



GLOUCESTERSHIRE

GLOUCESTERSHIRE PROBATION BOARD

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD AT PROBATION HEAD OFFICE, BEWICK HOUSE

Wednesday 15 March 2006

Present: Sir William Wratten (Chairman), Mrs Y Ball (Chief Officer), Mrs E Abderrahim, Mr D Cook, Mrs M Gardner, Mr D Gooch, Mr M Howe, Mr C Marshall, Ms H Middleton and Mr P Rowe.

Also in Attendance: Mrs N Cryer (ACO), Mr G Holden (ACO), Mr C Westhead (Board Administrator), and Mr K Robinson (Delivery & Quality Manager, NPD)

Apologies for Absence: Rev A. Davies, Mrs C Jago, Mr G, Limbrick (Secretary to the Board), Mr P Stott (Financial Advisor).

20/06 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

21/06 MINUTES

1) The minutes of the meetings held on 11 January 2006 and 14 February 2006 were accepted as a true record of the meetings and were signed by Chairman.

2) Actions:

Minute 02/06 ii) – The Chairman reported that Mr Hamblyn had been officially removed from the Board due to his non-attendance at meetings. He added that Christine Ellson and Judith Robinson have been appointed as new Board Members.

Minute 08/06 – Mrs Ball reported that the list of acronyms had not been issued yet as it was still being updated.

ACTION: Mrs Ball

Minute 11/06 – Mrs Ball reported that Mrs Cryer was in discussion with the Head of HR at the NPD regarding this issue and the discussion was continuing.

Minute 12/06 – This had been actioned

22/06 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman reported that the previous day he had attended a meeting with Kevin Lockyer and the Chairman of three other South West Probation Areas regarding the proposed SLAs, and they had agreed to a continued exchange of emails seeking a way forward in the event of the SLAs not being signed by 31 March 2006.

The four Chairmen attending the meeting were in agreement that the SLAs would not be signed until the Area budgets had been received. Kevin Lockyer indicated that he was happy that the minutes of the Extraordinary Board Meeting held on 14 February 2006 had been signed by the Chairman of GPA as this implied the Board's commitment to the principles of the SLAs.

The final item discussed at the meeting was the symposium Kevin Lockyer proposed to hold on 15 May 2006 to discuss the 5 year plan and SLAs.

23/06 CHIEF OFFICER'S REPORT

1) The Home Secretary had published his five year strategy to 'Protect the Public and Reduce Reoffending' and the areas impacting GPA were as follows:-

Resourcing – The number of offenders to be sentenced to Community Payback was to double. Custody Plus was to be phased in from September 2006 and at the end of this year Public Protection offenders would be released from Prison on licence until the end of their sentence.

Developmental Areas – Offender Management and OASys would be introduced for use in Prisons by the end of April 2006 and the government would be looking for a seamless supervision from Prisons to Probation.

Drug Interventions – The intention was for this to start from the moment of arrest. Under the revised Drug Intervention Programme for the county GPA was better placed to move forward with this. The local strategies partnerships were not wholly effective at present but money may well be available through them in the future. Work with the Department of Health on drugs treatment, alcohol interventions and mental health was seen as a priority by the Home Secretary.

Other issues raised in the Home Secretary's strategy were:-

The Home Secretary would be working with employers regarding the placement of offenders in employment and he would also be looking at the accommodation of offenders under the prisoners release focus. The Home Secretary wanted improved social and family links for prisoners and he would be advocating a system of Community Chaplaincy when prisoners were released. A significant development would be in the formation of community prisons with probation offices and courts on the same sites.

The Home Secretary wanted the ROM framework developed and he would be introducing a programme for Contestability. Probation Boards would become Probation Trusts and there would be greater freedom and independence for high performing prisons and Probation Trusts. The intention was also to introduce Community Justice Occupational Standards for all staff in the prison, probation voluntary and private sectors. The Home Secretary was also looking for Probation Areas to spend 5% of their budgets on voluntary sector partnerships. Gloucestershire was currently only spending 1% and the Chief Officer would be working on this target for 2006/07.

2) Performance was a continuing challenge. The Chief Officer welcomed the visit from Kevin Robinson of the NPD Performance and Delivery Unit and the benefits of his presence in the Area were already evident. Charlie Baker had been appointed as Assistant Chief Officer (Performance) and she would be focusing on the quantity and quality aspects of performance and performance management. The next meeting of the Performance Panel would be held on 27 April and the National Standards report from the NPD would be considered at that meeting. The Chief Officer would be drafting a suggested timetable of action for consideration by the panel.

3) The SMT was running 25% down as a result of Julia Oulton's absence, but it was hoped that Julia would return early in April. Garry Holden and Naomi Cryer had covered some of Julia's work and there were concerns about the amount of work falling on them.

