



PROBATION BOARD
28th September 2006
10.00 a.m. to 1.20 p.m.

PRESENT: S. Harrison (Chair)
A. Abbasi, R. Brown, D. Clark, O. Gleadall,
J. Hinchcliffe, M. Ismail, A. Khayum, B. Maslen,
F. McCready, H. Redhead, L. Taylor, H. Williams.

Also in attendance: J. Fox, B. Kerslake, M. Wright, D. Thomas (Items 77 - 84 only) and J. Tarr.

77. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from M. Murphy and K. Wyatt.

78. Declarations of interest

L. Taylor declared a pecuniary interest in the Local Government Pension Scheme (Agenda item 16(ii)). All Members declared a pecuniary interest in Board recruitment and retention (Agenda item 8).

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

RESOLVED: That the public be excluded during consideration of Attachment C to the report 'Public Value Partnerships' - Agenda item 11 – by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted. (Minute 87 refers).

80. Introductory statement by Roz Brown

R. Brown thanked S. Harrison for this opportunity to introduce herself and gave a brief résumé of her personal life and career in Probation. She had been told that SY was probably the perfect Area in which to work; it had power and size – but was not too large a Metropolitan Area; a perfect budget and excellent staff. She had found these to be true and thanked the SMM members for their very warm welcome. She said the latest Weighted Scorecard (WSC) and the ESI follow-up were not acceptable and she would endeavour to put them right. The Service needed to be ready for the move from Board to Trust, for

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contestability and to offer best value. Her first priorities were the Weighted Scorecard and high risk offenders. She also wanted to identify excellence in work, which she knew was there. She had concerns about the accuracy of figures in the WSC and wanted them to be double-checked and submitted to the NPD before the next quarter. She was a 'systems person' and procedures needed to be in place, understood and followed. She wanted a dialogue with Board Members regarding future business planning, to which she would refer later in the meeting.

S. Harrison thanked her for her statement which the Board had found very helpful.

81. Area Performance

i) Area Performance Report

M. Wright said the figures were very disappointing and the performance was unacceptable. She noted that there had been an improvement against some targets but other Areas had shown more improvement. Performance had been high on the agendas of SMM, other Head Office meetings and her own supervision meetings with Divisional Managers. She noted the many initiatives being introduced to improve the position and noted that in very many cases the work was being done but not recorded accurately.

D. Thomas echoed many of M. Wright's comments and explained in some detail the steps being taken to improve performance. R. Brown said it was very important that staff received the message that the improvements were designed to ensure the Service did the right things to help offenders.

O. Gleadall said the results were very disappointing. The former Committee had been advised 10 years ago that inaccurate recording was a problem and wondered about the quality of management when the position remained the same. He noted that if performance was that poor in the private sector 'heads would roll'. D. Thomas reiterated that in many cases the work was being done but it was not properly recorded. J. Hinchcliffe agreed that the data inaccuracies were the most disappointing aspect, particularly when it had been better in the recent past.

J. Fox said that at their recent conference the senior administrative staff had indicated that they were keen to undertake work to improve recording.

S. Harrison said that the Service appeared reluctant to do anything about poor performance by individuals. R. Brown said

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she wanted to do a thorough review of structures and procedures as part of the work on the business plan and this would include the 'process mapping' by administrative staff to which J. Fox had referred. She said she was too newly in post to know where the problems lay but assured the Board that if performance did not improve consequences would follow. She asked that they allow her time to address the issues.

D. Clark said she wanted POs to 'play to their strengths' and acknowledged the need for an interface with administrative staff who would handle the data.

O. Gleadall referred to a recent case where a colleague Magistrate had indicated that FDRs were completed and submitted on the same day on which they were requested. He had corrected this assumption. M. Wright said there was to be a SY Sentencers' Conference on 2nd February 2007 when this would be raised.

S. Harrison thanked colleagues and Officers for their comments on performance and said many issues had been noted. Progress would be reviewed at the next performance meeting in November.

ii) Offender Management – update

M. Wright said the report was very clear and drew attention to S. Scott's overall comments on page 3. She noted that Phase 2 would start on 7th November and that there would be a six-month lead-in. S. Scott and J. Kerr were working on it with staff in the prisons and the Service respectively.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

iii) Review of Top 10 Business Risks

J. Fox said that whilst most of the risks identified remained stable there was no room for complacency. He noted that Phase 2 of Offender Management, referred to in the last item, may feature in future reports. B. Kerlake drew the attention of Members to 'Comment' 1 on page 4 and noted that the arrow may now be in red and pointing upwards. He said that the financial state was not healthy at the moment and he would submit a report to the October Board.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

82. Minutes of last meeting

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 13th July 2006 be approved subject to the note in paragraph 3 of Minute 63 about the change of Chair being re-positioned so that it immediately precedes the existing final paragraph of the preamble.

