

GLOUCESTERSHIRE PROBATION BOARD
MINUTES OF MEETING
HELD AT PROBATION HEAD OFFICE, BEWICK HOUSE

Tuesday 1 February 2005

Present: Sir William Wratten (Chairman), Mrs Y Ball (Chief Officer) Mrs E Abderrahim, Mr D Cook, Rev A Davies, Mrs M Gardner, Mr D Gooch, Mrs J Hall, Mr A Hamblyn, Mr M Howe, Mrs C Jago, Mr C Marshall, Ms H Middleton and Mr P Rowe

Also in attendance: Mr Mrs N Cryer (Assistant Chief Officer), Mr G Limbrick (Secretary to the Board), Mrs J Oulton (Assistant Chief Officer), Mr P Stott (Financial Advisor), Mrs E Moss (Board Clerk)

Apologies for Absence: There were no apologies.

NB: Agenda items were not taken in order but for ease of reference, these Minutes have been produced to correspond to the agenda

87 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

As a County Councillor, Mrs Hall declared an interest in Agenda Item 17 – Gloucestershire's Supporting People Programme.

Mr Marshall advised that as a Member of the Courts' Board, he had been elected as Chair of the PPP for the two new court buildings.

Mr Limbrick declared an interest in Agenda Item 18 – Offender Learning and Skills Service as Avon and Somerset Probation Area was also involved in the tendering exercise.

88 MINUTES

(i) Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 1 December 2004

The Minutes were accepted as correct and would be signed by the Chair.

89 ACTIONS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

Minute 59 Approval of the Race Equality Scheme Update would be held in abeyance pending the first meeting of the Directing Diversity Group where it would be considered in the first instance. This would now be an agenda item for the March Board meeting.

Action: Mrs Moss

Minute 39(d) This had been discharged.

Minute This matter was to be addressed later in the meeting.
76

Minute Mr Marshall confirmed that he had passed relevant papers to Mr Blomley.
79(ii)

Minute This matter was reported as on-going.
79(iii)

Minute This had been discharged.
79(iv)

Minute This matter was outstanding. Mrs Jago confirmed that she would pursue
79(vii) membership of the Executive Group of the Cotswold CDRP.

Action: Mrs Jago

Minute Sir William Wratten reported that the PBA would not be updating their presentation
84 material supplied to Boards. Any update would be co-ordinated locally within Gloucestershire Probation Area (GPA).

90 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

(i) Meeting with Editor of Gloucestershire Echo

Sir William reported that he and Mrs Ball had met with the Editor of the Gloucestershire Echo on 13 December 2004. The Echo were interested in 'running stories' and opportunities to promote the Service this way would be considered, where appropriate.

(ii) Meeting with Parmjit Dhanda, MP

Sir William reported that he and Mrs Ball were due to meet with Parmjit Dhanda on 18 February 2005, when matters concerning Ryecroft Approved Premises would be raised.

(iii) PBA Council Meeting

Sir William advised that he would be attending the PBA Council meeting on 10 February 2005. He would seek accurate guidance on how contestability is to be approached nationally.

(iv) Addresses to the Board

Sir William reported that arrangements were being put in place for Mrs Ball and himself to meet with Judge Tabor, when he proposed inviting Judge Tabor to address the Board. Sir William would also be inviting Kevin Lockyer, Regional Offender Manager (ROM), to address the Board.

A query was raised as to GPA's position in relation to a representative from the Lord Chancellor's Department being appointed to the Board. Mr Limbrick advised that whilst a judge had been nominated for the Avon & Somerset Board some time ago. He had never been formally appointed, but attended Board meetings at the invitation of the Chairman. Discussion ensued and it was agreed that whilst Judge Tabor and Mrs Ball met on a quarterly basis, thereby ensuring open lines of communication, it would be invaluable for Board members to meet him and welcomed Sir William's proposal.

91 CHIEF OFFICER'S REPORT

(i) Senior Management Responsibilities

Mrs Ball reported on the streamlining of senior management responsibilities, highlighting the following:

- Mrs Oulton would lead on offender management and the ESI Follow-up Inspection
- Mr Blomley would lead on contestability, drugs and Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs)
- Mrs Cryer would be undertaking some regional work on the NOMS Offender Management Model.

