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PROBATION BOARD
22nd June 2006
10.00 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.

PRESENT: S. Harrison (Chair)
A. Abbasi, D. Clark, H. Harker, J. Hinchcliffe,
M. Ismail, A. Khayum, F. McCready, M. Murphy,
H. Redhead, L. Taylor, H. Williams, K. Wyatt.

Also in attendance: J. Fox, B. Kerslake, M. Wright, D. Thomas and J. Tarr.

37. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from O. Gleadall and B. Maslen.

38. Mark O'Neill

S. Harrison announced with regret the recent sudden death of Mark O'Neill, a PSO in the Rotherham Division. Members and officers stood for a few moments in silent memory.

39. Saghir Alam

S. Harrison announced that Saghir Alam, a recent former Member of the Board, had received an OBE for services to people with disabilities in the recent Honours List.

RESOLVED: That a letter be sent on behalf of the Board to S. Alam congratulating him on his award.

40. Welcome

S. Harrison welcomed M. Wright and D. Thomas in their new roles.

41. Declarations of interest

F. McCready declared a non-pecuniary interest in the Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS). (Agenda item 8) (See also Minute 47 below)

42. Items to be considered in the absence of the public

RESOLVED: That the public be excluded during consideration of the Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) – Agenda item 8. (Minute 48 refers).

43. Minutes of last meeting

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 25th May 2006 be approved.

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44. Matters arising

i) ESI follow-up inspection (Minute 25)

H. Harker said that the final HMIP Report had not yet been received and explained how it was likely to be dealt with, depending on its date of receipt.

ii) Transport issues and Bank Holiday Tuesdays (Minute 26)

H. Harker said that because of heavy demands on diary time of senior managers, which would be referred to later in the meeting, the proposal to discuss this with Staff Side in advance of the JNCC had not proved possible. S. Harrison said she was sure the Unions would understand the position.

iii) Custody plus, SLA meetings, Area boundaries and one-to-one meetings with the Chair (Minute 31)

Custody plus – H. Harker said there had been a very useful discussion of this matter at the recent Criminal Justice Board (CJB). J. Hinchcliffe said recent media coverage gave the impression it would not proceed.

SLA meetings – S. Harrison said she had discussed attendance with two Chair colleagues and had agreed that in future attendance would be restricted to those for whom it was necessary.

Area boundaries – S. Harrison said this was on hold at the moment and she would keep Members informed of developments. Collaborative working in the Region was still being pursued and H. Harker said that this applied particularly to Human Resources issues.

One-to-one meetings with the Chair – S. Harrison said she was happy to arrange meetings on request

RESOLVED: That a pro forma be sent to those Members whose membership was due to cease on 31st March 2007 asking whether they were prepared to continue to serve in the event that the relevant regulations were to be amended.

iv) Recruitment of new Chief Officer (Minute 34(ii))

S. Harrison detailed the arrangements for the recruitment of the new Chief Officer and said she would discuss the up-to-date position with the National Director at the forthcoming PBA General Meeting.

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45. First draft of statutory Annual Report 2005/06

H. Harker briefly introduced the draft Annual Report and said that the text had already been submitted to the NPD and the financial input would be submitted when the Accounts had been closed. H. Redhead suggested a minor amendment on page 15 and H. Harker asked Members who had further amendments to propose to send them to J. Tarr by 1st July.

RESOLVED: That the first draft of the Annual Report be noted.

46. HMIP Report on Anthony Rice – May 2006

M. Wright said she had compared the Rice Report with that on Hanson and White but there appeared to be little overlap. An Action Plan had been drafted on the former, which focussed on lifer issues, custody guidance and MAPPAs Strategic Management Board (SMB) matters. Developments on MAPPAs issues would be taken forward via the SMB. The SMM had considered the Action Plan on 16th June and would take it forward in future meetings, together with that for Hanson and White.

After a lengthy discussion, during which Officers answered Members' questions, it was

RESOLVED:

1. That a further report be submitted to the Board in September detailing any action taken regarding the Rice Report.
2. That a Board seminar be arranged in late September/early October and any resulting recommendations be considered at the Board meeting in October, alongside the MAPPAs Annual Report.
3. Among the topics to be considered for inclusion in the seminar were: the NPS-SY structure for dealing with dangerous offenders (possibly using an anonymised case study) and how it fits with MAPPAs and the SMB, and the role of the Parole Board and its members.
4. That when H. Harker and J. Tarr prepare a press release on the Rice Report they also consider and send to Members appropriate briefing material regarding issues on which they may be asked for comments in their role as Board Members.

47. Sex offenders

(NOTE: M. Murphy declared an interest as this item was progressing as he was a governor at a school near Norfolk Park Approved Premise)

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J. Tarr reported on articles from the News of the World on 18th June, from The Star on 19th June and handed round a copy of H. Harker's statement on sex offenders in Approved Premises in SY. H. Harker and J. Tarr went on to comment in some detail about telephone contacts with the NPD and media, including press interviews, they had had over the last weekend on this matter and the actions of managers to explain the press coverage to staff and residents at Norfolk Park. H. Harker also referred to a series of meetings with local residents in the Norfolk Park area in the autumn of 2005 when they had stressed that no sex offenders were housed in the Hostel and that there were no plans to do so. J. Tarr had recently sent e-mails to the local Councillors they had met at the time to reiterate that the position remained unchanged. The National Director had contacted her on Saturday morning because the Home Secretary had said that no sex offenders should be housed in an Approved Premise next to a school. Nothing had been heard from the NPD since then. The matter was now taking phenomenal amounts of management time and was creating massive problems for the Service. The MAPPA SMB, referred to earlier, was proving invaluable and up to date assessments and other checks were being carried out on all sex offenders supervised in SY, to ensure they were being managed correctly.