4) A decision had been taken to dismantle GRS due to the lack of management control and Brian Gash's contract had not been renewed. The work which previously had been carried out by GRS was being incorporated into the work of GDAS and there would be a revamped drug rehabilitation programme.

5) Work was taking place on restructuring operational teams into four Offender Management Teams. There would be no Public Protection Team but one Offender Management team would have more of a Public Protection brief.

6) Work was continuing on the Business Plan. The risk register was due to be with the NPD by 24 March 2006 and it was hoped that this deadline could be achieved.

7) There was now a regular need to inform the Board of Serious Further Offences (SFO) committed by offenders. A full report was not available but the Chief Officer gave a report indicating that for the year to date there had been five SFOs, at which two had been sexual, one domestic violence and two murder and GBH. A full stage 3 review of practice in the latter two was being undertaken. For the domestic violence SFO the stage 3 review would be completed before the end of the month and for the sexual SFO, one stage 3 review was in hand and it was not clear if the other one needed a review.

8) A Racial Equality Scheme had been prepared for Gloucestershire and Mrs Abderrahim had provided very helpful assistance in preparing this. The NPD had requested that the scheme should not be issued yet.

9) In response to a question from Mrs Abderrahim, Mrs Ball reported that at some point in the next few months she would be preparing a report for the Board on the issues raised in the Monkton Report.

24/06 Proposed SLAs with Regional Offender Management – Mrs Ball reported that she would be asking the new ACO (Performance) to lead on the monthly monitoring for the SLAs. She added that Areas needed additional resources for administering Custody Plus and the wording of the SLAs had been amended to reflect this.

The report from the Secretary confirming his satisfaction with the SLAs from a legal viewpoint was acknowledged.

25/06 Audit Committee – Mr Rowe presented the minutes of the meeting held on 1 March 2006 highlighting points of note. He referred to minute 16/06 and again expressed his concern about the Area not having a sufficient budget to provide an efficient and effective service.

Mr Rowe pointed out that because of some new internal audit requirements, the Area could be charged for an additional five days audit work, but he felt that we should not incur any additional charge. Mr Rowe asked the Chairman if he would raise this with the PBA as other Areas would be affected.

Action: Chairman

Mr Rowe referred to 'Any Other Business' and reported that there was a problem booking the Boardroom on a date when Mr Stott could attend the Audit Committee meeting. He wanted Mr Stott to attend the meeting and sought the Chief Officer's assistance in doing this. The Chief Officer agreed to take this up outside the meeting.

Action: Chief Officer.

It was agreed that a copy of the Minutes of the Audit Committee meeting would be sent to Kevin Lockyer.

Action: Mr Westhead

RESOLVED

THAT the minutes of the meeting held on 1 March 2006 be noted.

26/06 Joint Negotiating and Consultative Committee

The minutes of the meeting held on 31 January 2006 were not available.

27/06 Safety Committee

Mr Westhead reported that there was still some non-compliance with some parts of the Health & Safety Policy; in particular, some managers had not prepared risk assessments for their units in spite of regular reminders.

Mr Rowe asked what the position was regarding Stress Management. Mr Westhead reported that Mrs Cryer was in the process of preparing some guidance on this.

Mr Cook commented that Allan Thompson had been a member of the Safety committee for many years and his input had been invaluable.

RESOLVED

THAT the minutes of the Safety Committee dated 31 January 2006 be noted.

28/06 Performance

1) Address by Kevin Robinson – Mr Robinson thanked the Board for inviting him to the meeting. He was pleased that the Board was welcoming the SLAs but he did recognise the budgetary issues facing the Area. Mr Robinson referred to the Weighted Scorecard and he admitted that this tool had its limitations. The NPD was looking at other means for Areas to demonstrate good performance which were resource neutral and he outlined what some of these might be. The intention was that use of a much larger basket of indicators would give a more accurate rating.

Mr Robinson commented on some of the issues he had already identified in Gloucestershire and he pointed out that the work of middle managers was crucial to good performance.

Mr Howe asked if Mr Robinson would bring to the Board any concerns he had regarding issues such as organisational structure or workload. He replied that he will be sharing his findings with the Chief Officer and this process has already commenced.

2) Information Report – April 2005 to February 2006

Mrs Ball introduced this and commented that whilst the report was very disappointing the trend was now upwards. She then went through the targets individually and identified the actions being taken to improve performance on those areas.

Mrs Cryer explained that little could be done about the sickness figures as the high rate of sickness was principally due to the number of staff who were long term sick. Mrs Ball commended the work of Naomi Cryer on reducing the amount of sickness as the Area had been one of the best performers nationally.

