

DEPARTMENTAL BOARD MEETING

- Minutes -

Wednesday 18 September 2019 at 10.30 am

Castle Buildings Conference Room

Present:	Peter May	Permanent Secretary (Chair)
	Deborah Brown	Director, Justice Delivery
	Ronnie Armour	Director, Reducing Offending and Head of NI Prison Service (NIPS)
	Anthony Harbinson	Director, Access to Justice
	Maura Campbell	Deputy Director, Safer Communities
	Clarke Black	Independent Board Member
	Heather Baily	Independent Board Member
In attendance:	Fergal McCallion	NICSHR
	Sinead Simpson	Head of Corporate Engagement and Communication Division (CECD)
	Maria Watson	Northern Ireland Prison Service, item 5 only
	Graham Walker	Brexit Preparedness, item 7 only
	Sinead Bell	Deputy Board Secretary
Apologies:	Claire Archbold	Director, Safer Communities
	Clare Dornan	Board Secretary

The meeting commenced at 10.30

1. APOLOGIES

1.1 The Chair noted the apologies from Claire Archbold and Clare Dornan and welcomed Maura Campbell to the meeting as Claire's deputy, and Sinead Bell as Clare Dornan's deputy.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

2.1 Minutes of the previous meeting were agreed. The Board noted the progress made on the actions.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 The Chair asked for any declarations of interest or any changes required to the register. None were raised.

4. UPDATES

a) Strategic issues

4.1 The Chair noted the ongoing political uncertainties

b) BREXIT

4.2 The Chair stated that given Brexit was covered as a deep dive discussion within this meeting all he would state at this point was to acknowledge the large time commitment by staff across the department.

c) Resourcing issues/Finance update.

4.3 The Chair noted that the Strategic Resource Committee (SRC) held before the Departmental Board that morning had covered all finance issues. The Board noted the following decisions taken at the SRC:

Decision: In-year financial position – the SRC noted the pressures presented at the in-year finance update exercise, and agreed to the recommendations in the paper; and

Decision: Future year finance exercise – the SRC agreed the approach as presented in the paper, the return to the DoF Future Years exercise, and the proposed next steps.

5 PRISONS 2020 END OF YEAR 1 REPORT AND LAUNCH OF YEAR 2 PLAN

5.1 Maria Watson, Programme Manager presented her paper to the Board. Maria gave a brief overview of the timeline of the programme and explained the paper before the Board outlining the achievements and challenges of Year 1. Built on the 4 pillars of Services, People, Infrastructure and Programmes the Prisons 2020 plan aims to make fundamental improvements for both staff and people in Prison care.

5.2 Particular points to note included:

- Success of Year 1 was firstly the engagement with staff and management, with a very focussed communication strategy ensuring staff were informed of how the programme would affect them;
- The visible presence of the Programme Team and Ronnie Armour internally and the Prisons 2020 narrative displayed widely throughout establishments and also externally attendance at NICS Live, PCSP's and councils.

- Particularly successful initiatives delivered in Year 1 such as:
 - Prisons Wellbeing Programme,
 - Leadership Development to help empower individuals,
 - The introduction of a harm reduction landing,
 - Wellness Hub
 - Older Person landing to focus on vulnerable individuals to work alongside the SPAR evolution programme to provide better outcomes alongwith Learning and Skills and Family Strategy.
 - A recent introduction of Autism and Disability Friendly visits in Maghaberry
 - Upcoming opening of Davis House which will assist in improving how NIPS looks after those in their care and
 - The reflection of the Prisons 2020 work in the nominations for Valuing Our People Awards and NICS Awards allowing staff to receive recognition for their work.

5.3 Maria explained it was an ambitious programme delivered within 6 months. The success was how it had been received and discussed amongst staff and others. Work had been completed on the design of Year 2 plan and formed the basis of the objectives in the wider Departmental Business Plan.

5.4 It was recognised by the Board that this was a cultural change for NIPS and that a lot of work was ongoing with long-term benefits. It was hoped that these benefits would be measured and outcomes demonstrated. Maria agreed this was important and noted that Future Leader training being completed was reaping benefits wherein senior officers are leading in innovative programmes such as the Autism and Disability Friendly visits and the recent new playground.

