

## DEPARTMENTAL MANAGEMENT BOARD MEETING

- Minutes -

Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026 at 10.00 am

Castle Buildings, Stormont Estate

<b>Members:</b>	Hugh Widdis (Chair)	Permanent Secretary
	Deborah Brown	Deputy Secretary, Justice Delivery
	Beverley Wall	Deputy Secretary, Reducing Offending and Director General, Northern Ireland Prison Service
	Sean Holland	Deputy Secretary, Access to Justice
	Catherine Dolliver	Non-Executive Board Member
	Colm McKenna	Non-Executive Board Member
<b>In attendance:</b>	David Lennox	Director, Corporate Engagement and Communications Division
	Richard Logan	Finance Director
	Jackie McAllister	HR Business Partner, DoF
	Michael McAvoy	Director, Community Safety
	Patrick Butler	Director, Coroners Service and Legacy Inquests
	John Napier	Director, Information Services Division
	John Kerr	Financial Services Division
	Ricki Kettle	Head of Corporate Governance and Equality Unit, CECD
	Bill Smyth	Corporate Governance and Equality Unit, CECD (Secretary)
<b>Apologies:</b>	Glyn Capper	Chief Executive, Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service
	Mark Goodfellow	Deputy Secretary, Safer Communities

### 1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, including Michael and Patrick, who were deputising for Mark and Glyn respectively. Apologies were noted from Glyn and Mark.

### 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1. No declarations were raised.

### **3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

3.1 Draft minutes of the previous meeting were circulated with the papers and no further amendments were raised.

### **4 STRATEGIC ISSUES**

#### Permanent Secretary's Update

4.1 The Chair briefed the Board on the current position in relation to the proposed budget allocation for the Department. He advised that the Programme for Government Delivery Plan for 2025/26 had been agreed by the Executive, but the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland (ISNI) has not been formerly approved to date. He also noted the extremely positive report from the Chief Inspector of Prisons in relation to the recent inspection of HMP Magilligan. It was agreed that the Permanent Secretary would write on behalf of the Board to congratulate NIPS on the positive report.

#### Update from Deputy Secretaries

4.2 Updates from Deputy Secretaries included: an update on the competition to appoint a new Police Ombudsman; ongoing recruitment for Directors within the DoJ; plans for transition of work being undertaken through the Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime into the DoJ; the current position in relation to bids for Transformation funding; Speeding up Justice Programme; the current position in relation to the prison population numbers; NIPS recruitment; PSNI Resourcing; Enabling Access to Justice Delivery Programme; the Causeway Programme; the continued implementation of Themis; the ongoing modernisation programmes within NICTS; and the continued impact of the withdrawal of services by the Criminal Bar Association Bar across the justice system and the ongoing work to address this situation.

### **5 FINANCE UPDATE**

5.1 Richard provided an update on the 2025/26 budgetary position following the Forecast Outturn reported to DoF as at 28 February 2026. He noted that the Department's Non-Ringfenced Resource DEL was forecast to breakeven and that the Ringfenced Resource DEL was forecast at a slight underspend of £0.4m. Capital DEL was forecast at an underspend of *circa*. £1m.

5.2 Richard also gave an update in relation to preparation of the 2025-26 Annual Report and Accounts. He advised that the NIAO Audit Strategy was formally issued to the Department on 4 March 2026 and approved by DARAC at its meeting on 19 March. He

further advised of key dates across the Department before discussing the possible NIAO staffing that may impact on the DoJ being able to lay the Annual Report and Accounts in the Assembly by the summer recess. Board Members discussed the potential risks to the Department.

5.3 Richard also provided an update on the current position in relation to the proposed budget allocations for 2026-30. While a budget had not been agreed by the Executive for the start of the 2026-27 financial year, DoJ business areas have been given indicative budget allocations for 2026-27 to 2028-29 for Resource and for 2026-27 for Capital. He also noted that the Department's response to the first stage of the 'Open-Book' Exercise had been returned to DoF in March. A query was raised about potential revenue generating opportunities and it was agreed that details of potential opportunities would be shared with NEBMs.

5.4 Richard advised that the Public Sector Transformation Board had recommended that funding be provided for two DoJ projects in the latest bidding round: Ending Violence Against Women and Girls and the PSNI Relativity Platform. A final decision on approval would depend on funding being approved by the Executive.