Mrs Ball was confident that with the appointment of a new ACO, the strenuous efforts being made to improve performance would soon begin to have an effect.

3) Performance Management Panel Meeting 1 March 2006 –

Mr Howe reported that this had been the third meeting of the Panel and the working relationship with the Managers involved had greatly improved. There was considerable evidence that managers were now committed to implement the changes necessary to improve performance.

The Chairman reported that following the appointment of the new ACO (Performance) he would be looking for clear signs of improvement in performance.

29/06 Revenue Budget 2006/07 – Mrs Cryer reported that an indicative budget had been received and if this was confirmed by the NPD savings in excess of £300,000 would be required to balance the budget. Mrs Cryer gave an illustration of typical areas where the savings might come from but it was agreed that no decisions would be taken until the Area budget had been confirmed.

30/06 Supervision of Staff Policy – Mrs Cryer reported that this policy had been approved

by the Employers Side and the JNCC.

RESOLVED

THAT the Supervision of Staff Policy be approved.

- 31/06 HR Information Report** – Mrs Cryer presented this report and commented that the intention was to bring this report to future Board Meetings on a quarterly basis. Mrs Gardner asked if the staff turnover for the whole year could be represented as a percentage in the final column. Mrs Cryer agreed that this would be done in future.
Action: Mrs Cryer.

RESOLVED

THAT the HR Information Report be noted.

32/06 Community Integration Service

Mr Holden presented this report explaining the background to the report and the benefits accruing from the action taken. In response to a question from Mr Cook regarding funding to voluntary organisations, Mrs Ball confirmed that funding the CIS would increase the Area's percentage funding to voluntary organisations

RESOLVED

THAT the Community Integration Service report be noted

33/06 Members Feedback

Mr Cook reported that he had attended a meeting of the Substance Action Group the previous day. The Group wants to develop a county alcohol strategy and GPA were listed as being part of the working group on this. Mrs Ball commented that she had no knowledge of this, but she would refer it to Mr Holden to investigate. Mr Cook also reported that the PPO scheme was having problems accessing housing but Ted Yates was heading up a sub-group on housing and drugs which would be looking into this.

Mr Marshall had attended a meeting of the Ryecroft Liaison Group a few weeks earlier. He reported that high risk offenders would start to be accommodated Ryecroft soon and added that Dave Berry and his team had put in a considerable amount of work in preparation for this.

Mrs Abderrahim had attended two meetings of the Supporting People Partnership Board. A revised memo of understanding was being sent out about the operation of this Board.

Mrs Abderrahim commented that she has also attended a meeting of the Tewkesbury CDRP, which considered the future structure of the body and its terms of reference, and the Compact Steering Group she had attended had started work on developing and revising its code of practice.

Mr Rowe asked if a risk assessment had been done on the protection of the public and staff as result of the increased risks due to accommodating high risk offenders at Ryecroft. Mrs Ball replied that this had been done and a considerable amount of staff training had been carried out in order to control the risk.

- 34/06 Complaints Monitoring** – Mrs Ball introduced this and invited questions from Members. Mr Cook commented that there had been no complaints since August 2005 and he questioned whether this was correct. Mrs Ball replied that she aware of at least one complaint since August 2005 and she would ensure that the schedule of complaints would be updated.
Action: Mrs Ball

Mrs Abderrahim asked if the nature of a complaint could be included in future reports. Mrs Ball suggested that Mrs Abderrahim raise this at the meeting of the Diverting Diversity Group.

RESOLVED

THAT the Complaints report be noted.

- 35/06 Directing Diversity Group** – Mrs Ball presented the notes of the meeting held on 12 January 2006 and pointed out that the Group was considering how to take the Race Equality Scheme forward. The Diversity ‘Topic of the Month’ had not taken off and would be relaunched. Mrs Ball commented that she wanted the DDG to be a dynamic and inclusive group.

RESOLVED

THAT the notes of the DDG meeting held on 12 January 2006 were noted and the revised Terms of Reference for the Group were approved.

- 36/06 Any Other Business**

Mr Howe pointed out that the next meeting of the Board would not be held until 17 May 2006 and he questioned how the Board was going to approve the 2006/07 budget. The Chairman suggested that a group comprising of the Chief Officer, the Chairman of the Audit Committee, the Financial Advisor and himself be given the power to do this.

RESOLVED

THAT a group comprising the Board Chairman, Chief Officer, Chairman of the Audit Committee and Financial Advisor be given the power to approve the 2006/07 budget.

- 37/06 Date of Next Meeting** – The next meeting of the Board would be held on Wednesday 17 May 2006 at 9.45a.m. in the Boardroom.

The Meeting closed at 1.15 pm.

Chairman

