



GLOUCESTERSHIRE

GLOUCESTERSHIRE PROBATION BOARD

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD AT PROBATION HEAD OFFICE, BEWICK HOUSE

Wednesday 21 May 2008

Present: Mr T FitzSimons, Mrs Y Ball, Mr R Burns, Mrs C Ellson, Mr M Blockley, Ms J Robinson, Mr S Pritchard (in part), Mr M Howe

Also in attendance: Mrs D Bennett (Assistant Chief Officer), Mr J Bensted (Assistant Chief Officer), Mrs Naomi Cryer (Assistant Chief Officer), Mrs Charlie Baker (Assistant Chief Officer), Mr John Bensted (Assistant Chief Officer), Mr Garry Holden (Assistant Chief Officer)

50/08 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

HHJ Picton, Mr G Limbrick (Board Secretary), Mrs S McGrath, Mr C Youngson

51/08 INTRODUCTION AND BOARD TEAM LINKS

Mr FitzSimons discussed Board/team links. A proposed list was tabled and agreed by all members. Mrs Ball will send an email to all staff advising of the links and Board members were requested to contact team managers within the next 2-3 weeks. **Action: Mrs Ball and Board members.**

Mr FitzSimons explained that today's meeting will focus on budget and the allocation of the additional national plan funding.

52/08 CHIEF OFFICER'S UPDATE

Mrs Ball updated the Board on national and regional issues.

Mr Ball attended a leaders meeting on 29th April 2008. The message from NOMS is to focus on delivery. There is £3.5 billion of funding and results are expected by the Government.

Prison numbers are increasing and using the £40 million additional funding there are high expectations for Probation to decrease the prison population via Community Sentencing. If Areas do not deliver, Roger Hill can remove the additional funding from Areas next year. Mrs Ball explained to the Board that when making decisions regarding recall and breaches, some decisions are sensitive. Mrs Ball requested that the Board support staff if necessary when a reasonable and defensible decision has been made. It was discussed that SMT will be more robust in recall decisions and when it is safe to do so, issue an ACO warning letter. Research has shown that short term custody is ineffective, as is a Suspended Sentence Supervision Order. Mrs Ball advised that GPA will provide robust

proposals for Magistrates, where appropriate, without going down the custodial route which has very little impact on reducing reoffending. Mr John Bensted will brief the Board fully on Gloucestershire Plan later in the agenda.

Mrs Ball explained the new structure of the Prison and Probation Directorate. Roger Hill's team now includes Chiefs, Chairs, ROMS and IDMs. Mr Hill is responsible for:

- Public Protection Unit
- Mental Health
- Performance Improvement Unit
- Probation Change Programme
- Partnerships
- Courts

Mr Hill is not responsible for Interventions. The ROMs role is now to help probation to deliver and the day to day accountability for Chief Officers. They will also be responsible for policy leads. The shape of the regions and the number of Trusts is still under review. Performance and Best Value are the focus.

The C-NOMIS system will not be used and there is a new OMNI transformation which will hold 43 data systems. Areas that use CRAMS will change systems to DELIUS. Mr Sid Pritchard expressed concerns regarding the funding of this system.

Phil Wheatley wants specification of what probation does, what is supervision? Setting a cost against it including standards of practice. By doing this Mr Wheatley will be able to advise the Government when Probation is at its capacity within the resources available.

Mrs Ball updated the Board on the regional structure. Liz Hill is the new ROM. The structure is currently a work in progress clarify the role for IDM's and no clarity regarding the Regional Partnership Board and if joint meetings with the prison will be required. There is a 3 year reducing reoffending plan due to be published and will be sent to the Board when released.

GPA has had a positive press review regarding the Offender Management Inspection. The Board congratulated staff.

Mr FitzSimons added that there is still no clarity from the Centre on various topics.

53/08 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations.

SECTION A STANDING ITEMS

54/08 MINUTES

(i) Minutes of the Meeting Held on 19 March 2008

The Minutes were accepted as accurate and were signed by the Chair.