**Decision** - The Board noted the updates provided in the paper and their impact on the Department.

**Action** – Details of potential revenue generating opportunities to be shared with NEBMs.

## **6 INTEGR8 UPDATE**

6.1 Richard presented this paper noting that DARAC had already been briefed on the progress with the Integr8 programme at its meeting in March. He highlighted some of the key risks adding that the Department would continue to closely monitor the progress and update SMT and the Board accordingly.

**Decision** – The Board noted the paper.

## **7 HR UPDATE**

7.1 Jackie presented an HR update and highlighted the current position in relation to: vacancy levels; recruitment competitions across the NICS; progress with specific DoJ recruitment competitions; trends in HR information for the Department; and progress on work undertaken and planned in support of the 2025/26 DoJ People Plan and the Health and Wellbeing Action Plan. She also advised of the overall position in relation to the ongoing

recruitment competitions. Jackie also highlighted ongoing progress with rollout of a pilot on Strategic Workforce Planning.

**Decision** – The Board noted the paper.

## **8. PROCUREMENT BOARD UPDATE**

8.1 John Kerr updated the Board on procurement governance across the NICS and the Department, noting the scale of spend across the Department and the importance of strong oversight, risk management, and engagement with CPD. He highlighted the outcome of an independent review of public procurement governance, commissioned following NIAO and PAC findings.

8.2 The Board also noted updates on procurement structures, including the Procurement Forum and Governance Board, developments on Direct Award Contracts, and new transparency requirements under the NI Public Procurement Policy Statement, including forthcoming assurance reporting arrangements.

**Decision** – The Board noted the update.

## **9. HEALTH & SAFETY REPORT**

9.1 John Napier presented the 2025–2026 Annual Health & Safety Report, confirming that the Department’s Health & Safety Management System remains effective and outlining progress in recruiting a new Health & Safety Advisor. He highlighted ongoing Castle Buildings Block B refurbishment works in line with relevant construction regulations, and confirmed that interim accommodation continues to operate safely with appropriate health, safety, and fire evacuation arrangements in place.

**Decision** – The Board noted the update.

## **10. PROGRAMME/PROJECT UPDATE**

10.1 John Napier presented a comprehensive update on DoJ P3O activity since September 2025, covering project assurance, reporting, and governance improvements. He highlighted oversight of major programmes, including five high-risk projects subject to Gateway Review, with updates on assurance action plans and portfolio changes, alongside engagement with SROs to identify delivery risks. Progress on the ISNI DataMAP system was outlined as a developing centralised reporting platform, while the Department continues to rely on the Delivery Confidence Landscape for current oversight. John also noted the role of the Major Projects and Transformation Advisory Board in strengthening prioritisation and governance,

ongoing work in response to the NIAO major IT projects report, and a satisfactory Internal Audit outcome, with all recommendations implemented, including the development of a departmental project skills register.

**Decision** – The Board noted the update.

## **11. DOJ BUSINESS PLAN 2025/26 UPDATE**

11.1 David provided an update on the end of year position on performance against targets in the 2025/26 Business Plan. He noted that of the planned 50 associated actions: 37 are currently being reported with a 'green' status, 11 are recorded as 'amber' and 2 as 'red'. David advised that the year-end position showed 74% of departmental actions reported as achieved, with a further 22% partially achieved. He added that the report would inform the narrative for the 2025/26 Departmental Annual Report & Accounts. He also noted that a draft Business Plan for 2026/27 was being prepared in anticipation of confirmation of an approved budget.

**Decision** – The Board noted the updated report.

## **12. RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE**

12.1 Ricki presented the update on the Risk Management Register and advised of changes made since the last update in November 2025. It was noted that a revised version of the framework would be presented at the next Board meeting for approval. It was suggested that consideration be given to inclusion of the implementation of the Integr8 Programme in DoJ as a separate Risk.

**Decision** – The Board approved the updated Risk Register.

## **13. DARAC UPDATE**

13.1 Colm updated the Board on the DARAC meeting held in March. He noted the issues discussed including: an update on arrangements for Information Assurance within the DoJ; clearances for NIAO staff; NIAO Audit Strategy; a Financial governance update; update on the Integr8 programme; and updates on the Internal Audit Plans for 2025/26 and 2026/27.

**Decision** – The Board noted the update.

## **14. INTREG8 SENIOR STAKEHOLDER UPDATE – MARCH 2026**

14.1 David provided this for informational purposes to the Board.

**15. AOB**

15.1 There was a brief update on progress with the Castle Buildings refurbishment project.

**Date of the next meeting: Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2026 at 10:00 am.**