



PROBATION BOARD
25th October 2007
10 am to 12.30 pm

Present: H. Redhead (Chair), R. Brown,
N. Cadet, B. Fatogun, A. Khayum, B. Maslen,
H. Williams, R. Akroyd, F. McCready, K. Wyatt,
M. Murphy.

Also in attendance: J. Fox, B. Kerlake, A. Cullen (items 85 – 93), J. Tarr.

85. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from M. Thomas, D. Thomas and M. Wright.

86. Declarations of interest by members

No interests were declared.

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

RESOLVED: none.

88. Minutes of last meeting

It was noted by the meeting that there was an error on minute 84 of the previous minutes, the next meeting was to be held on the 25th October (today), not the 27th September 2007.

RESOLVED: the minutes of the meeting held on the 27th September 2007 be approved.

89. Matters arising

i) JNCC – (Minute 71 (ii))

R. Brown advised the meeting that the dispute had still not been resolved and that A. Cullen was meeting with UNISON today.

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ii) Membership of the Board (minute 72)

J. Fox advised the meeting that G. Wordsworth had resigned by letter to Roger Hill earlier this week. He has been in touch with NOMS to get the post advertised, this will be put in either the Sheffield Star or the Yorkshire Post and when it arrives from NOMS he will distribute the advert amongst current Board Members should they wish to apply. J. Fox said that he hoped H. Redhead would remain acting Chair until December, and it is expected that a new Chair will be in post by 31st March 2008. R. Akroyd asked if it would be possible to send a letter of thanks from the Board to G. Wordsworth.

RESOLVED: J. Fox to write to G. Wordsworth on behalf of the Board.

ii) Minute 83 iii

B. Maslen advised that she had been in touch with NAPA, and 11 Board Members have applied, she is awaiting the outcome of a meeting on the 8th November.

90. Performance

R. Brown presented the report in D. Thomas' absence. The information is for the 2nd quarter, however, this is not nationally available until November. She advised the meeting that performance continues to improve and the IPPF results have been put in for September and at the moment we come out as a 3* area.

91. Review of Business Plan

R. Brown advised that previously the Board approved the Business Plan and asked for 6 monthly updates, therefore this is the first 6 month update. She told the Board that the table was prepared by J. Tarr. The Board agreed that they are content with the progress on the Business plan. B. Maslen asked about the sub-contract plan, B. Kerslake advised that a revised set of proposals on this will come to the Board in the near future. R. Akroyd asked whether the reoffending plan is working, R. Brown advised that staff are beginning to work pro-actively and there is evidence that resources are being put to better use with the high risk group of offenders, however it is difficult to change the way that staff work when they have worked in a certain way for a long time. She advised that National research shows that low risk offenders are more likely to reoffend by coming to Probation offices. K. Wyatt explained that he thought the document was well laid out and was in a user friendly format, however he asked that should it not be backed up by on going risk plans, R. Brown assured the Board that behind each point is a 3 year action plan.

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92. Findings of a Study on Reconviction Rates

R. Brown gave her presentation to the meeting. She advised that she wanted to share the results of this research with the Board, as it is good news and something to be celebrated. However, she advised that the Government are not planning to publish them. M. Murphy asked why this was, R. Brown advised that there was no control group therefore researchers would argue that it is not verified. A discussion around the possibility of either the PBA publishing them or maybe getting a control group together was had however it was not thought that either of these options was possible. F. McCready asked that since the research indicated that programmes do well, is it not possible to have more, R. Brown advised that they are trying to develop this area and Alcohol services have already been commissioned in, however, the financial situation at present causes restrictions.

93. Annual Report on Diversity / Compliance of Policies with Legislation

A. Cullen advised the meeting that the legal compliance with the 3 equality schemes are currently not being met and the Gender Scheme has not been published as yet, however, J. Fox has done a lot of work on this and it is hoped that it will be out soon. She advised that she is hoping through the HR review to be able to put a central framework in place.

K. Wyatt raised an issue with the draft disability scheme which came out last year, he felt that the scheme missed important points and should be reviewed. He offered assistance as the RMBC's scheme is already in place. A. Cullen advised that two schemes are compliant however, we are not meeting what we need to in terms of delivery. She said that the Centre had sent a letter to all Chief Officers asking what each areas position was, she advised that it isn't just South Yorkshire who are in this position. She explained to the Board that work is being done to get a framework together however it will be 12 months before this is near completion due to the lack of resources. However, she explained that a business case has been put forward for a Diversity Officer post. A. Khayum commented that he was worried about the weak position we are in and the legal implications this might have, and would like to keep an eye on the situation and hopefully complete it as soon as possible. B. Fatogun asked whether the staff who are given time to attend National Diversity events could not assist with this, A. Cullen advised that although these people are given time to attend meetings they are not given time to do any work for it. It was decided that this issue would be kept on the agenda as it is a priority. H. Redhead thanked A. Cullen for her report and said that he was glad a business case for a Diversity Officer was ongoing, and that the Board will have to accept the current position if there are no resources.

94. Safeguarding Children

In M. Wright's absence, J. Fox explained to the Board that this report was factual and invited comments of which there were none.

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95. Bidding for external funding.

B. Kerslake presented his report and asked the Board to reserve to itself the decision of big bids and delegate to the Senior Management Team the decision on smaller bids. He explained that a big bid would be classed as any amount over £750,000 and asked for them to also make the decisions when the amount of smaller bids comes to over 15% of the total allocation. He said that in these situations the Senior Management Team would present a report to the Board for them to make a decision. R. Akroyd asked what the rationale behind the figure of £750,000 was, B. Kerslake advised that the bids under that figure covered the secure areas, such as prisons, and didn't present a huge financial risk.

