

PROBATION BOARD

31st March 2006

10.00 a.m. to 12.50 p.m.

PRESENT: S. Harrison (Chair)
A. Abbasi, J. Hinchcliffe, M. Ismail, A. Khayum,
F. McCready, H. Redhead, L. Taylor, H. Williams.

Also in attendance: J. Fox, B. Kerslake, P. McMullan.

167. Welcome

S. Harrison formally welcomed the three new Members, A. Khayum, F. McCready and H. Williams to the meeting.

168. Graham Goodale

S. Harrison announced with regret the recent sudden death of Graham Goodale, a PSO in the Barnsley Division. Members and officers stood for a few moments in silent memory. It was agreed that A. Abbasi would attend the service at Barnsley Crematorium on 4th April with P. McMullan.

169. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from D. Clark, O. Gleadall, H. Harker, B. Maslen, M. Murphy and K. Wyatt.

170. Declarations of interest

No interests were declared.

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

RESOLVED: That the public be excluded during consideration of the papers '2006/07 Revenue Budget: Offender Management and Interventions cost split' and '2006/07: 5% Voluntary, Community and Private Sector expenditure target' (enclosures to Agenda item 7), by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted. Minutes 176 and 177 refer.

172. Minutes of last meeting

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd February 2006 be

approved, subject to:

- i) the deletion of 'acceptable' and substitution of 'deliverable' in the fourth line of Minute 160,
- ii) the deletion of 'were' and substitution of 'was' in the first line of Minute 165.

173. Matters arising

- i) 'Pool' of Members to deputise for the Chair (Minute 161)

S. Harrison said that J. Hinchcliffe, B. Maslen and K. Wyatt had volunteered to form the 'pool' and recorded her thanks to them.

- ii) Muslim speaker to address a seminar (Minute 161)

Replying to a question from M. Ismail on progress, J. Fox said this was a matter he had not yet sorted.

174. 2006/07 Business Plan

P. McMullan said that the Plan had not been finalised at this time. The Service's budget was not yet known and performance targets for 2006/07 were still awaited. Officers were working on a draft which would be submitted in April. The draft would mirror the SLAs which in turn would replicate the 'shadow' targets which Services were to be given.

RESOLVED: That the verbal update be noted.

175. Revenue budget 2006/07

B. Kerslake apologised for the lateness of the report and said he had waited as long as possible in the hope that the NPD would have confirmed the resource allocation. In the absence of that confirmation he had prepared and was proposing a budget that balanced to an assumed allocation. There was a degree of risk in this assumption. He went on to detail the other challenges and risks outlined in the report, which he believed were reasonable and commended the proposed budget. He would report the formal allocation to the Board when it was received from the NPD. Together with Chief Officer colleagues he answered Members' questions.

RESOLVED: That the Revenue Budget be approved.

176. 2006/07 Revenue budget: Offender Management and Interventions cost split

B. Kerslake submitted a report indicating that it was a requirement that the Revenue Budget for 2006/07 was split into those costs associated with Offender Management and those associated with Interventions and that the two figures had to be inserted into the two Service level Agreements (SLAs)

with the Regional Offender Manager (ROM). He also provided a brief overview of the process for arriving at the two figures to be included. There was an expectation that actual expenditure would be reported against those budget totals during the course of reporting on SLA performance. J. Hinchcliffe stressed that the ROM was only given global figures and did not receive a breakdown. B. Kerslake said there were no guidelines yet on how the commissioning process would work in the future and J. Fox added that the ROM would attend the May Board meeting.

RESOLVED: That the current basis for identifying Offender Management and Interventions costs for inclusion in the respective SLAs be noted.

177. 2006/07: 5% Voluntary, Community and Private Sector expenditure target

B. Kerslake said SY had a good basis from which to move forward and the challenges were outlined in the paper.

A. Abbasi and M. Ismail asked the officers to be imaginative and consider involving 'non-traditional' agencies in order to meet the Board's declared diversity commitments. P. McMullan said H. Harker would welcome those suggestions and noted that he had already discussed these aspects with her and B. Kerslake. B. Kerslake added that whilst he agreed with the principle of what the NPD wished to achieve, he felt that the speed with which they wished to do so was a high risk strategy. F. McCready said she welcomed the move because it would offer the Service opportunities to free up staff time to allow them to concentrate on core tasks. B. Kerslake said commercial agencies would outsource things that were not their core business. However, if the Service put out things that were not its core business e.g. financial services, it would not help it achieve 5% because that only related to offender services.

RESOLVED: That the current position with and the implications of the 5% expenditure target be noted and the 'direction of travel' towards its achievement, outlined in the paper, be approved.

178. Service Level Agreements (SLAs)

P. McMullan said that together with S. Harrison, J. Hinchcliffe, J. Fox and B. Kerslake he had met the Regional Offender Manager on 29th March and, in the Officers' opinion there was nothing in either SLA which was not deliverable. B. Kerslake said the budget figures approved earlier had been included in the SLAs and if they changed after the NPD approved the resource allocation the figures could be amended. J. Fox said the legal status of the SLAs was not very clear but he felt that it would be sensible to have a practice run using them and his advice was to sign. S. Harrison said that, based on the advice from the senior managers, she would sign them.

