot of short adjournment reports with more detail for Members in the report. Regular engagement with staff and the judiciary is ongoing, with examples of the mixed feedback received included for Members. The sheet for staff completion has been amended to capture more information. The pilot will be evaluated in August 2023.

A meeting will also take place next week with the Lady Chief Justice to discuss the introduction of a similar pilot to the Crown Court.

There are no Serious Further Offences to report.

Mr Hamilton gave an update that the first meeting has taken place of the Research Governance Group with the Terms of Reference to be discussed and tabled at the next Policy and Practice Committee Meeting.

Ms Montgomery advised that a draft quarter 1 Risk Register for 2023-2024 will be presented to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee later today.

## **COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE**

Ms McGreevy provided an update on internal and external communications. The PBNI Staff Conference provided a link for the Chief Executive alongside the safeguarding Board for NIPB Director of Operations to take part in an interview for BBC Sunday Sequence on the role of PBNI delivering a trauma informed approach alongside other extensive media coverage and engagement. Local offices have been busy with engagement events with stakeholders and political representatives. PBNI attended the Belfast PCSP Spring Safety event at City Hall. The PBNI released its second podcast which has been circulated to Members. Team Brief and Town Hall will take place at the beginning of May and will focus on the potential impacts of the Budget.

The Communication Strategy for the next three years 2023-2026 will go to SLT in May and then come to Board for approval.

Ms McGreevy gave an update on the cyberattack which affected some organisations which use 'Evide' and with which we share data. One of the PBNI partners confirmed that service user data was not affected and ASCERT is continuing to investigate what data has been accessed.

There are currently 4 information complaints being managed by local managers. A review has been completed of the Complaints Policies and Procedures and will be going to SLT in May and continue to Board for approval.

Following discussion the Board noted the Paper.

## **9. INDICATIVE PBNI BUDGET ALLOCATION 2023/24**

Mr King gave members a high-level overview of the paper which provided an update on the potential impacts of the indicative budget allocation for 2023-24 in advance of decision making on the final budget allocation which is still to be confirmed. The shortfall position for 2023-24 is estimated to be £2,197k. Areas for reduction are discretionary spend, community and voluntary spend, recruitment freeze, reducing services, reduction of Enhanced Combination Orders (ECOs), reducing/stopping of programmes, further expansion of the pilot Short Adjournment Reports, removal of agency staff / reducing PBNI Office opening hours, removing Performance and Practice Research Unit (PPRU) and Reduction in IT support and digitalisation work. Pay Modernisation will continue and has been endorsed by both Board and Senior Management.

Mr King stressed that while the budget allocation is still indicative there will still need to be significant savings made. The Board will be able to discuss and ratify the areas for reduction and targeted savings at the Special Board meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2023. Several engagement events are scheduled with unions, managers, and staff to make sure that all are kept up to date and to assist in the decision-making process.

Members agreed that the indicative budget is challenging and will have a major impact on PBNI and its services. They agreed that measures need to be taken to make sure PBNI is in a breakeven position next year, and that all risks need to be closely monitored and managed. The Members welcomed union / staff engagement. Subject to PBNI receiving an agreed budget a Special Board Meeting will be organised for Friday 19 May to discuss implications of budget.

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

### **10.1 DRAFT BOARD SUBMISSION TO THE ANNUAL REPORT & ACCOUNTS**

This has been made available to Members and any queries should be sent to the Board Secretary. This update has been noted by Members.

### **10.2 THEMED BOARD MEETING MAY 2023 – DRAFT AGENDA**

The Board Secretary has drafted an agenda for this meeting, this was agreed by Members.

### **10.3 BOARD WORK PLAN 2023/24**

There were no comments from Members.

### **10.4 RATIFY CORPORATE RESOURCES COMMITTEE DEPUTY CHAIR**

Members ratified Ms Lloyd-Stevens as Deputy Chair of this Committee.

**AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE (ARAC)**

**11. COMMITTEE CHAIR’S UPDATE (Verbal)**

There is a meeting of this Committee taking place today, with a further update at the next Board Meeting.

The Board noted the update.

**CORPORATE RESOURCES COMMITTEE (CRC)**

**12. COMMITTEE CHAIR’S UPDATE (Verbal)**

The Committee Chair welcomed Mr Bodger and Ms Lloyd-Stevens to the Committee with Ms Lloyd-Stevens taking up post as the Committee’s Deputy Chair. The indicative budget was discussed at length along with members of the Senior Leadership Team. Members had been asked at CRC to note and approve the actions taken to date in the paper on CVS funding issues. The Committee approved the position noted in the paper. The terms of reference as agreed at the Committee Chairs Working Group will be reviewed, this will be circulated to Members by the Board Secretary and will be on the agenda for the next meeting.

The Committee also supported the decision by the PBNI Accounting Officer to approve release of last year’s funding to a PBNI CVS partner based on a CJINI draft inspection report. This action was consistent with the decision of the DOJ accounting Officer in relation to the Department’s grant funding.

The Board noted the update.

**POLICY & PRACTICE COMMITTEE (PPC)**

**13. COMMITTEE CHAIR’S UPDATE (Verbal)**

There had been no meeting since the last Board.

The Board noted the update.

**14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Members were asked to note the Special Board Meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2023 and the Themed Board Meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2023.

The meeting ended at 11.45 pm.

Date of Next Meeting – Friday 26<sup>th</sup> May 2023, 9.30 am, PBNI Conference Room, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, HQ

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Mr Max Murray CBE  
Board Chair

Date \_\_\_\_\_