

DEPARTMENTAL BOARD MEETING

- Minutes -

Wednesday 18 December 2019 at 9.00

Castle Buildings 5th Floor Meeting Room

Present:	Peter May Deborah Brown Ronnie Armour	Permanent Secretary (Chair) Director, Justice Delivery Director, Reducing Offending and Head of NI Prison Service (NIPS)
	Anthony Harbinson Claire Archbold Clarke Black Heather Baily	Director, Access to Justice Director, Safer Communities Independent Board Member Independent Board Member
In attendance:	Brendan Devlin Jacqui Wallace Iggy O'Doherty Clare Dornan	Head of Governance Unit NICS HR Representative DoF – Chief Strategy Officer Board Secretary

Four Board Observers present

Apologies: None

1. APOLOGIES

1.1 No apologies were required.

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. STRATEGIC UPDATE

a) Strategic issues

4.1 Peter referred to the local political talks taking place this week and explained that the powers passed to NICS Permanent Secretaries under the NI EFEF Act 2018 expire on 13 January 2020. The recent health strikes are also an added impetus for a return of Devolution.

4.2 In preparation for a possible return to Devolution work has commenced with the commissioning of an updated first day brief and a meeting of the Legislative Programme Board. This will ensure that the Department is ready for Ministers and that officials are familiar with the processes in place for dealing with AQs, Ministerial correspondence and other Ministerial issues. Time and effort invested now to progress these far as we can will pay dividends.

b) BREXIT

4.3 Anthony advised that plans are now gathering pace and that the withdrawal agreement is now anticipated to go through Parliament meaning that UK will leave the EU on 31 January with a transition period in place to December 2020. "No Deal" is now less likely. Trade, economy and justice are the more complex issues in the negotiations and will require more work and time. The Home Office (HO) are taking the lead in justice negotiations and DoJ role is to ensure that we secure the best deal for justice in Northern Ireland. Overall the EU needs the same things from the negotiations. The Board noted that the plans in place for dealing with a "No deal" scenario provide a basis on which to build in the transition period.

c) Resourcing issues/Finance update.

4.4 The Board considered the November Finance report, and the forecast year end position, noting that in line with the decision by SRC, funding has been surrendered to DoF as part of the January Monitoring Round. The Department will continue to monitor the financial position in the approach to year end to ensure that the Department lives within the revised budget.

d) Other strategic updates from Executive Members

4.5 The Board heard about the impact of the on-going health strike on Prisons. The Southern Eastern Health and Social Care Trust (SEHSCT) are providing limited cover and only in critical cases. Cover is tight and Prisons are operating on a Christmas day rota basis. The situation is being closely monitored.

4.6 The Board also heard of plans for an Organised Crime Strategy and a Community Safety Framework.

Action – Claire Archbold to circulate the Draft Organised Crime Strategy to Directors.

5 PRESENTATION – CYBER FRAMEWORK

5.1 Iggy O'Doherty, the Department of Finance (DoF) Chief Strategy Officer's presentation covered:

- NI Strategic Framework for action and the 3 themes identified
- Stay safe on-line
- NICS – new contract for CHECK services 2019-2025
- Key messages for DoJ
 - The importance of protecting information
 - Cyber security – not just an issue for IT
 - NICS investing in cyber as a career path
 - The need to raise staff awareness
 - Incident management procedures are critical
 - Cyber security should be included in risk registers
 - GDPR helps strengthen public sector assets.

5.2 The Board discussed the different responsibilities under the Shared Services arrangements and the key issues for the Department and noted that there was an existing risk on the risk register and that a risk had been escalated from IROC for discussion in a later agenda item. The Board also discussed the need for on-going and up to date training and awareness based on intelligence being gathered at the centre. They noted that Centre for Applied Learning (CAL) are developing training packages for this purpose.