(ii) Actions arising from the previous Minutes

41/08 - Strategic Planning Away Day – confirmed for the 22nd July 2008
COMPLETED.

47/08 - OMI Press release. **COMPLETED.**

SECTION B PERFORMANCE

55/08 i) Operational Performance

Mrs Charlie Baker reported on Performance.

Mrs Baker advised the Board that GPA performed well over and above on weighted targets. Not all targets were achieved including end to end targets, successful terminations, some OASys targets in relation to lower risk offenders. GPA was on or above national average on all targets.

Regarding end to end targets, Mrs Baker is writing to the Head of Courts to address the issues. Work is underway on compliance and is a national problem. Compliance is being regionally addressed through workshops. OASys targets were highlighted in OMI and are addressed in the OMI action plan. GPA should achieve Green in the IPPF.

Mrs Baker explained that some of this year's targets are causing national concern regarding the measurement and recording. It is different this year as figures are direct from the systems rather than via returns. Previously Areas had the chance to study and cleanse returns. If figures are direct from the system, it is not possible to monitor. Areas are discussing the issues with NOMS. There is a need to be more precise when entering data; this is of major importance which is being cascaded to teams. It is additional pressure for managers and staff to do it right the first time. It is felt that small Areas have to perform better than larger due to the disproportionate effect of one failure on small sample numbers.

ii) HR Report

Mrs Naomi Cryer reported on HR issues. The Board were given figures on employment data, workforce headcount and sickness.

The Disability survey will be completed by May 2008. Short term sickness figures for April 2008 was at 154.67 days. This was unexpectedly high and has been investigated. 84 days were due to chest infections/virus. Bond has provided an upgrade within PPWin which can produce monthly reports to ACO's regarding sickness within their responsibility. It was noted that end of year figure (2007/08) for sickness absence was 11.1 against the national target of 9 days per FTE.

It was reported that the workforce has decreased by 7 full time employees; these include 1 middle manager, PSR writers but are mostly administration posts. Due to the additional funding it was noted that there is no longer a need to reduce headcount.

iii) **End of Year Financial Report**

Mrs Darrill Bennett presented the end of year financial report

The final accounts template and quality assurance return has been sent to NOMS and the Auditors by the deadline. An advertisement of the publication of accounts has been printed in local papers and the accounts are now ready for inspection.

Most of the 07/08 draft internal audit reports were received in late March, early April giving additional workloads at a very bad time of year. The Audit Commission report was fully updated subject to queries raised with internal audit.

The revised budget reporting facility within Pegasus remains a significant issue and has been an extra burden to the finance team. This facility will not be used in 2008/09. The Audit Committee have asked Mrs Bennett to produce a statement on how the £95k deficit has been reduced to £29k and any additional costs that have been incurred. Mrs Bennett tabled the statement and highlighted the following points:

- Pathfinder money, under spend of £22k, carried forward into 08/09
- Receipt of capital contribution of £10k
- Additional OLASS money
- Additional savings from staff gaps
- Additional savings from TPO budget
- Depreciation of non cash assets
- Additional vehicle maintenance
- Reduced income in Drug Interventions Programme
- Additional Probation costs in court

Mrs Bennett presented the Statement of accounts 2007/08. The Statement of Accounts is subject to final audit.

Audit has subsequently identified that the area pension funding has been partially duplicated in the last 3 or 4 years. The report quantified a £490k duplication. However, the £490k is favourable towards GPA as both GPA and the Actuary have been making appropriate provision for pension funding in this period. The pension deficit is also reduced. This is a historic problem and is a non cash-adjustment. It will not materially effect operating outturn for the year.

The deficit is lower than what was forecasted at the beginning of year. It is a good outturn in respect that GPA have lived within the means and performed well. Mr FitzSimons congratulated GPA on a very good outturn.

Mrs Bennett also informed the Board that 96% of suppliers have been paid within the Government target which is an improvement on last year.

