

PROBATION BOARD FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

BOARD MEETING – FRIDAY 20 SEPTEMBER 2024

9.30 am – Conference Room, PBNI Headquarters

ATTENDANCE

BOARD MEMBERS

Mr M Murray, Chair
Ms E Patterson, Deputy Chair
Mr K Donaghy
Mr B Ingram
Ms A Lloyd-Stevens
Ms B Mongan

OFFICIALS

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

GUEST

Mr M McCracken, Principal
Psychologist

PRESENTATION FROM MICHAEL MCCRACKEN, PRINCIPAL PSYCHOLOGIST ON THE PSYCHOLOGY AND PROGRAMMES REVIEW

The Chair thanked Mr McCracken, Principal Psychologist for attending the meeting and invited him to present an update on the review of the Psychology and Programmes review. Mr McCracken thanked the Board Chair for the opportunity to update members on these areas of work. He provided the background for each review, gave an overview of the findings, recommendations identified, and progress made to date. He also highlighted the challenges ahead which included access to training through HMPPS, the impact of upcoming staff moves and legacy programmes. Mr McCracken also outlined the next steps including a review of PBNI's current programme delivery model, continuing to liaise with HMPPS about legacy programmes, training and Building Choices and working with NIPS to align the programme suite. A productive discussion with Members followed covering issues around managing the lack of staff resource, options for programme delivery and training issues.

The Board Chair concluded the session by thanking Mr McCracken for a very interesting and comprehensive presentation which highlighted the exceptional work he and his team are undertaking on a daily basis.

1. WELCOME, OPENING REMARKS AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The Board Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and set out the schedule for the day. A quorum was confirmed.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were recorded from Ms M Brunt, Ms C Magee and Mr J Johnston.

3. MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING – FRIDAY 23 AUGUST 2024 (PAPER)

The minutes of the Board Meeting held on Friday 23 August 2024 were approved as a true record.

The Board approved the paper.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES (PAPER)

There were five actions from the previous meeting. Members and Officials were asked to note the Board Theme Day at the Malone Suite, Newforge on 22 November 2024. Two actions in relation to updates on the Staff Survey Action Plan and Organisational Resilience were ongoing. Papers will be brought to a future Board meeting.

The Board noted the paper.

4.2 SOCIAL WORK WORKFORCE IMPLEMENTATION BOARD (PAPER)

Ms Montgomery referred Members to the Paper summarising the work of the Social Work Workforce Implementation Board (SWWIB) which had been established in June 2022 and provided an update on actions which impact on PBNI. The Paper outlined the progress on supply and retention workstreams and actions that were being taken to address the attrition rate from Social Work courses. Discussion took place around the additional forty social work student places in the 2024-25 intake and though an increase from thirteen in the previous year, this number was disappointing and would not make a significant impact on current social work vacancies in Northern Ireland. Ms Montgomery explained that universities are also experiencing budgetary challenges and currently funding was only available for forty additional places. She advised that the SWWIB membership continued to raise this as a concern. Members welcomed Ms Montgomery's input to the SWWIB and appreciated the detail in the update paper.

The Board noted the Paper.

5. BOARD CHAIR'S REPORT (PAPER)

The Board Chair referred Members and Officials to the paper and highlighted the visit to the Shipquay Street Team and the informal lunch with NIHE and key partners, both on 29 August 2024. The Chair reminded Member of the memorial service for Neil Bodger at Malone House on Thursday 26 September 2024.

The Board noted the paper.

6. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S UPDATE (VERBAL)

The Chief Executive provided a verbal rather than written update, due to annual leave. She confirmed that the draft Programme for Government was now out for consultation and advised that key areas are a strategy for women and young girls and reducing offending and re-offending and, for the first time, PBNI is mentioned in relation to Community Sentences. A Strategic Review Group has been set up to include representatives from Senior Management and the Board Chair to discuss the response to the consultation. Following a meeting of the group a submission will be drafted and brought to the October Board meeting for consideration and approval.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the PBNI application to the Transformation Fund for a further extension of Enhanced Combination Orders to other court areas had reached the next stage and information had been provided for the panel which will be held on Wednesday 25 September 2024.

The Chief Executive asked Ms Montgomery to update Members on a serious further offence (SFO) which had taken place on 13 September 2024 and had attracted media attention. Members were reminded of PBNI's processes in relation to SFOs and Internal Reviews. Ms McGreevy briefed Members on the actions being taken in respect of possible media coverage over the incoming weekend.

The Board noted the update.

7. CORRESPONDENCE (PAPER)

There were three items of correspondence to note.

7.1 Correspondence from Chief Inspector CJINI to Chief Executive on Proposed Pilot of Recommendation Implementation Monitoring

The Chief Executive explained that PBNI will be participating in the proposed pilot for a six-month period and will be responding to the letter from the CJINI Chief Inspector accordingly.

7.2 Correspondence from DOJ Permanent Secretary to Chief Executive Digital Justice Strategy

The Chief Executive confirmed she would keep the Board apprised of developments and progress in respect of the Digital Justice Strategy and its impact on PBNI.

7.3 Correspondence from Chief Social Worker to Chief Executive on Mindfulness Based Social Work and Self-Care Programme and Coaching Support

The Chief Executive advised that the letter from the Chief Social Worker was by way of information for Members.

The Board noted the correspondence.