(ii) Regional Offender Manager (ROM)

Mrs Ball informed Members that she and senior managers had met with Kevin Lockyer, ROM, in December 2004. Whilst appearing supportive, he had made it clear that he expected GPA to work with prisons and other areas in the Region. She believed that Mr Lockyer would give the Region clear leadership on this. He anticipated there being Service Level Agreements (SLAs) between himself and the Boards. She reported that Mr Lockyer was taking a keen interest in the OLASS Bid (see Minute 102 for further information). Mr Lockyer would be spending 24 hours in the Area on 3 – 4 March 2005 when he would be meeting with the County Managers' Group. Sir William Wratten would pursue the possibility of Mr Lockyer meeting with Board Members during this visit.

Action: Sir William Wratten

Sir William suggested that the Board needed to impress upon Mr Lockyer that his primary task was to resolve many current unknowns into certainties. Discussion ensued over 'contestability'. The Contestability Group (Mr Howe, Mr Limbrick and Mrs Jago) had recently met and it was agreed that Mr Howe would circulate his paper drafted from that meeting to all Members.

Action: Mr Howe

Mrs Ball confirmed that there had been no steer from the Centre regarding contestability although she understood that work on developing what contestability meant and what it would look like for areas was being undertaken.

(iii) GPA Business Plan

Mrs Ball reported that the Budget 2005/06 was still awaited but anticipated nil growth. Mrs Oulton confirmed that the new National Standards relating to offender management would be operational from 1 April 2005.

(iv) Pay Review

Mrs Ball confirmed that 0.8% would be carried forward into 2005/06. She reported that NAPO was not balloting for industrial action at this stage but had recorded a failure to agree with employers.

92 PERFORMANCE

(i) Information Report

The December 2004 Information Report was circulated at the meeting. Mrs Oulton advised Members that the November WAMP figures indicated that GPA was 3% away from receiving the Achiever's Bonus. Enforcement and Programme figures were good but Mrs Oulton urged caution in this regard. She advised that GPA was still struggling to achieve the target for the number of appointments offered and kept. Improvement was anticipated with the newly appointed Courts & Case Management manager taking up post on 1 February 2005, thereby bringing a full complement of managers to this area of work.

The drop in ECP completions was attributed to lack of up-to-date record keeping which would be investigated. Discussion ensued regarding the application of resources and it was noted that a Programmes review was underway in order to manage resources to deal with the current waiting lists.

Mr Gooch commended the work that has been undertaken to achieve 100% on enforcement. It was agreed that a message from the Board would be included in the Chief Officer's February Communications Bulletin.

Action: Sir William Wratten

RESOLVED

THAT the report be noted.

(ii) **Complaints Monitoring**

It was agreed that documentation should be amended to indicate that the outcome of the complaint should be recorded as 'other' rather than 'not substantiated'.

Action: Mrs Moss

RESOLVED

THAT the report be noted.

93 BUSINESS PLAN 2004/05

Mrs Cryer confirmed that in relation to the Quarter 1 Review, there were no outstanding self-assessments other than two new staff members.

Mrs Cryer confirmed that the DDA Audit had been completed although she had not yet had sight of the final document.

RESOLVED

THAT the Third Quarter's Report and the Update to the Risk Register be noted.

94 BUSINESS PLAN 2005/06

Mrs Ball advised Members that the budget pack for 2005/06 had not been received although the Business Plan 2005/06 template had arrived. Work had commenced on this.

95 AUDIT COMMITTEE

(i) **Draft Audit Committee Minutes – 12 January 2005**

Item 10: After discussion, it was agreed that the virement requirement for Board approval be raised to £60,000.

RESOLVED

THAT the raised virement level be noted.

In order to negate the need for an annual review of the maximum virement level, the Audit Committee were asked to consider an amount set in excess of 1% of budget.

Action: Mr Rowe

RESOLVED

THAT the draft minutes of the Audit Committee held on 12 January 2005 be noted.

