

MINUTES SUBJECT TO THEIR  
ACCEPTANCE AS A CORRECT  
RECORD AT THE NEXT MEETING



GLOUCESTERSHIRE

## GLOUCESTERSHIRE PROBATION BOARD

### MINUTES OF MEETING HELD AT PROBATION HEAD OFFICE, BEWICK HOUSE

Wednesday 22 November 2006

**Present:** Sir William Wratten (Chair), Mrs Y Ball (Chief Officer) Mr D Cook, Mr P Rowe, Mr M Howe, Mrs M Gardner, Mrs C Ellson, Ms J Robinson, Mr D Gooch, Mrs E Abderrahim, Rev A Davies, Mr C Marshall

**Also in attendance:** Mr G Limbrick (Board Secretary) Mr P Stott (Board Treasurer), Mrs C Baker, (Assistant Chief Officer), Mrs Naomi Cryer (Assistant Chief Officer), Mr G Holden (Assistant Chief Officer)

#### 118/06 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Ms H Middleton

#### 119/06 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Graham Limbrick mentioned that in respect of item 130/06 the documents to be considered had been prepared by him at the request of the Regional Manager, in connection with a working group he was involved with looking at regional Governance issues.

There were no other declarations.

#### CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS

None

#### SECTION A STANDING ITEMS

#### 120/06 MINUTES

##### (i) Minutes of the Meeting Held on 18 October 2006

Subject to the following amendments these were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

Minute 103/106 reference to Keith Lockyer should be to Kevin Lockyer.

Minute 76/06 line 11 delete "new" insert "old", and delete "prior to" and insert "after"

Line 16 delete "needed to be" insert "were"

Minute 109/06 second bullet point first line delete "were working together"

##### (ii) **Actions arising from the previous Minutes**

91/06 Future Race Equality Seminars

**Action: Mrs Ellson/Mrs Cryer – on-going**

92/06 Human Resources Information Report

**Action: Mrs Cryer – on-going**

111/06 **GPA** Review of Health and Safety Procedures  
Action Mr. Westhead – on-going

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**121/06 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

Sir William Wratten reported on a meeting of the Performance Management Panel that had taken place, and also that he and Mr. Howe had attended a meeting of the PBA Council on 9<sup>th</sup> November. That meeting had discussed in some detail the Home Secretary's speech at Wormwood Scrubs, and Sir William reminded members that John Raine had subsequently written to the Home Secretary and had received a reply from Mr. Sutcliffe, the Home Office Minister.

He had attended a Regional Forum meeting with Mrs. Ball and indicated that the Forum was pursuing a structure to get value for money out of Regional action.

He had attended an SLA Review Meeting with Peter Blomley, which had covered a lot of familiar territory. Sir William was concerned that there appeared to be continuous reviews of information already given on earlier occasions, and he questioned the necessity of this.

On 17<sup>th</sup> November Roger Hill had visited GPA. Sir William considered that overall this had been a fruitful visit focusing on performance. The main issue related to the handling of high-risk offenders. The Ryecroft Hostel had impressed Mr. Hill, and Sir William noted that unsurprisingly Dave Berry had done an excellent job during the visit.

The question and answer session had been well organised. There was regret and concern that despite greatly improved performance GPA had not been taken off special measures.

The JNCC Meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> November had been well attended, but had raised the issue of the sustainability of performance improvement. The Chief Officer will be reviewing this through management.

He also noted that it appeared that the size of the next Probation Board would be 15 members, including the Chief Officer and the Lord Chancellor's representative.

## **122/06 CHIEF OFFICER'S REPORT**

Mrs Yvette Ball, Chief Officer, reported to the Board on the following items:

NOMS Bill – She understood that this would be drafted this month to be presented to Parliament during January. One outcome would be to make the position of the Regional Offender Manager more meaningful.

SLA Meeting – She confirmed the Chairman's comments.

Panorama Programme. There had been some local fallout. The Home Secretary had subsequently visited Bristol and she had been invited to a meeting with him at which she had had an opportunity to speak to him.

Special Measures. She confirmed that GPA was still under special measures, and was concerned about the effect that this had on certain press reporting, notably in The Guardian following the Panorama programme.

Roger Hill's visit. She regretted not having been present due to a family bereavement, but wished to express her thanks to all for their contribution to the visit. It appeared to have been a very positive day.

Public Protection Practice – the quality of work is being looked at carefully.

New Performance Framework for Probation – she reported that a second draft had been received, which was more outcomes based. There were joint targets with Courts and Partner Agencies, which should give greater success.

Performance – this appeared to be looking good, but sustainability will always be an issue.

Following discussion the Board agreed that the Chair should write to Roger Hill in relation to Mrs. Ball's position.

## **123/06 PERFORMANCE**

Charlie Baker, Assistant Chief Officer, handed round the latest figures for October. She drew attention to certain items on the weighted scorecard. The Court reports for August, September and October were maintaining the target and GPA is above the National Average. The compliance target for October had been met. The sickness target was below the national average, but there are six or seven members of staff on long-term sickness, which affects the figures adversely.

In relation to the target for victim contacts, there were some issues as to what was required from the Centre, and not all areas may be recording the figures on

the same basis.

The LCJB targets, relating to the speed of breaching, had been good since August.

She had met with Roger Hill, who had concentrated on home visits in high risk cases and it was accepted that GPA needed to do some more work on this. So far as the timeliness of reviews and sentence planning was concerned, significant improvement was shown. We are meeting targets in respect of four week employment, and generally Roger Hill was very impressed.

On the issue of sustainability, she commented that statistics showed that this had now been achieved for nine months, and that there had been a big shift of culture in the service.