RESOLVED

THAT the report be **NOTED**

SECTION C ITEMS FOR APPROVAL

56/08 APPROVAL OF BUDGET 2008/09

The budget was delivered by Mrs Darrill Bennett

Mrs Bennett reported the following changes in the budget since March 2008:

- GPA has received an additional £314k for working towards reducing custodial sentences and promoting community based sentences.
- The agreed allocation of £44,500 has been included for TPO's.
- The Probation staff working in HMP Gloucester figures have been put in the budget but they are still subject to negotiation.
- The reduction of the deficit from £95k to £29k has been included.

Mrs Bennett explained that the main risks are:

- There is an estimated provision of some of £200k for pay awards and increments. National negotiations are under way and GPA is waiting for a response.
- Additional £107k for the NOMS centrally funded Chief Officers pension's deficit. The fund is awaiting actuarial valuation. The final figure could be different.
- The overall position is the budget for 08/09 is balanced. The additional work for the reduction of the prison population is a transfer of resource to another area of the service. This is the risk regarding the continuation in 09/10 of the additional £314k funding. There needs to be an effective way to monitor the spending of that money to ensure a) the targets are met or exceeded and b) we can explain the cause of increased resources and the effect of reduced custodial sentences in the Area.

Mrs Bennett advised the Board that she anticipates that there will be an additional £80k from external funding, though only a small amount will be offset against the deficit as most of the additional funding will be used on resource needed to undertake the associated additional work.

There was much discussion regarding the Budget for 2008/09. To summarise, the budget proposed is made up of grant funding of £7811k which funds 168 full time employees (FTE). The total funding of £8370k includes funds for 189 FTE (including seconded prison staff etc).

The risks are as stated above. The risks currently are not identifiable as being sufficiently quantified and robust to deviate GPA from the original financial plan. The budget is balanced for 2008/09.

RESOLVED

THAT the budget be **APPROVED**

57/08 DRAFT PSO ACCREDITATION STRATEGY

The Strategy was prepared by Mrs Naomi Cryer.

The Strategy has been approved by the JNCC.

RESOLVED

THAT the Strategy be **APPROVED**.

58/08 DRAFT HR STRATEGY

The Strategy was prepared by Mrs Naomi Cryer.

The Strategy has been approved by the JNCC.

RESOLVED

THAT the Strategy be **APPROVED**

59/08 GENDER EQUALITY SCHEME ACTION PLAN

The Action Plan was presented by Mrs Charlie Baker

The Directing Diversity Group has agreed the Action Plan and is proactive in implementing the plan.

RESOLVED

THAT the Action Plan be **APPROVED**

60/08 SLA NOTIFICATIONS OF CHANGE

The proposed Notifications of Change were delivered by Mrs Charlie Baker

The ROM have instigated the changes and GPA are awaiting confirmation and for the formal Notifications of Change. The commitments that have been made for the National Plan will be added to the SLA eventually, locally GPA has already added.

RESOLVED

THAT the Notifications of Change be **APPROVED upon receipt.**

61/08 IMPACTING ON THE PRISON POPULATION NATIONAL PLAN

The National Plan was presented by Mr John Bensted

Mr Bensted advised the Board that the volume of prisoners is critical. The National Plan is about work being transferred from the Prison service to Probation. The drive to reduce prison numbers is by targeting offenders and giving them Community Sentences rather than short term custodial sentences, there is a need to promote confidence in Community Sentences. Magistrates and Sentencers scope for sentencing may be slightly reduced; sentencing guidance will be more restricted in some Areas. Within Gloucester, Magistrates have high custody rates of 7%, other Areas vary between 2.5 – 8%. Mr Bensted has been working with Michael Seath of HMCS, delivering new training and has addressed all 250 Magistrates over the past couple of months. GPA provided an Area plan on how the additional funding would be used and the impact that it would have. This was completed to a very short deadline. The plan was approved by the ROM.

GPA will use additional funding by:

- Targeting Offenders for intensive community programmes.
- Speedier Sentencing Assessments
- Additional Interventions e.g. increased use of curfews.