96 HEALTH AND SAFETY

(i) **Draft Safety Committee Minutes – Extraordinary Meeting - 16 December 2004 and Ordinary Meeting - 18 January 2005**

Item 06/05: Mr Marshall requested that it be noted that he would not be attending the Launch of Phase 2 of the National Health & Safety Strategy on 17 March 2005.

Item 11/05: Mrs Ball clarified that Gloucester City Council would be undertaking a study of parking arrangements in the Denmark Road vicinity. It was anticipated that this would be carried out during the early part of 2005.

RESOLVED

THAT the draft minutes of the Extraordinary Safety Committee held on 16 December 2004 and the Ordinary Meeting held on 18 January 2005 be noted.

(ii) Update

Mrs Ball confirmed that all staff were aware of their responsibility under the new Health and Safety Strategy. Additional policies, recently received, would be considered at the next Safety Committee Meeting in May 2005.

97 JOINT NEGOTIATING AND CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE (JNCC)

(i) Draft JNCC Minutes – 18 January 2005

Mrs Cryer expressed concern that after the local annual union elections, there were now only two Probation Services Officers (PSOs) serving as NAPO representatives.

Item 10/05: Mrs Cryer invited Members to note the item on Car Parking Policy.

Item 11/05: It was noted that a Staff Conference was not planned by way of follow-up to the Staff Survey, the main reason being due to financial constraints. This would, however, be kept under review.

RESOLVED

THAT the draft minutes of the JNCC held on 18 January 2005 be noted.

98 MEMBERS' FEEDBACK

(i) Mr Howe reported on his attendance at an Actuary – Pension Scheme Meeting where concern had been expressed about the integrity of pensions. Employers' contributions would rise from 18% to 22% with effect from April 2005. Alterations to the Pension Scheme were being considered for implementation over a period of time. These included:

- The raising of retirement age
- The right to retire early to be discarded.

Mr Howe reported that the GPA Contestability Group had met with Mrs Ball but there was little to report on progress. He suggested that there was a need for the Probation Boards' Association, National Probation Directorate (NPD), and National Offender Management Service (NOMS) to 'flush out' what is happening. He advised that useful work was being undertaken in the South West Region with Wiltshire acting as project managers for Community Punishment. Local feedback would be provided. Mr Howe indicated that Mr Lockyer, South West Regional Offender Manager (ROM) would be working to push the SW Areas and Region into market testing situations. Mr Howe had drafted a paper on Contestability, which he agreed to circulate to Members.

Action: Mr Howe

After discussion, it was agreed that Sir William Wratten should write to Mr Lockyer itemising GPA's concerns. Human Resources issues were of major concern as was the fact that there appeared to be no strategic vision around contestability. TUPE issues were of considerable concern.

Action: Sir William Wratten

Sir William encouraged Members that their individual links to teams should be a top priority at this difficult time.

- (ii) Mr Gooch indicated that he would like to hand over his participation in the European Excellence Model (EEM) and requested other Members to consider taking this on. Anyone interested should approach Mrs Oulton, Assistant Chief Officer, in the first instance and advise Sir William Wratten.

Action: All Members

- (iii) Ms Middleton informed Members that she had been invited to a workshop on Prolific Offenders – Prevent and Deter Strategy - to be run by Cheltenham Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP). She sought the Board's perspective to feed into this. Mrs Ball indicated that treatment for the under-18's was very intensive and that Probation would take a different approach.

Ms Middleton reported from the last meeting of the Cheltenham CDRP where it had been implied that the Persistent and Prolific Offender Scheme (POPO) was not working well. Mrs Ball advised that whilst the Scheme had got off the ground in Gloucester, it had not progressed at the same rate in the other two areas. She would bring this to the attention of Mr Blomley, Assistant Chief Officer.