5.5 Heather Baily noted how the “bottom up” change was leading the way for other jurisdictions and Ronnie Armour agreed noting a recent visit from UK prisons officials. Deborah Brown agreed the information was very powerful and requested to speak with Maria regarding the Leadership Programme.

Action: Deborah Brown and Maria Watson to meet regarding the NIPS Leadership Programme

5.6 Ronnie Armour explained work to develop the Year 2 narrative including a brand of “competent, confident and compassionate” and in this context noted that in November there would be an event in Davis House to begin consultation on how NIPS manage vulnerable prisoners.

5.7 Peter thanked Maria and Ronnie for the update on Prisons 2020.

6 PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS

6.1 Following on from previous discussions Maura outlined the work done to date in considering the establishment of a Public Appointments Unit and the issues this raised. She talked members through a number of options. Members agreed the proposals in the paper, namely that:

- A Public Appointments Unit should be set up. Initially, the appointments process should be managed jointly by sponsor branches and PAU with incremental progression to option 3: appointments led by PAU with input from sponsor branches.
- The Unit should sit with the Corporate Engagement and Communications Division in the proposed new Governance Unit;
- and that further work was required on mapping of workloads and resources with a further report on the resourcing impact required. Maura expressed her thanks to Lisa Boal for drafting the paper.

Action: Sinead Simpson and Maura Campbell to map workload/resource of PAU and bring a further paper back to the Board.

7 DEEP DIVE DISCUSSION – BREXIT PREPAREDNESS

7.1 The Board were asked to consider and note the content of the report. Graham explained that DoJ planning continues, with a No Deal Exit as the planning assumption. The Department plans were well developed and assessed as such in a peer review by TEO. The Board considered the risks and whether the mitigations were sufficient and agreed C3 arrangements were in line with requirements. The Board thanked Graham for the report and agreed the recommendations which were:

- That the DOJ Brexit Preparation Plan (at Annex A) is sufficient;
- That the risks are properly reflected;
- And the mitigations sufficient;
- That the C3 arrangements are in line with requirements.

The Board agreed to keep the risks under review.

8 QUARTERLY REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE AGAINST THE BUSINESS PLAN 19/20 INCLUDING UPDATE ON RISK REGISTER

8.1 Sinead explained the update on the progress against the 22 objectives in the business plan and noted that of the 58 actions 15 were amber (action required) and 43 green (on target).

8.2 It was noted this was an accurate reflection of progress on actions but not necessarily on achievement of outcomes. In this context Sinead noted:

- Next year's plan would take a greater outcome focus but it was important to measure progress against the targets set this year;
- Ongoing work within the department was seeking to promote collaborative working around the six Departmental themes.

8.3 Sinead updated the Board following a risk register workshop that the risk register was currently being reworked and it would be a paper at the next Board.

Action: Sinead Simpson to put a paper to the SMT on more collaborative working

9 REVIEW OF BOARD EFFECTIVENESS

9.1 The Board received a verbal update on plans for the Board to take time out to review their effectiveness and noted that proposals would be circulated after discussion with Cora Robinson, who is assisting the Department with Leadership Development work.

Action: Deborah Brown to circulate proposals on Board effectiveness

10 HR UPDATE

10.1 The Board noted the content of the report provided by NICSHR including the detail on competitions activity around the department.

10.2 The Board noted plans to roll out on 25 November to Line Managers an enhanced role in Management of Sickness Absence. Training currently available to staff was noted alongside further plans to promote awareness of the change and ensure all staff within the department received the information they required. It was recognised this was a significant culture change and it was important to embed it properly to ensure consistency.

10.3 The Board noted that management information was being revamped but was keen to see statistics on sickness absence and compliance on performance management.

Action: Fergal McCallion to ensure sick absence levels are included in future reports to the Departmental Management Board

11 DECISIONS MADE UNDER THE NI EXECUTIVE ACT

11.1 The Board noted the decisions made under the NI Executive Act.

12 BOARD BRIEF

12. The Board approved the content of the DoJ Board Brief.

13 KEY MESSAGES

13.1 The Board agreed that the key messages should be;

- Brexit – increased “no deal” planning and peer review of DoJ plans which found them to be well developed
- Prisons 2020 and next year plans
- Plans for a Public Appointments Unit

Date of next meeting 14 October 2019.

The meeting ended at 12.10