179. HMIP Report on Hanson and White

P. McMullan referred to the 'in-house' process for investigating incidents where an offender carries out a Serious Further Offence and noted that in the case of Hanson and White an independent enquiry had been carried out. He said the Report of the Enquiry was a tragic catalogue of mis-management, which he felt was encapsulated in the third paragraph on page 2. He noted that evidence tended to indicate that cases which led to SFO investigations were not high risk and quality risk assessment and supervision were the key. He added that it was not practical to do full risk assessments on every case, as recommended by the Chief Inspector. Replying to a suggestion by M. Ismail to focus on MAPPA cases and involve outside agencies at as early a stage as possible, he said that MAPPA processes concentrated on 'the critical few' and it was often the next level down (Level 2) offenders who were problematic.

P. McMullan went on to refer to recent interest from the News of the World in Approved Premises and those accommodating sex offenders in particular. It was understood that the newspaper was to 'out' all Approved Premises in the country, quoting addresses and printing photographs of sex offenders. A raft of plans had been put in place locally, mainly involving the Police, but thankfully they were not needed because the newspaper had not proceeded with its alleged proposal. He placed on record his thanks to the Police, staff in the Approved Premises and the Unions for their assistance in dealing with the matter.

RESOLVED: That the Report on Hanson and White and the verbal report on the recent media interest in Approved Premises be noted.

180. Serious Further Offences (SFOs)

P. McMullan's report gave an overview of SFO reports completed in SY in 2005/06, presented some factual/statistical information regarding those cases, outlined practice/management issues identified and actions taken and gave an outline of expected changes to procedures. He also had to submit an annual report on deaths of offenders under supervision and quoted from the current one. In future years he would submit a copy to the Board. He undertook to raise at the National Seminar in May whether 'index offence' could include something about racial offences and following the seminar would advise the Board about the new procedures. Members expressed their satisfaction with their current role in reviewing reports.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

181. ESI Action Plan

P. McMullan said the Plan represented both work done and still ongoing. Any outstanding areas of work would now be integrated into the 2006/07 Business Plan.

RESOLVED: That the progress and future work of the Action Plan be noted and incorporated into the Business Plan.

182. Industrial Action

P. McMullan said management had put mechanisms in place to deal with the industrial action on 28th March and noted that overall the disruption to services had been low key. The Courts had been advised of possible disruption in advance and three of the four Magistrates' Courts had been staffed on the day. He was grateful to the Unions who had allowed their members to operate in Approved Premises. Approximately 50% of staff had taken part in the action.

183. Audit Committee

J. Hinchcliffe commented on the main business transacted at the recent Audit Committee.

RESOLVED:

1. That the internal and external Audit Plans for 2006/07, as commended by the Audit Committee, be approved.
2. That Members interested in becoming members of the Audit Committee advise J. Fox.

184. Expenditure Monitoring Position

B. Kerslake said he hoped his report was both self-explanatory and reassuring for Members.

RESOLVED: That the current and projected expenditure position be noted.

185. Reports back from Members and Working Groups

Members who had attended spoke of their experience of the recent job evaluation training events in Wakefield and discussed with officers the evaluation exercise, which had to be completed by the end of September, and the possible implications for the budget if a large number of staff appealed and were successful.

186. Chair's diary

A revised version of the diary report was tabled and S. Harrison pointed out that the meeting on 24th April was with the Leader and Chief Executive of Rotherham Borough Council and not Sheffield City Council.

RESOLVED:

1. That the revised diary report, as now amended, be received.

2. That O. Gleadall, M. Ismail, B. Maslen and K. Wyatt attend the NOMS Sentencer Conference on 21st April.

187. Chief Officers' Report

i) Probation Centenary

RESOLVED: That this matter be considered at a future meeting.

ii) South Yorkshire Criminal Justice Board

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the CJB held on 9th February 2006 be noted.

iii) Supporting People Inspection: Barnsley

B. Kerslake noted that the Sheffield Supporting People inspection was also due to report in the coming week.

RESOLVED: That the information about the forthcoming inspection in Barnsley be noted.

iv) Green Paper: Reducing Re-offending Through Skills and Employment

Each Member present was handed a copy of 'Get Wise', Issue 11, Winter 2005/06 which included an executive summary of the Green Paper.

RESOLVED: That the current position in NPS-SY be noted.

v) PS Plus 3

RESOLVED: That the unfortunate development regarding funding be noted.

vi) Complaint by a Serving Prisoner

RESOLVED: That the decision of the Panel be noted.

J. Fox added that this complaint had been referred by the prisoner to the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman.

vii) Schedule of Likely Board Agenda Items – April to December 2006

RESOLVED: That the schedule be noted.

188. Board seminar on Court issues

J. Fox said the seminar was likely to be held at 2.00 p.m. on Wednesday 24th May. Sharon Greenhough, Area Director, Her Majesty's Court Service, had been invited to attend.

189. John Raine

J. Fox reported that John Raine had been re-elected unopposed as Chair of the Probation Boards' Association.

190. Re-structuring matters

Each Member present was handed a copy of:

- i) Home Office news release 21st March 2006 'Written Ministerial Statement – Police Force re-structuring',
- ii) Home Office: 'Police Force re-structuring - A sixty second brief.'
- iii) NOMS: 'Summary of responses to re-structuring Probation to reduce re-offending.'

191. Next Meeting: 10.00 a.m. Thursday 27th April 2006 in the Board Room, Division Street, Sheffield.

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