The impact will be:

- Increased Confidence in Community Sentences
- Increased Availability/Visibility of POs in Court
- Increased Compliance with supervision

Mrs Ball commented to the Board that GPA's job is to promote confidence in probation and how ineffective short term custody is, shifting the balance is required.

It was agreed that the above needs to be summarised in numerical terms, i.e. a target of 28 offenders receiving Community Sentences rather than custodial where a custodial sentence would normally have been recommended. This and the number of recalls will be monitored via the Performance Panel. A formal review will be undertaken at the turn of the year.

RESOLVED

THAT the Plan be **APPROVED**

62/08 ALCOHOL POLICY AND STRATEGY

The Alcohol Policy and Strategy were delivered by Mr Garry Holden. Mr Holden gave a detailed overview of the Policy and Strategy.

The strategy is designed to deliver, both by direct provision and via partnerships, a 'Stepped Care Model' of alcohol interventions for offenders subject to supervision by GPA. This approach will provide specific interventions for harmful, hazardous and dependent drinkers. The aim of the strategy will be to achieve :

1. A reduction of alcohol related offending
2. Consequent reduction in alcohol related admissions to hospital by offenders under GPA supervision
3. Consequent reduction of alcohol related disorder by offenders under GPA supervision

In summary the Alcohol Treatment Requirement (ATR) will be launched on 1.06.08. Magistrates will be addressed regarding what the ATR requirements are.

RESOLVED

THAT the Policy and Strategy be **APPROVED**

63/08 BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AND STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS

The Strategy was delivered by Mr Garry Holden

The strategy is designed to deliver:

- Reduced operating costs.
- cost effective services through growing internal and external business initiatives
- Increased external funding and /or income generation opportunities.
- Increase the reach of GPA and maximise the amount of offender related services commissioned by others

This will be achieved by:

- Best value reviews to continuously improve efficiency and effectiveness in internal and outsourced services. The reviews will be predicated on identifying cost per income unit and may lead to:
 - reforming in-house services.
 - Commissioning other agencies to deliver services
 - contracting out and in services with partner organisations.
- Commissioning services from the public, private or third sectors or.
- Ensure commissioning bodies, commission the required level of offender related provision.
- strategic assessment of need, commissioning capacity and partnerships
- Assist the development of the offender services provider market place.
- Trained staff able to identify and manage business development opportunities.

RESOLVED

THAT the Strategy be **APPROVED**

SECTION D ITEMS TO NOTE

64/08 AUDIT COMMITTEE

(i) Appointment of Audit Committee Members

Current Audit Committee members were reappointed.

(ii) Draft Statement of Accounts 07/08

RESOLVED

THAT the Accounts be **APPROVED**

(iii) Minutes of the Meeting Held on 7 May 2008

RESOLVED

THAT the minutes be **NOTED**

65/08 BUSINESS PLAN AND RISK REGISTER 07/08

A Report was delivered by Mrs Yvette Ball

RESOLVED

THAT the report be **NOTED**

66/08 PC03/2008 CORPORATE MANSLAUGHTER AND CORPORATE HOMICIDE ACT 2007

A Report was prepared by Mr Graham Limbrick.

Item deferred until 2nd July 2008

67/08 SAFETY COMMITTEE

(i) **Minutes of the Meeting Held on 17 April 2008**

RESOLVED

THAT the minutes be **NOTED**

68/08 JNCC

(i) **Minutes of the Meeting Held on 17 April 2008**

RESOLVED

THAT the minutes be **NOTED**

SECTION E – EXEMPT ITEMS

69/08

In accordance with paragraph 3(a) of the National Scheme for Meetings in Private approved by the Secretary of State it was **RESOLVED THAT** the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items because of the confidential nature of the business considered.

70/08 EXEMPT MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 MARCH 2008

These were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

71/08 SFO QUARTER FOUR REVIEW

RESOLVED

THAT the report be **NOTED**

72/08 COMPLAINTS END OF YEAR REVIEW

Item deferred to 2nd July 2008.