#### **124/06 SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS**

Charlie Baker reported that the second quarter figures were above the first quarter and generally the review team had been very impressed

#### **125/06 AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING**

##### **Audit Committee Minutes – 15 November 2006**

Mr Peter Rowe reported on the recent Audit Committee Meeting, and indicated that he considered the principle risk to GPA was insufficient funding to carry out its core business. There was some concern lest there be a large deficit at the end of the current financial year, and the job evaluation exercise has not been completed, so the final figures are not yet known, and the estimate made may be low. He pointed out that this was likely to have an impact on the new Board.

He also reported that the County Council is going to change its financial systems, which will have major implications for GPA. It was hoped that we might be able to remain with the existing system until the end of 2007/08. He considered that Peter Stott had been of great help to GPA, and this also might be affected in the future.

Possibilities to consider could include migrating to the system used by another Area, or to a regional system, although this is not yet in being. A decision needed to be made fairly soon.

The draft minutes of the meeting of 15<sup>th</sup> November were received.

#### **126/06 CONTESTABILITY GROUP**

Mr Howe presented the notes of the latest meeting of the Group, which had not met for some time. The notes were received.

#### **127/06 MEMBERS' FEEDBACK**

Mr Gooch referred to a recent complaint appeal that had raised an operational

matter. It was agreed that he would discuss this with Mrs Ball outside the meeting

## **SECTION B – ITEMS FOR DECISION**

### **128/06 PURCHASE OF AN HR DATABASE**

Mrs Cryer presented a report seeking approval to purchase the Professional Personnel System for HR. Funding would come from the NPD capital budget. Two other Areas in the Region used the same system. After a short discussion it was

#### **RESOLVED**

**THAT** the proposal be approved

### **129/06 DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME**

Lizzie Abderrahim presented this, although she pointed out that she was not the lead Officer. She made it clear that what Members had was not the complete Scheme, as not all the Annexes had been copied. A small working group from the Directing Diversity Group had worked on this, using a very prescriptive national template. Parts of the document came from others already in use. The Scheme has to be in place by 6<sup>th</sup> December 2006, and may need some drafting changes later. Mrs Ball expressed her thanks to Lizzie and the working group, which has enabled GPA to be compliant, and Lizzie recorded her gratitude to those staff with a special knowledge or interest who had helped. 6 key challenges were to be included, and NPD would be using external consultants to audit all schemes.

#### **RESOLVED**

**THAT** the Scheme be approved

### **130/06 GOVERNANCE REPORT**

Mrs Ball introduced a report relating to a proposal from the Regional Forum to create a governance framework within which specific partnership projects can be created and managed. A partnership Board was being suggested, and members considered the draft Constitution. Issues were raised as to the numbers of members, and that the Chair and Vice Chair should not be from the same Area Board. It was agreed that members would give their comments to Mrs Ball, who would pass them on to the Regional Manager who was overseeing the project. Subject to that it was

#### **RESOLVED**

**THAT** the Constitution and Agreement be approved.

**Action: Mrs Ball**

## **SECTION C – ITEMS TO NOTE**

### **131/06 HR STRATEGY**

Mrs Cryer reported that this had been considered by the JNCC and had been well received. A strategic view of where HR fitted in the organisation was needed to help develop an organisation that was fit for purpose.

**RESOLVED**

**THAT** the HR Strategy be noted

**132/06 BUSINESS PLAN 2006/07 – SECOND QUARTER REVIEW**

The review of the Business Plan had been tabled at the last meeting, and there were no further queries. Mrs Ball commented on the risk register, indicating that Custody Plus had been taken out, but budgets remained an issue. Three bids had been won, attracting external money to improve services to offenders.

**RESOLVED**

**THAT** the paper be noted

**133/06 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT POLICY AND STRATEGY**

Mrs Ball presented the reviewed Performance Management Policy and Strategy to update the Board indicating that there had only been minor changes.

**RESOLVED**

**THAT** the paper be noted

**134/06 SUBSTANCE MISUSE INTERVENTIONS**

Mr Holden presented a report, updating the Board on Drug Rehabilitation Requirement matters.

**RESOLVED**

**THAT** the paper be noted

**135/06 REGIONAL LEDGER SYSTEM/GCC SYSTEM**

Peter Stott presented a Paper relating to the proposal by the County Council to introduce a new system with effect from October 2007. He indicated that a decision needed to be made before the end of this financial year as to whether GPA wanted to continue with the County Council's new system. However, at this stage he was unable to give any costings, and would not be able to do so until early in the new year.

He had also illustrated the possible costs of migrating to a regional system, and the costs indicated were for the entire region. Again it was difficult at this stage to be precise, or to say how the costs would be divided between the Areas in the region.

After some discussion members were concerned that such short notice of the need for change was being given, and were of the opinion that GPA should remain with the County Council at least until March 2008 to give as much time as possible to look at other solutions. They were aware that regionally work was being done on the regional option and its costings. In reply to questioning Mr. Stott indicated that whatever option was pursued there would be no need to change GPA's banking arrangements. Mr. Rowe suggested that a special meeting should be convened to look at this in much more detail when sufficient information was available, and the matter will be reconsidered at the January meeting.

**RESOLVED**

**THAT** the matter be considered further at the January 2007 Board Meeting, or at a special meeting if necessary.

**Action: Peter Stott, Yvette Ball**

**136/06     SECTION D – EXEMPT ITEMS**

In accordance with paragraph 3(a) and 3 (i) respectively 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.

**137/06     EXEMPT MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18 OCTOBER 2006**

These were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

**138/06     ILL HEALTH RETIREMENT**

The Board approved an urgent request for ill health retirement.

**139/06     ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was none.

**140/06     DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Board will be held on Wednesday 10 January 2007 at 0945 a.m. in the Boardroom at Bewick House.

The meeting closed at 13:10pm.

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CHAIRMAN