83. Matters arising

i) Effective Supervision Inspection (ESI) (Minute 63)

D. Thomas confirmed that the small number of managers disproportionately responsible for the failings referred to in paragraph seven of the minutes had been followed up. He added that there would be a five month delay in the national roll-out schedule of C-NOMIS but it would not be known until November how this would affect the timing of going live in SYPA.

ii) Investors in People – re-assessment (Minute 74)

D. Thomas confirmed that the Service had been re-accredited for the next three years.

84. Board recruitment and retention

J. Fox said that as a consequence of the proposals outlined in his report, the Board would lose a significant percentage of its experienced Members at 31st March 2007. He understood that advertisements had already gone out for new Members and Chairs and believed that the response had been very good so far. He would pass copies of an NPD letter regarding membership to those Members whose membership would terminate between November 2005 and 31st March 2007 (B. Maslen and K. Wyatt) after the meeting. R. Brown added that whilst she was a member of the Recruitment Project Group referred to in paragraph 3 of the report, meetings were normally called only the day before they were due to be held and to date she had not managed to attend one.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

85. High Risk Audit

M. Wright submitted a report on the High Risk Audit in July which had been undertaken with the assistance of the NPD quality improvement project. R. Brown had subsequently required officers to look at all high risk cases and they would be audited in October and November.

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O. Gleadall said he was very concerned about the results of the Audit and said the position was unsatisfactory. The Effective Supervision Inspection (ESI) had revealed a problem, it had been put right, the NPD team came to assist the Service and they found another problem.

M. Wright said it was acknowledged when the NPD team was invited that they would find issues – it was part of an ongoing process and had been started before the ESI. B. Maslen asked if there was a robust appraisal system. M. Wright confirmed that there was but said there may be room for improvement. S. Harrison said the Board may wish in future to receive a report on appraisal and how it fed into performance, including further information on procedures for dealing with staff who were not competent. J. Hinchcliffe added that management of staff was also an important element. S. Harrison said she would discuss with R. Brown outside the meeting what may be useful for the Board to consider.

86. HMIP Report on Anthony Rice – May 2006

M. Wright referred to the report considered by the Board in June and submitted a paper on progress within the Service, externally and nationally and also referred to next steps.

RESOLVED: That the progress report be noted.

87. Public Value Partnerships (PVP)

B. Kerslake said he had tried in his paper to give the Board both a flavour and an overview of public value partnerships (PVP). The Commissioning Plan referred to in paragraph 8 was due to arrive at the weekend. He noted that secondments were the favoured way forward but added that they could be problematic. Agencies, for instance, may not be happy to take staff on secondment where there were significant differences in pay and yet jobs and responsibilities appeared similar. The Service could not force staff to agree to be seconded. Value for money would be a key element. The possibility of the Service jointly leading a consortium of agencies needed to be explored; the South Yorkshire Offender Partnership might offer an option. Attachment C, which contained confidential information, gave the Board an early idea of some of the areas of work which were considered possibilities for contracting out.

S. Harrison noted that senior management was to have a two-day business planning event and it may be useful for the Board to have a Seminar on PVP following their event. The Seminar could possibly replace a Board meeting, subject to the business scheduled for discussion that month.

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O. Gleadall said the Service should not bid for everything if that might affect the quality of the service provided. He added that it would be a real challenge to manage this whole matter alongside motivating staff to improve performance. F. McCready said the Service might have to stop doing things it had traditionally done and agreed that it would need to look closely at what to bid for. She felt that there would be a need to identify 'added' value for money.

S. Harrison said the Board would discuss PVP in more detail at a future date.

RESOLVED:

1. That the publication of the contestability prospectus and the potential implications for the South Yorkshire Service be noted.
2. That the possible ways of taking this forward, outlined in the report, be supported.

88. Business Risk Management policy

J. Fox said that the SMM had recently reviewed the policy and pointed out the minor changes suggested. He invited the Board to approve the policy or to refer it to the Audit Committee. J. Hinchcliffe, Chair of the Audit Committee, said the changes were so few and of such a minor nature that the Board should approve the policy today.

RESOLVED: That the revised Business Risk Management policy be approved.

89. Audit Committee meeting 11th July 2006

J. Hinchcliffe picked out the main items of business from his report and noted that the Committee considered that routine attendance by the Chief Officer at all its meetings was not necessary. R. Brown said she would discuss this with him outside the meeting. D. Clark said it had been a very positive meeting and she took heart as a Board Member from all the assurances they were given by the Auditors and Service Officers.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

90. Reports back from Members and Working Groups

i) Reward and Recognition Working Group

D. Clark gave a verbal update on the meeting of the Group on 21st September, when the Reward and Recognition Scheme was reviewed, and outlined some of the suggestions put forward

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to revise it. J. Tarr added that peer nominations appeared to have been problematic in the past and for the next round of awards nominations may be sought from Divisional Managers. He also thought that local awards ought to tie in to national ones such as those by The Butler Trust. S. Harrison said that D. Clark should discuss the Scheme outside the meeting with R. Brown and consider whether a report should be prepared for the October Board.

