Department of Justice
An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt
Männystrie O tha Laa
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DEPARTMENTAL MANAGEMENT BOARD MEETING

- Minutes -

Wednesday 23 September 2026 at 10:00 am

Castle Buildings, Stormont Estate

Members:	Hugh Widdis (Chair)	Permanent Secretary
	David Lennox	A/Deputy Secretary, Justice Delivery
	Karen Ward	A/Chief Executive, Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service
	Beverley Wall	Deputy Secretary, Reducing Offending and Director General, Northern Ireland Prison Service
	Mark Goodfellow	Deputy Secretary, Safer Communities
	Gareth Johnston	Deputy Secretary, Access to Justice
	Richard Logan	Finance Director
	Catherine Dolliver	Non-Executive Board Member
	Colm McKenna	Non-Executive Board Member
	In attendance:	
	Brendan Devlin	A/Director Corporate Engagement and Communications Division.
	Jackie McAllister	HR Business Partner, DoF
	Aisling Hillen	Financial Services Division
	Ricki Kettle	Corporate Governance and Equality Unit, CECD
	Ashleigh Woods	Corporate Governance and Equality Unit, CECD (Secretary)
Apologies:	Glynn Capper	Deputy Secretary, Strategic Justice Transformation

1. Welcome and Apologies

1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were noted from Glynn.

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 and the actions arising were noted to be completed.

4. Strategic Issues

Permanent Secretary's Update

4.1 The Chair provided members with an update on the Department's operating position in the absence of an agreed budget for 2026/27. While noting that budgetary negotiations where ongoing with the UK Government at present, he informed members of the potential limitations that may arise should a budget not be agreed. He also discussed the current position with regard to the Programme for Government 2025/26.

Update from Deputy Secretaries

4.2 The Chair invited Directors to provide updates from their areas. Updates included; NICTS operational delivery; Progress update on the new forensic laboratory project; PSNI resourcing and operational planning; the current position on the legislative programme; the current prison population and accommodation landscape; NIPS resourcing; remand and bail discussions; ongoing inspection in Maghaberry Prison; Integr8; budget discussions; and the current operating position of the Troubles Permanent Disablement Scheme following closure of the Scheme.

5. INTEGR8 Update

5.1 Aisling presented this paper, providing a detailed update on progress towards implementation of the Integr8 programme and Oracle Cloud Fusion. She asked the Board to note key risks such as resourcing capacity, funding and business readiness will require active management at this critical juncture. Hugh offered support through high-level engagement with senior officials at this critical stage of implementation if required.

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

6. Finance Update

6.1 Richard provided an update on the Department's financial position. He advised that the Department's 2025-26 Annual Report and Accounts had received an unqualified audit opinion and outlined the final outturn position, which noted a non-ringfenced resource DEL underspend of £2.1m, equivalent to of 0.14% of its £1,437m budget.

6.2 He also updated members on progress with the Whole of Government Accounts process and the ongoing budget planning exercise for 2026-27 to 2029-30, noting that discussions on a multi-year Executive Budget remained ongoing and that revised resource and capital bids had been submitted to inform Executive consideration.

6.3 Richard further briefed the Board on the Department's transformation bids, including successful projects and the position regarding additional funding. Members discussed the financial outlook and the implications of continued budget uncertainty.

Decision: The Board noted the financial update**.**

7 HR Update including Health and Wellbeing Circle

7.1 Jackie presented an update to the Board on a range of people and workforce matters, including workforce trends; vacancy management; recruitment activity; temporary staffing arrangements; sickness absence; delivery of the DoJ People Plan 2026/27; strategic workforce planning; outreach activity and Integr8. She also outlined proposals to relaunch the DoJ Wellbeing Circle to support staff wellbeing and strengthen attendance management arrangements. David provided an overview of absence statistics within the DoJ and wider NICS, highlighting key trends and ongoing efforts to identify areas for improvement through the Department's wellbeing initiatives.

Decision - The Board noted the update and approved the relaunch of the DoJ Wellbeing Circle**.**

8. Interim Business Plan 2026/27

8.1 Brendan presented a recommissioned Draft version of the Interim Business Plan for 2026/27, highlighting updates made to deliverables since the June meeting and the rationale for publishing an interim plan pending budget confirmation on the DoJ website.

Decision - The Board noted the updates to the Interim Business Plan and approved publication**.**

9. DoJ People Plan Update

9.1 Brendan presented the Board with the proposed DoJ People Plan 2026/27, noting that it builds on the previous year's plan, reflects engagement with the Staff Engagement and Communications Forum, and is aligned to the NICS People Strategy 2025-30. He outlined the Plan's focus on strengthening workforce skills and capacity, enhancing staff experience and the working environment, and promoting leadership, inclusion and diversity across the Department. Members discussed opportunities to further develop mentoring initiatives to support staff development.

Decision - The Board approved the People Plan for 2026/27.

10. Board Effectiveness Paper

10.1 Brendan presented a paper on the review of Board effectiveness, outlining proposals to commission an independent review to provide an objective assessment of the Board's effectiveness and governance arrangements. Members discussed the value of external challenge and assurance, and the opportunity to identify areas for continuous improvement in Board performance and oversight.

Decision: The Board approved the commissioning of an independent review.

Action: Secretariat to explore independent review providers and bring recommendations to the next Board meeting

11. Risk Management Update

11.1 Ricki presented the update on the Risk Management Register, including the proposed addition of a new corporate risk relating to the Integr8 Programme. Members discussed the Integr8 Programme and its associated risks. Ricki advised that a risk management workshop would be held in November 2026 to consider further enhancements to the risk management framework. Gareth highlighted some queries about evaluations of RAG status which he would discuss with Ricki ahead of the workshop.

Decision – The Board approved the updates to the Corporate Risk Register.

12. DARAC Update

12.1 Colm presented a verbal update to the board in relation to the DARAC meeting held in June. He noted, in particular, the work done to complete the 2025/26 Annual Report and Accounts.

Decision – The Board noted the update.

13. AOB

13.1 No further matters were raised for discussion

Date of the next meeting: Wednesday 18 November 2026 at 10:00 am.