



NATIONAL PROBATION SERVICE  
for England and Wales

*Gloucestershire*

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

**Wednesday 18 May 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, Mr A Hamblyn, Mr M Howe, Mrs C Jago, Mr C Marshall, Ms H Middleton and Mr P Rowe

**Also in attendance:** Mr P Blomley (Assistant Chief Officer), Mr P Stott (Financial Advisor), Mrs E Moss (Board Clerk)

**Apologies for Absence:** Mr G Limbrick (Board Secretary)

Sir William advised members Mrs Hall had resigned from the Board on taking up the position of Cabinet Member for Children's Services on Gloucestershire County Council. She no longer felt able to give the necessary time and commitment to the Gloucestershire Probation Board.

Sir William introduced Mr John Raine, Chair of the Probation Boards' Association (PBA) who would be addressing Board Members. Mr Raine was invited to stay for the duration of the meeting.

**20/05 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were none.

**21/05 MEMBERS' FEEDBACK**

- (i) Mr Howe reported that he had met with S McBride and J Maitland-Hudson, Case Management Managers (West). In summary, there were obvious concerns about workloads being extraordinarily high, with additional work emanating from the Criminal Justice Act 2003 and the current vacancy rate. Mr Howe reported the managers as being upbeat and hopeful that the situation would improve once the vacancies were filled in July/August. Other concerns noted were the increased staff turnover and increased sickness absence. Mr Howe had discussed the subject of voluntary health screening for staff with the two managers and informed Board Members that he would be happy to pursue the costs of such screening. It was noted that staff were going through a particularly stressful period. It was agreed that any new initiatives that the Board or senior managers could suggest to stem the current pressures would be helpful.
- (ii) Mrs Jago reported on the Directing Diversity Awards that she attended at the end of March 2005. It had been a very upbeat occasion and had provided useful information/thoughts about managing diversity within the Area.

Mrs Jago advised that the meeting of the Cotswold Crime & Disorder Partnership (CDRP) scheduled for 20 May 2005 had been postponed.

- (iii) Ms Middleton spoke to her report. She confirmed that she and Mrs Ball were pulling together a Probation statement to go on the CADA Website. It was confirmed that no other CDRP had requested such a statement but it was noted that Gloucestershire Area could be pro-active in providing one. It was noted that work was currently on-going in updating the GPA website
- (iv) Mrs Abderrahim spoke to her paper circulated at the meeting. She advised that the Chairmanship of Tewkesbury CDRP had passed to Mr Phil Kendrick, Manager, Gloucestershire Youth Offending Service, who was very keen to have an opportunity to address the Board.

Mrs Abderrahim advised that she had prepared a more detailed report on the PBA Promotions and Partnerships Working Group and invited Members to contact her should they require a copy.

- (v) Mr Cook reported on his attendance at the Revitalising Heath & Safety Strategy, Launch of Phase 2 event at the end of March. One other Board member and two members of staff had also attended this event, which Mr Cook regarded as a waste of resources as no significant information for Areas had been forthcoming. Mr Raine indicated that other areas had reported similar views.

Mr Cook advised that the Gloucester CDRP had postponed its last two meetings.

- (vi) Mr Marshall reported on a recent visit to Ryecroft and commended the work that had been done in improving the conditions there, ie. re-decoration, planting etc. Rev Davies echoed this and the Board noted the good work that has been undertaken.

**22/05 ADDRESS BY MR JOHN RAINE, CHAIR OF PROBATION BOARDS' ASSOCIATION**

Mr Raine addressed the Board.

**23/05 MINUTES**

**(i) Minutes of the Meeting Held on 9 March 2005**

The Minutes were approved subject to the following amendments.

*08/05 Health and Safety*  
First paragraph, second sentence amended to read 'Four are to attend: Mr Cook, Mr Westhead .....

*9/05 (vii) Members' Feedback*  
The second sentence was amended to read 'The volunteering groups had expressed their anxiety about contestability and Mr Barrett had agreed to arrange a contact .....

*13/05 Race Equality Scheme*  
The wording was amended to 'The Board noted the progress report made to the Home Secretary.'

*14/05 Gloucestershire's Supporting People Programme*  
The wording of this item was amended to read:  
'Mr Blomley spoke to the draft Supporting People Strategy which was circulated at the meeting. Mr Blomley advised Members that the Strategy, though updated, had not been finalised. Members also agreed that the Strategy should not be ratified until required amendments had been made.

Mr Blomley recommended to Members that authority to approve be delegated to the Chair and Chief Officer.'

- 15/05 *Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS)*  
The wording of this item was amended to read:  
'Mr Blomley advised members that tenders had been invited for the region and the award would be announced on 31 March with contracts commencing on 1 August.
- Mr Blomley reported that the Education, Training and Employment Team had been very successful in meeting targets this year and were confident of meeting them next year subject to the outcome of the OLASS bid.'
- 16/05 *Ryecroft Approved Premises*  
In the first sentence, first paragraph, the word 'refurbishment' was replaced with 'reform' and in the second paragraph, first sentence, the work 'Accommodation' was amended to 'Admissions'.