Action: Mrs Ball

- (iv) Mrs Abderrahim spoke to her paper that was circulated at the meeting. Additional points to note were:
- Mrs Ball would consult with the Directing Diversity Group (DDG) regarding feeding into Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Racist Incidents Group (CTRIG)
 - Mrs Ball and Mrs Abderrahim would liaise outside of the meeting regarding Compact

Action: Mrs Ball/Mrs Abderrahim

- Mrs Ball had attended Gloucestershire Race Equality Council's (GlosREC) AGM. A lack of funding from public bodies had been a point of contention but good discussion had been set in train as to what GlosREC was actually providing for agencies.
- (v) Mrs Jago spoke to her paper that was circulated at the meeting. Some concern was expressed regarding the anticipated discussion of individuals falling under the Prolific and other Priority Offender Scheme (POPO) during CDRP meetings. Mrs Jago reported that Gloucestershire Drugs and Alcohol Service (GDAS) had been awarded £30,000 funding from the Forest of Dean CDRP. A decrease of £250,000 national funding for GDAS was noted.
- (vi) Mr Rowe reported a more formalised format for future SW Regional Audit Chairs' meetings.

99 DIVERSITY POLICY AND STRATEGY

Mrs Ball reported that the Policy and Strategy would be impact assessed through the Independent Advisory Group (IAG), a sub-committee of the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB). The Strategy was a visionary document which clarified GPA's aims; substantial work was required to achieve these. The Directing Diversity Group (DDG) would draw up an Action Plan to address what is set out in the Strategy, with key areas being identified and prioritised; this would be brought back to the Board. It was noted that not all the objectives were SMART.

RESOLVED

THAT the Diversity Policy and Strategy be approved.

100 CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACT 2003 – APPROVAL OF PLACES FOR ACTIVITY REQUIREMENTS

Mr Limbrick spoke to his paper and confirmed that all those premises listed were used for activities with offenders.

RESOLVED

THAT the premises for activities be approved.

101 REVENUE BUDGETS FOR 2005/06

It was confirmed that the budget pack for 2005/06 had not yet been received. It was now running two months behind schedule, with the possible deadline for submission having moved to the middle of March.

Mr Stott spoke to an update paper which was circulated at the meeting.

RESOLVED

THAT the contents of Mr Stott's update on the 2005/06 budget settlement be noted.

102 GLOUCESTERSHIRE'S SUPPORTING PEOPLE PROGRAMME

Mrs Ball spoke to Mr Blomley's paper. She reported that Gloucestershire's Supporting People has severe funding difficulties which had left GPA needing to promote the needs of offenders against stiff competition such as the elderly, physically disabled etc. The current Gloucestershire Supporting People Strategy did not make specific allowance for offenders, leaving their provision to be applied for through mainstream placements. Mrs Abderrahim advised Members that money had been set aside for offenders in the National Supporting People budget. Mrs Hall suggested that a letter should be sent from GPA to Ms Y Cooper, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, on this matter. Mrs Hall would compose a letter for Sir William Wratten to share with Members prior to posting.

Action: Mrs Hall/Sir William Wratten

RESOLVED

THAT the update be noted.

103 OFFENDER LEARNING AND SKILLS SERVICE (OLASS)

Mrs Ball spoke to Mr Blomley's paper and advised Members that GPA was particularly interested in bidding particularly for Part 1 and Part 2 of this pilot OLASS bid. Mrs Ball confirmed that agreement had been reached with Avon & Somerset and Dorset Chief Officers to bid as a consortium for lead provider. Wiltshire had expressed an interest in joining but Devon & Cornwall had elected not to participate. There was not sufficient time for GPA to prepare a separate bid for sub-contractor status but a covering letter would be submitted indicating interest in this should the consortium of Areas not be successful in their bid as lead provider. Mrs Ball reported on the need for the exercise to be carried out extremely swiftly in order to fit in with the academic year starting in August 2005. There had neither been a project plan or risk register provided by the Learning & Skills Council (LSC) nor an opportunity to identify the impact on GPA's budget for 2005/06. Risks would become evident as the tender process unfolded. Mrs Ball also observed that there would be stiff competition for this bid. The timetable for the tendering process was as follows:

- Bids to be submitted by 17 February 2005
- Panel would consider bids in mid-March 2005
- Anticipated appointment being made in June 2005.

