



DEPARTMENTAL BOARD MEETING

- Minutes -

Wednesday 24 February 2016

Castle Buildings

Present: Nick Perry (Permanent Secretary)
Clarke Black (Independent Board Member)
Lian Patterson (Director, Justice Delivery)
David Lavery (Director, Access to Justice)
Sue McAllister (Director General, NIPS / Director, Reducing Offending)
Anthony Harbinson (Director, Safer Communities)

Apologies: Rotha Johnston (Independent Board Member)

In Attendance: Maria Watson (Secretary)

OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

ACTION

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed the Board to the February meeting and noted apologies from Rotha Johnston.
- 1.2 No conflicts of interest were declared.
- 1.3 The Board agreed the January minutes with one small amendment.

**Board Secretary to place
January minutes on
Departmental website.**

Critical Issues

- 2.1 David Lavery advised Board members that the dispute over Legal Aid fees had been resolved following mediation.
- 2.2 Sue McAllister noted that NIPS were undertaking some modelling work around the potential impact this will have on establishments.
- 2.3 Clarke Black asked if the outcome of the mediation would have an

impact on the projected savings. David Lavery clarified that there would be a some reduction in the projected savings however the principle of standard fees had been retained which was a very positive outcome as the intention is now to expand reform to other areas (ie family court and civil fees). David agreed to bring a paper to the Board following the Strategy Group meeting in April.

David Lavery to bring a paper to the April/May Board meeting

- 2.4 Sue McAllister confirmed that the report on the re-inspection of Maghaberry in January was published today and had broadly been received positively.
- 2.5 David Lavery noted that A2J were undertaking some modelling work on the potential implications of Brexit. David Ford will be briefing the NI Affairs Committee on the subject shortly.
- 2.6 David Lavery confirmed that a bid to establish a Legacy Inquest Unit will be made to the Executive at its final meeting in March.

DOJ OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE

Business Plan / PfG / Risk Register

- 3.1 The Board reviewed the Business Plan/PfG/Risk Register and updated progress in a number of areas. These will be captured in the formal review at the end of quarter 4.
- 3.2 Nick Perry advised the Board that he would be issuing a note to staff shortly, updating them on the position with the Transformation programme and the impact of VES.

Resourcing Issues

- 3.3 Lian Patterson confirmed that there was no change in the resourcing position since the SRC meeting last week.
- 3.4 Clarke Black asked for an update on the VES scheme. Lian Patterson provided current figures but added that the position would be clearer the following week, once the outcome of the tranche 5 offers was known.
- 3.5 Anthony Harbinson reported that a funding issue had arisen between PSNI and FSNI for 2016/17, which he was working to resolve as speedily as possible.

GOVERNANCE

People

Sick Absence

- 4.1 The Board discussed paper BP(16)8 which outlined the headline sick absence position for January, as the detailed breakdowns from NISRA were not yet available. The Board noted the slightly improved position since December but agreed that further work needed to be undertaken in this area.
- 4.2 The Board considered paper BP(16)9, which outlined the management response to the internal audits which had been conducted into absence management across DOJ. The Board noted that all recommendations had been accepted and practical steps were now being taken to address issues raised.
- 4.3 The Board revisited the position within NIPS and the need to tackle this area specifically. Sue McAllister confirmed that additional administrative staff had now been moved to Maghaberry to assist with sick absence management and a summit was planned on the way forward.
- 4.4 At the January meeting there had been a suggestion to invite in other Departments who had seen a positive change in their absence figures however Sue McAllister understood this had been tried in the past and had not been very successful and the focus now needed to be on practical changes.
- 4.5 Sue McAllister advised that Phil Wragg was undertaking a piece of work to identify the blockages in the system which were preventing him from progressing cases and how this compared to the rules and systems in GB. The Board asked Phil to bring a paper to the March meeting to inform further discussion. The Board felt it would also be helpful to clarify the proportion of LTS cases which are the result of assaults, or incidents, in the workplace.
- 4.6 Clarke Black noted the internal audit recommendations in relation to disciplinary action for non-compliance in completing documentation and asked if there had been any progress on this. Lian Patterson confirmed that previous inconsistencies in practice has been identified

Phil Wragg to bring a paper to the March Board meeting

as part of the HR Shared Services project and once all HR function were brought together from 1 April 2016, there would be an opportunity to identify what actions can be taken forward. Lian suggested that a paper from HR Shared Services on the way forward should be tabled for the April Board meeting.

Lian Patterson to bring a paper to the April Board meeting

Board Brief

- 5.1 The Board reviewed and agreed the draft Brief with minor changes.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 6.1 Nick advised the Board about upcoming board development events during March and April which were being held as part of the modernising NICS agenda.

Date of Next Meeting

- 6.2 The next meeting will take place on 23 March in Castle Buildings, Belfast at 1pm.