BOARD BUSINESS

8. UPDATE ON PAY MODERNISATION (VERBAL)

Ms Sweeney confirmed that all staff had now received back pay in relation to the transfer to NJC. Payroll staff are in the process of finalising payments to staff who have left the organisation. Human Resources will be commencing revisions to PBNI policy documents, where required. Ms Sweeney advised that the unions had now lodged an equal pay claim and that she would keep the Board briefed.

The Board noted the update.

9. BOARD WORK PLAN 2024-25 (PAPER)

The Board Secretary referred Members to the paper. A visit to Burren House is arranged for 30 September 2024 and visits to CS projects and the Armagh office are currently being planned. The Board Chair suggested that two to three Members on each visit would be preferable and that a presentation from Complex Lives at a future Board meeting would be welcomed.

The Board noted the Paper.

AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE (ARAC)

10. COMMITTEE CHAIR'S UPDATE (PAPER)

The Committee Chair talked through the paper and highlighted three areas which had been covered in the ARAC meeting held on 6 September 2024: the Final Report to Those Charged with Governance 2023-24, the newly formatted Audit Control Log 2024-25 and Q3 Risk Management Report 2023-2024.

The Board noted the update.

10.1 Q3 Draft Strategic Risk Register 2024-25 (Paper)

The Board Secretary gave a summary of the Risk Management Quarterly Report. She advised that the Strategic Risk Register (SRR) 2024/25 for Q2 had been reviewed by SLT and there was no change to the

risk ratings of the substantive strategic risks. A new Strategic Risk Register for quarter 3 2024/25 has been developed by the SLT. Ms Fitzsimons confirmed that there have been no changes to the inherent or residual scores within Areas 1 to 5 with the exception of Risk 3 where the residual score, though still medium, had reduced from 9 to 6 due to the provision of further in-year funding through monitoring. Discussion took place around the addition of another cause of reputational damage at Risk 5 following the high profile SFO that occurred the week previously. It was agreed that Senior Management would revise this risk accordingly.

Miss Fitzsimons also advised that Horizon Scanning had been reviewed by SLT and revisions made. Ms Stewart suggested that the issue around Programme Delivery and future accreditation, as highlighted earlier by Mr McCracken be added to document.

Action: The Board Secretary to liaise with the two Directors of Operations to amend Risk 5 and Horizon Scanning.

The Board approved the Paper subject to amendments discussed in relation to Risk 5.

10.2 Report To those charged with Governance 2023-24 – Final (Paper)

The Board Chair referred Members to the Final Report to those charged with Governance 2023-24.

The Board noted the Paper.

CORPORATE RESOURCES COMMITTEE (CRC)

11. COMMITTEE CHAIR'S UPDATE (PAPER)

The Deputy Committee Chair talked through the key items covered at the CRC meeting held on 13 September 2024, including Internal Communications and Engagement, the Disability Policy and Reasonable Adjustments Policy (Disability Passport) and Finance and HR updates.

The Labour Relations Agency had agreed to assist with the provision of facilitators to work with SLT and Unions to review policies and procedures. The first meeting of the group took place on 19 September 2024, chaired by the Chief Executive. TORs had been agreed and consideration given to which policies would initially be reviewed.

The Board Chair suggested that sick absence should have a greater focus and agreed to discuss with the Committee Chair.

The Board noted the update.

11.1 Disability Policy and Reasonable Adjustments (and Reasonable Adjustment Passport) Policy (Paper)

The Deputy Head of HR, Mrs Smyth, had given a presentation on the Disability Policy and Reasonable Adjustments (and Reasonable Adjustment Passport) Policy at the CRC meeting on 13 September 2024 including proposals for roll out, training and development. Following discussion the Committee recommended that the policy be brought to the Board for approval.

In response to a Member's question regarding current staff with adjustments, Ms Sweeney confirmed that currently HR have a record of forty staff with adjustments. The Committee Chair thanked Ms Sweeney and the HR team for their work on the Policy.

The Board approved the Paper.

11.2 Financial Outturn Report (August 2024) (Paper)

Mr King gave a summary of the Paper. In addition, he apprised Members of the work of the Estates Team in conjunction with landlords and Land and Property Services (LPS).

The Board noted the Paper.

POLICY & PRACTICE COMMITTEE (PPC)

12. COMMITTEE CHAIR'S UPDATE (PAPER)

The Committee Chair talked through the key items covered at the PPC meeting held on 13 September 2024, including the plans for the Themed Board meeting in November 2024, the draft Restorative Justice Strategy, the Sentencer and Service Users Surveys and the Annual Reports, some of which are on today's agenda. The Committee Chair thanked Ms McGreevy and the Communications Unit for the breadth and depth of their work on policy review, consultations and internal and external engagement.

The Board discussed a number of points raised and also noted the update.

12.1 Draft Restorative Justice Strategy (Paper)

The Committee Chair referred Members to the Draft Restorative Justice Strategy paper. The paper had been considered and endorsed by the PPC held on 13 September 2024 for Board approval.

The Board approved the Paper.

12.2 Deaths Under Supervision Annual Report 2023-24 (Paper)

Members were asked to note the Deaths Under Supervision Annual Report 2023-24 which had been considered at the PPC meeting held on 13 September 2024.

The Board noted the Paper.

12.3 Serious Further Offences (SFO) Annual Report 2023-24 (Paper)

Members discussed the Serious Further Offences Report 2023-24 which had been considered at the PPC meeting held on 13 September 2024.

The Board noted the Paper.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business. The meeting ended at 12.50 pm.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING – FRIDAY 25 OCTOBER 2024, 9.30 AM - PBNI HQ CONFERENCE ROOM

Mr Max Murray CBE
Board Chair

Date