



DEPARTMENTAL BOARD MEETING

- Minutes -

Friday, 31 July, 2015

Castle Buildings

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

Apologies: None

In Attendance: Peter Grant (Secretary)
Maria Watson (Personnel & Office Services Division)

ACTION

OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed the Board to the July meeting.
- 1.2 There were no Declarations of Interest.
- 1.3 The Board agreed the June minutes.

Board Secretary to place
June minutes on
Departmental website.

Critical Issues

- 2.1 The Chair welcomed Maria Watson to the Board meeting as an observer in advance of taking up the Board Secretariat role in September. He thanked Peter Grant for his work in the Secretariat role over the past two years.
- 2.2 The Board welcomed the relatively peaceful passing of the parading season. A number of the new Councils have been seeking assistance

in taking forward community planning in partnership with the Department. This will be taken forward by Community Safety Unit.

- 2.3 The Head of Civil Service has written to all Departments to ask that all documentation relating to the sale of the NAMA Northern Ireland Loan Portfolio be collated.
- 2.4 Confirmation of whether tranche 1 of the Voluntary Exit Scheme will proceed may not be received until the end of August. The Chair asked Directors to consider how ongoing pieces of work will be taken forward with particular attention to specialist posts if the Scheme proceeds. Rotha Johnston asked that the current oversight and scrutiny of ALB Governance be maintained throughout the VES process.

DOJ OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE

Business Plan / PfG / Risk Register

- 3.1 The Business Plan / PfG / Risk Register paper was reviewed. The Faster Fairer Justice section of the Business Plan dealing with reform of Legal Aid was reassessed from Green to Amber. Under the Finance Section the targets of Delivering Agreed Savings and ensuring the Final Outturn is within Budget were reassessed from Green to Amber.
- 3.2 Members asked that the narrative around the Risk Register be revised to align it and the Business Plan more closely.
- 3.3 Copies of the Corporate Plan and Business Plan were sent to the Justice Committee before the summer recess.
- 3.4 The Board noted and welcomed the passage of the Justice Act and the progress being made on Legacy issues.

Resourcing Issues

- 3.5 Lian Patterson provided an overview of the financial situation. At the outset of the new financial year a balanced budget had been set but the issues around Welfare Reform have made the position very uncertain. There could potentially be further cuts if Welfare Reform remains unresolved.

- 3.6 Anthony Harbinson has been liaising with PSNI who should be in a position to declare an early easement. Discussions are ongoing with DFP on how any easement might be utilised. A briefing session for ALBs will be held in September.

PERFORMANCE

ISD Performance Report Jan – June 2015

- 3.7 The Board noted the ISD Performance Report update and welcomed the compliance rates and timeliness performance on FOI and Data Protection requests.

GOVERNANCE

People

Sickness Absence Update

- 4.1 Lian Patterson presented the updated position on sickness absence as of 30th June, which reveals a deteriorating position. The Chair informed the Board that he had met with each of the Directors and Agency Chief Executives. Arising from the meetings POSD are preparing a 3 month plan of action.
- 4.2 Sue McAllister informed the Board that Phil Wragg, the NIPS Director of Operations and Governor at Maghaberry, is examining NIPS absence cases in detail. In addition to developing a 7 year Action Plan Phil is formulating a NIPS Leadership Development Programme.

Internal Audit Report on YJA Attendance Management

- 4.3 The Board noted the Internal Audit Report on YJA Attendance Management. Lian Patterson agreed to examine the Terms of Reference for future Internal Audit Sick Absence Reports.

Sick Absence Update from Directors

- 4.4 The Directors provided updates on efforts taken to manage sick absence in their respective areas.

Health & Safety Annual Report 2014/15

- 4.5 The Board noted the Health & Safety Annual Report 2014/15.

DOJ Wellbeing Report

- 4.6 Members considered the Wellbeing Report. In January the Board had noted the findings of the Wellbeing Survey. Arising from the findings the Wellbeing Programme and a range of Services have been launched. By virtue of being a confidential service only indicative feedback is available but it is overwhelmingly positive. Welfare Clinics will begin in September and have worked well in other Departments.
- 4.7 The Wellbeing report on the YJA has now been given to Declan McGeown, the Chief Executive, who is considering and addressing the findings. Wellbeing reviews will now be undertaken in NICTS and NIPS. Engagement teams will be formed to follow up on these reports and oversee the implementation of improvements.

Performance Management Update

- 4.8 The Board noted the update and asked that every effort be made to complete all outstanding 2014/15 reports before the 2015/16 mid year reviews are due in September. An update will be provided to the September Board meeting.

Communications

Board Brief

- 4.9 The Board reviewed and agreed the draft Brief.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Date of Next Meeting

- 5.1 Lian Patterson informed the Board that preparations for the Fire and Rescue Service joining the Department are progressing and that the Service will be factored into the budget negotiations. Further updates will be provided to the Board throughout the Autumn.
- 5.2 David Lavery provided an update on the Legal Aid strike. The Judicial Review taken by the Bar is due to be heard at the end of September.
- 5.3 The next meeting will take place on 30 September 2015 in Castle Buildings, Belfast at 2pm.