It was noted that this was a highly mobile and unsatisfactory situation.

RESOLVED

THAT the update be noted.

104 RYECROFT APPROVED PREMISES

Mrs Ball spoke to Mr Blomley's paper and advised of the intention to hold briefing meetings with local groups, MPs etc.

RESOLVED

THAT the update be noted.

105 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

Mrs Oulton reported that information leaflets had been circulated to all staff and that they were expected to sign for attendance at the Freedom of Information briefings undertaken by their line manager. It was important that staff understood their own personal liability under the Freedom of Information Act. The same briefing was delivered to Board Members who were also required to sign for attendance.

In discussion, the following points were noted:

- Mrs Oulton would be Lead Officer for Freedom of Information and all requests would be dealt with by her
- If an individual had signed for attending a Freedom of Information briefing and subsequently was in breach of supplying information, the Board as a corporate body would not also be in breach
- Any requests that cause doubt as to whether information could be released, would be referred to the Open Government Unit to be dealt with
- Information about individuals would be covered by the Data Protection Act
- A mechanism would be set up to allow quarterly reporting to the Board on requests made under the Freedom of Information Act
- GPA's approach to Freedom of Information would be to ensure as much information as possible is put into the public domain via the GPA website
- GPA would need to exercise caution in ensuring information is retained in its proper place.

Mrs Ball acknowledged the hard work that Mrs Oulton, Mr Limbrick and Mr Fogarty (Business Systems and Information Manager) had undertaken.

By way of additional information, Mrs Oulton advised Members that Criminal Justice Act Briefings were scheduled for 25 April 2005 and 12 May 2005. Members would, in due course, receive official invitations to attend one of these.

RESOLVED

THAT the update be noted.

106 EUROPEAN EXCELLENCE MODEL (EEM)

Mrs Oulton spoke to her paper and advised Members that no financial support had been received from NPD to complete the EEM report in 2004 although they had committed to the continued use of EEM from 2005. In discussion the following points were noted:

- The EEM Report and skills of the Assessment Team would be useful in preparing for contestability
- The score for 2004 was slightly higher than the previous year which indicates GPA's maintenance of its position
- The external facilitator, at a cost of £1,000, was invaluable in terms of objectivity, knowledge of the model and experience of pulling all the relevant information together at the consensus meeting
- Real costs for the EEM was staff and Board Members' time
- Customer Strategy, communications and embedding diversity in the organisation would be fed into the Business Plan 2005/06.

Further discussion ensued regarding the Area for Improvement on Leadership – ‘the role of the Board as leaders needs to be clarified’ (page 7) and it was agreed that a newsletter to staff explaining about the role of the Board with a brief snapshot of each individual Board member would be issued. Members were to provide snapshot details to Sir William Wratten.

Action: All Members

RESOLVED

THAT the report be noted.

107 PROBATION AND SENTENCERS’ LIAISON

Mrs Oulton advised Members that the final version of the Strategy document had not yet been completed. Mr Howe reported that he had attended the Probation Liaison Annual General Meeting in January 2005 and had observed the excellent relationship between sentencers and Probation managers.

RESOLVED

THAT the update be noted.

108 MANAGEMENT OF OFFENDERS AND SENTENCING BILL

Mr Limbrick spoke to his paper.

RESOLVED

THAT the principal provisions be noted.

109 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(i) Portfolio of Assistant Chief Officers – Re-alignment of Roles

Sir William Wratten advised Members that Mr Blomley, ACO, had sought reassurance from the Board regarding his role in the light of contestability. Sir William had responded to all the ACOs in a reassuring and optimistic mood but offered no guarantees that could not be underpinned.

(ii) Ambassadorial Role

This would be re-visited as an agenda item at the next meeting to identify groups of presenters.

110 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Board will be held on Tuesday 15 February 2005, at 9.45am in the Boardroom at Bewick House.

NB: The date of the next meeting was subsequently altered to **Wednesday 9 March 2005** commencing at 9.45am in the Boardroom at Bewick House

The meeting closed at 1.10pm.

CHAIRMAN