91. Chair's diary

In addition to her written diary, S. Harrison reported briefly on the following meetings/events:

i) PBA Council meeting – 14th September, where the first draft of the new Probation Performance Framework had been discussed. It had also been announced that 'soft services' in Approved Premises would revert to being provided by Areas.

RESOLVED: That O. Gleadall, M. Ismail and H. Williams consider the Framework, in a virtual or real meeting which would be co-ordinated by J. Fox.

ii) Regional Forum – 28th August, which she had attended with R. Brown. The intention in the future was to have two meetings – a monthly Regional Steering Group (Chairs and Chiefs) and a Regional Performance Improvement Group (Chiefs). There would be more on this in due course.

RESOLVED: That the diary and the additional verbal report be noted.

92. Chief Officers' Report

i) Clarification on mergers and collaboration

R. Brown said she was relieved that discussions were now about collaboration instead of merger and added that she believed strongly in the former.

RESOLVED: That the circular letter from R. Hill be noted.

ii) Local Government Pension Scheme – consultation and developments

RESOLVED: That the update on the consultation and developments be noted and the Director of Finance and Partnerships be authorised to make an appropriate response to the consultation document.

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iii) Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme (IDAP) – progress

RESOLVED: That the progress report be noted.

iv) Human Resources strategy

RESOLVED: That the position outlined be noted and the submission of a report in October on how best the new strategy could be achieved in South Yorkshire be welcomed.

v) Diversity

a) 'Diversity Event' – Bradford, 5th October 2006

J. Fox said he would follow up the concerns he had about the suitability/relevance of an event in West Yorkshire with his contacts at the NPD and may then send an e-mail to Members. Members expressed surprise that the event was being held in the evening during Ramadan, which would preclude attendance by Muslims. R. Brown said that if prospective applicants from South Yorkshire were to attend she would also go, if not she would be happy for S. Hall, Chief, NPS-West Yorkshire, to make any appropriate comments.

b) South Yorkshire events 2006

The Board noted the latest position.

RESOLVED: That when the events schedule was finalised J. Tarr send a copy via e-mail to Members.

vi) Probation Boards' Association (PBA)

RESOLVED: That the Directors' Report and Accounts for 2005/06 be noted.

vii) Conferences

a) Annual BME Board Members' Conference

RESOLVED: That the postponement be noted.

b) Building public confidence in the Criminal Justice system – 26th October

RESOLVED: That Members let J. Fox know if they were interested in attending.

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viii) Employment of Trainee Probation Officers (TPOs)

R. Brown confirmed that the Service would employ all the Newly Qualified Officers (NQOs) in October 2006, even though there might not be vacancies for them.

RESOLVED: That the correspondence from J. McKnight, General Secretary, napo, and M. Caldwell, Governance Manager, PBA, be noted.

ix) Complaints Panel hearing

J. Fox said that the complainant had now referred his complaint to the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman.

RESOLVED: That the Panel's decision be noted.

x) Death of Audrey Hallam OBE

RESOLVED: That the death of Audrey Hallam, former Deputy Chief Probation Officer, be noted with regret.

xi) Documents received

A copy of VISTA Vol. 10, Number 3, was handed to each Member present.

RESOLVED: That the documents received be noted.

xii) Schedule of likely Board agenda items - October to December 2006

RESOLVED: That the schedule be noted.

93. Barnsley grievance

J. Fox advised the Members who were on the Hearing Panel (S. Harrison, J. Hinchcliffe and H. Redhead) that they would be sent papers in the next few days.

94. Centenary Group

J. Tarr said the Group had met three times and business was progressing very well.

95. Presentation on contestability

B. Kerslake gave a verbal report on the experience of the 'mock' contestability exercise on Unpaid Work in which the Service had taken

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part and which he had led. The team had received very positive feedback on both its bid and presentation. The 'tender' had contained seven criteria and the team's responses had been judged above average on six of them. He noted that the task of preparing the bid and presentation were very expensive in officer time and those involved had not had workload relief.

P. Nowell, napo Convenor and one of several Union representatives who had been invited to attend for this presentation, asked what assurances there were that bids were submitted 'on a level playing field'. B. Kerslake said the commissioner would have to abide by fair procurement rules. He noted with interest that 'cost' was not one of the seven criteria. In such bids the Service would have to play to its strengths i.e. they were the only one who could supply punishment in the community.

96. Next Meetings

i) Seminar: 2.00 p.m. Thursday 5th October 2006.

ii) Board meeting: 10.00 a.m. Thursday 26th October 2006.

(Both meetings will take place in the Board Room, Division Street, Sheffield)

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