RESOLVED: The Board accepts B. Kerslake's proposals.

The Board was asked of B. Kerslake to note the current position with potential ESF bids.

A discussion was had around the DIP Tender, B. Kerslake advised the Board that there are many concerns around taking on the DIP tender and that the SMM had made a decision to withdraw their bid. He asked the Board to agree to the bid being withdrawn. F. McCreedy asked whether there would be implications for the DIP staff if this was to happen, B. Kerslake advised that whoever wins the bid will take on the DIP staff and if everyone decides to take the same step as Probation and withdraw, the PCT will have to enter into negotiations with the current provider or take it on themselves. If that situation arises he advised that the Officers will come back to the Board with a new report. M. Murphy expressed his concern that the DIP service will suffer if the successful bidder does it for a cheaper price, B. Kerslake advised that this is an issue for the PCT Management Team. B. Fatogun asked whether the PCT will be in a financial position to take this on, B. Kerslake advised that the PCT get specific funding for DIP so this should not be a problem. R. Brown added that the risks involved with taking on DIP are too high especially when the service has just started meeting targets, she advised that the Service is not strong enough at the moment to take this on.

RESOLVED: The Board made the decision that the business risk is too great and agreed to withdraw the bid.

96. Expenditure Review

B. Kerslake reported that the current situation is okay, however there is a potential for a new commitment. This is the unsocial hour's payments for Approved Premises staff. When a figure has been agreed with the Trade Unions it is estimated that it will be around £200,000, this consists of £100,000 of this years payments and also £100,000 backdated payments from 2006. He advised that there is a contingency fund of £60,000 and the other £140,000 will have to be generated through making savings by holding as many vacancies as possible. B. Fatogun asked what the implications will

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be for holding vacancies, B. Kerslake explained that there will be pressures on staff, but said that this isn't an absolute ban and the SMM will consider each case on an individual basis. He also highlighted the benefits for the next financial year of holding vacancies at this stage. He advised the Board that he is optimistic of being able to make these savings and is hopeful of some new funding from the centre.

97. Annual Audit Letter

B. Kerslake reported to the Board that the Draft version has been agreed and asked for their approval. K. Wyatt commented that the letter from the External Auditors is very reassuring and it is a credit to B. Kerslake and his team. B. Kerslake advised that plans have been drawn up to look at the recommendations by the Auditors and that it is moving in the right direction.

98. The Comprehensive Spending Review and Future Probation Funding

B. Kerslake presented his report and advised that although the table shows a worst case scenario he felt it important to share it with the Board. He highlighted the need to communicate the difficult position with staff without causing alarm. A discussion took place surrounding funding and bidding. R. Brown advised the meeting that in light of the situation with no cost of living increase and redundancies in the next financial year, the service is in danger of facing severe industrial unrest and it is important to get the unions on side. She said that a number of strategies were in place and the unions have been formally told. K. Wyatt asked when the flat cash figure will become definite, B. Kerslake and R. Brown advised that there has been a suggestion of early December, however there has been no official communication from the Centre even though the Ministry of Justice have had their allocation.

99. Reports back from Members and Working Groups

i) IPPF Presentation at PBA 16th August 2007.

K. Wyatt reported back from the meeting that there is still work in progress. However a decision has been made to look at regions like for like, instead of comparing metropolitans with country sides.

R. Brown reported on the last JNCC meeting, she advised the Board on what had happened in the meeting specifically that UNISON had made the dispute on the on call arrangements in Approved Premises official. B. Maslen advised that she will feed through to A. Cullen any training needs for the JNCC Pool.

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100. Chief Officers Report

i) Decisions of Panel held on 26th September 2007

Item for information only.

ii) PBA Items

Items for information only.

iii) Offender Management Act Implementation

Item for information only.

iv) Probation Estates Strategy

J. Fox reported that the Home Office Estates Team continue to be unresponsive to our needs.

v) South Yorkshire Pension Fund

Item for information only.

vi) Renewal of Lease at Westbar

J. Fox invited the Board to agree to renewing the lease at Westbar.

RESOLVED: The Board agreed

vii) Academy for Criminal Justice Commissioning

J. Fox asked Board members to let him know if they don't want to receive these in future.

viii) Schedule of Board Meetings 2008

RESOLVED: The Board agreed the meeting dates for 2008.

ix) Probation Circulars

Item for information only.

101. Any Other Business

B. Fatogun asked if the JNCC meeting dates for 2008 had been set yet. J. Fox advised that the next meeting is to be held on the 10th January and then every 3 months from that dated. R. Brown advised that it would be helpful if these were fixed.

RESOLVED: J. Fox to send out suggestions.

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K. Wyatt informed the Meeting that it is Islam Awareness Week starting Monday 19th November. J. Fox advised Members to reply to his earlier email should they wish to go to the opening event.

J. Fox advised that there would be two grievance hearings on the 15th November and invited members to be part of the Panel. It was agreed that this would be F. McCready, R. Akroyd and A. Khayum. J. Fox advised that he would send them the papers and they would be required to attend for 9.30am until mid afternoon.

J. Tarr invited members to an event next Thursday at 11 am at Division Street where they will be presenting cheques to the beneficiaries of the "Do your hours" day. He advised the meeting of various upcoming events and said he would put the details in an email.

H. Redhead told the meeting about the Regional Partnership Board for Members and Managers that is being held in Ossett on the 16th November. He invited two Board Members to attend and asked that anyone interested should let J. Fox know. He also advised the meeting that he is to attend a Chairs Meeting in London tomorrow where they will receive an update on the NOMS Act and Trusts.

102. Next meeting

Wednesday 28th November 2007 at 10 am in the Board Room, 45 Division Street, Sheffield.

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25.10.07

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