5.3 The Board welcomed the offer from DOF Cyber Security team to provide briefings for staff.

6 PREPAREDNESS FOR A POTENTIAL RETURN OF DEVOLUTION

6.1 Peter advised that the purpose of this item was to update the Board on the work on-going within the Department. The Board noted the plans in place and the progress against the timescales.

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7 QUARTERLY REVIEW OF:

- **PROGRESS AGAINST BUSINESS PLAN**
- **RISK REGISTER AND ISSUES LOG**

7.1 The Board Secretary presented both papers. The Board was invited to note the progress against the Business Plan and the number of actions with a yellow RAG status.

Decision - The Board agreed that no additional action was required at this stage as any slippage was in relation to timings.

7.2 The Board were also asked to:

- Note the content of the risk register.
- Note and agree the inherent risk ratings.
- Agree the current risk ratings.
- Consider the IROC Risk for consideration by the Board.
- Consider the risks escalated by Agencies (and advise on whether or not the process meets the Board needs).
- Agree the content of the issues log.

7.3 The Board considered each of the point above and agreed the content of the risk register, the inherent and current risk ratings and the issues log. They also considered the risk escalated from IROC.

Decision – Risk escalated from IROC to be incorporated into Departmental Risk 5.

Action – Deborah to re-word existing Risk 5 to cover the issues raised by IROC.

Decision – The Board agreed the content of the risk register, the inherent and current risk ratings and the issues log.

7.4 The Board considered whether any risks from the list escalated by Agencies/Directorates should be included in the Departmental register but decided none warranted inclusion. The potential role for Compensation Services in making payments to legacy victims and the establishment of a Redress Board and the timelines for payments were items noted for further consideration when the situation was clearer.

Decision – The Board agreed that the issues raised by Agencies were adequately covered in the Departmental Risk Register.

8 UPDATE ON IIP

8.1 Deborah provided a verbal update on the IIP assessment process. The series of face to face meetings have now concluded. A report will be received in mid- January when the

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results will be known. The assessor has advised that they will be happy to present the key findings to the Board (January or February if possible) and discuss next steps

8.2 The Board agreed that it would be helpful for the Assessor to meet with the Board.

Action – Board Secretary to arrange for IIP Assessor to be invited to attend a DoJ Board meeting in either January or February.

9 NOVEMBER DARC UPATE

9.1 Clarke talked to his paper and highlighted a number of issues that had arisen at the meeting. The Board noted the update.

10. DECISIONS MADE UNDER THE NI EFEF ACT

10.1 The Board noted the content of decisions made in the past month.

11. HR UPDATE

11.1 This item was taken in closed session and was dealt with at the end of the meeting.

11.2 The NICS HR representative talked through the report provided and highlighted a number of points.

- Issues raised in relation to the content of HR Management Information
- Temporary Promotions over 12 months – Intention is to replace these substantively from future promotion lists where possible.
- Performance Management – Figures for completion of mid-year reviews has risen from 52 to 75% in the last month.
- Industrial action and impact on business areas
- Talent Management – will be rolled out and will be tailored to the Department's needs.
- Sickness absence levels

11.3 The Board noted that the sickness absence levels were higher than average and discussed possible reasons for this. This led to a discussion on mental health and again the Board noted the DoJ figures are higher than NICS figures. The Board also noted the very substantial reductions in staff numbers since 2010 and discussed the various reasons for that.

Action – Sinead Simpson to add a table showing budget against the staff numbers.

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Action – Deborah to speak to Chief Executives and Grade 5's to develop a narrative around staffing levels.

Action – NICSHR to provide a comparison of mental health absence figures for 2018 and 2019.

12. Key Messages

12.1 The key messages for inclusion in the Board update were to highlight the work being done across the Department:

- In preparation for potential return of Ministers
- to establish the Historical Institutional Abuse (HIA) Redress Board
- to increase awareness of cyber security issues

13. AOB

13.1 No items of any other business were raised.

Date of next meeting 29 January 2020 in Juvenile Justice Centre in Woodlands, Bangor.

The meeting ended at 11.00