K. Wyatt said that according to experts sex offences were committed mainly within families. D. Thomas suggested that H. Harker's statement could usefully be posted on the Service's website. J. Tarr added that local television channels had followed up the News of the World articles and he had seen two interviews with local residents who had spoken positively about the presence of sex offenders and the way they were managed by the Service. H. Harker added that the remaining two Approved Premises in SY – Rookwood and Town Moor – enjoyed good relationships with their local communities and the managers were very active in maintaining them.

S. Harrison thanked the Officers for the update and said the Board appreciated the amount of management time taken in dealing with the matter.

48. Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS)

B. Kerslake introduced his paper by commenting on the national context and the latest developments locally. He noted that a great deal of uncertainty remained and the timescales were extremely tight for resolving a significant number of matters. There was potential for a lot of work and consideration needed to be given to the continuing demands, assuming that matters were satisfactorily resolved for the implementation of the new arrangements on the due date.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

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49. Art and creative writing in Probation

S. Harrison said she had discussed her paper with J. Tarr and they recommended that the proposal should be remitted to the newly created Centenary Working Group and also be taken forward via the Diversity Management Committees. Members noted other resources worth exploring e.g. poems by offenders, the recording studio in Lindholme Prison and the possibilities of short films being created.

RESOLVED: That the proposal outlined in the report, together with the other resources mentioned, be considered by the Centenary Working Group.

50. Audit Committee

i) Audit Committee meeting 16th May 2006

J. Hinchcliffe said the report covered the points on which he had given a verbal report at the last Board meeting.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the approval of the draft Accounts and their submission to the NPD (by the required deadline) and the external auditors be noted.

ii) Annual Report of Audit Committee 2005/06

J. Hinchcliffe briefly introduced the Annual Report, placed on record his thanks to members of the Audit Committee and noted that it was good to have the three Members who had agreed to attend as observers. He asked the Board to address the issues arising from the self-assessment exercise, covered in paragraph 5.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Annual Report be noted and that it be disseminated widely within NPS-SY.
2. That in respect of the issues in paragraph 5, the Board express its satisfaction with the current arrangements/way of working subject to B. Kerslake and J. Fox agreeing suitable words for inclusion in the Terms of Reference to cover the powers of co-opted members.

51. Reports back from Members and Working Groups

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i) Feedback from the senior management and Board development day – 9th June

H. Williams and F. McCready gave verbal reports on the presentations and workshops they had attended. J. Hinchcliffe, M. Ismail and K. Wyatt also commented on their experiences on the day. All agreed it had been a very useful and interesting event. H. Harker said that the time demands on senior managers in particular should not be underestimated. M. Ismail said in relation to contestability he had concerns whether quality could be maintained when many firms in the private sector were profit driven.

ii) Centenary Working Group – 8th June 2006

K. Wyatt commented briefly on the content of his report which had been tabled and Members and Officers commented on the ideas proposed. S. Harrison said that Sheffield Hallam University was staging a large international conference on Probation in 2007 and she had advised Professor Paul Senior, Faculty of Development and Society, that the Service would wish to be involved.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the Working Group continue to address issues regarding the Centenary and take note of the 'steer' offered by the Board today.

52. Report template

RESOLVED:

1. That Members be encouraged to use the template when preparing draft reports.
2. That with effect from the July meeting papers be submitted wherever possible using Arial font, size 12.

53. Chair's diary

RESOLVED: That the diary be noted.

54. Chief Officers' Report

i) Age Discrimination Regulations and retirement age

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RESOLVED: That the introduction of a mandatory retirement age be approved for all staff, subject to consideration of any requests for extension in the circumstances outlined in the report now considered.

- ii) Performance Report 20 and year-end weighted scorecard 2005/06

RESOLVED: That the summary of Performance Report 20 and the year-end weighted scorecard 2005/06 be noted.

- iii) Senior management structure

RESOLVED: That the schedules be noted.

- iv) Chair/Chief Officer meetings with Local Authority Chief Executives and Leaders

RESOLVED: That the report on the meetings be noted.

- v) National Workload Management Tool

RESOLVED: That the update on the National Workload Measurement Tool be noted.

- vi) Abbeyfield Park Multicultural Festival – Sunday 9th July 2006

RESOLVED: That any Member wishing to join staff in representing the Area contact J. Tarr as soon as possible.

- vii) Likely Board agenda items - July to December 2006

RESOLVED: That the schedule be noted.

- viii) Document received

RESOLVED: That receipt of the HMIP Report 'Working to make amends' – An inspection of the delivery of Enhanced Community Punishment and Unpaid Work by the National Probation Service, be noted.

55. Next Meeting: 10.00 a.m. Thursday **13th** July 2006 in the Board Room, Division Street, Sheffield.

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