**(ii) Actions Arising from Previous Meeting**

- 04/05 (i) *Meeting with Parmjit Dhanda, MP*  
Discharged
- 04/05 (iii) *Ryecroft*  
Visits were booked and had begun.
- 05/05 (v) *Directing Diversity Group*  
This would be reported on later in the meeting.
- 05/05 (vii) *Leadership Forum*  
Sir William Wratten and Mrs Ball had attended.
- 05/05 (x) *Audit Commission*  
Discharged.
- 07/05 (iv) *GPA Budget 2005/06*  
A letter had gone to the National Probation Directorate (NPD) and GPA had subsequently been advised that they were the only Area to complain about their allocated budget. Mr Mike DuBock, Acting Head of Finance, NPD was due to visit GPA to discuss the budget on 7 June 2005.
- 09/05 (v) *Volunteer Community Scheme/Compact Working Group*  
On-going.
- 10/05 *Revenue Budget 2005/06*  
See 07/05 (iv) above.
- 15/05 *Offender Learning & Skills Service*  
On-going.
- 16/05 *Ryecroft Approved Premises*  
On-going. Sir William Wratten and Mrs Ball would be meeting with the Bishop of Gloucester after the next Board meeting on 20 July 2005.
- 18/05 (i) *David James*  
Discharged.

**24/05 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

- (i) Board Expenses Budget**  
Sir William informed members that the 2004/05 Members' Expenses budget had been 5% underspent.

(ii) **Judge Tabor**

Discussion took place regarding Judge Tabor's availability to attend Board meetings. Sir William advised Members of his intention to write to Judge Tabor to inform him of the remaining 2005/06 Board meeting dates and times, and to notify him that it might be possible to change the date/time of a meeting to accommodate his needs.

**Action: Sir William Wratten**

(iii) **Regional Forum**

Sir William Wratten had attended a Regional meeting of Chairs with Kevin Lockyer, Regional Offender Manager (ROM) on 25 May 2005. A regional Project Initiation Document (PID) – Preparing for Contestability – Developing the Competitiveness of Enhanced Community Punishment and Unpaid Work Across the South West Region was being worked on. He advised that Devon and Cornwall Probation Area were undertaking their own project in addition to the regional one at a cost of £120,000 in consultancy fees.

(iv) **Good Governance Document**

Sir William reported that this document, presented by Mr Mike Caldwell, had been publicised at the last Probation Boards' Association (PBA) Board meeting and had been very well received. It was agreed to invite Mr Caldwell to a GPA Board meeting.

**Action: Sir William Wratten**

(v) **Chief/Chair Appraisals**

Sir William Wratten advised Members that he had responded to Roger Hill's letter regarding Chief and Chair appraisals.

**25/05 CHIEF OFFICER'S REPORT**

(i) **NOMS Conference, 11 – 13 April 2005**

Mrs Ball reported that the design of the organisation would be finalised in May with ROMs defined either as Commissioners or Offender Managers. It was anticipated that Service Level Agreements (SLAs) would come into operation in 2006/07. There would be a build up of private and voluntary capacity in Criminal Justice to encourage competition/complementarities of provision. Mrs Ball informed Members that the three Isle of Sheppey prisons had been provided with a team of consultants and had been given a year to prepare for contestability. The experience of contestability within prisons had been good – value for money had been driven up along with performance under very tight contract management.

(ii) **Performance**

Mrs Ball advised Members that the end of year national figures had been published. GPA had made significant improvement on last year and had moved to 27<sup>th</sup> position in the league table. It was noted that this was a particularly admirable achievement when taking account of the scale of change in having both a new Chief and Chair appointed during the period.

(iii) **Budget 2005/06**

Mrs Ball informed Members that Mr Mike DuBock, Acting Head of Finance, NPD, was due to meet with GPA representatives on 7 June 2005. She also reported that GPA had not been considered in the SW Accommodation Gateway and that she and Mr Blomley, ACO, had sent a clear message that GPA wished to be included in the future.

(iv) **Business Plan 2005/06**

Mrs Ball reported on an exercise that would be undertaken with the County Managers' Group (CMG) on 27 May 2005.

(v) **Race Equality Scheme**

Mrs Ball reported that she was undertaking comprehensive revision of the Scheme and would bring it to the Board once completed. Mrs Abderrahim had offered her support with regard to this work.

(vi) **Contestability**

Mrs Ball reported on an exercise undertaken with CMG at their meeting on 22 April 2005. Mr Blomley, ACO, was undertaking project work on shaping contestability.

Mrs Ball advised Members that TRIBAL had been awarded the contract for Unit 1 of the OLASS Bid and Strode College had been awarded Unit 2 – Basic Skills Teaching. GPA would be entering into discussions with TRIBAL but at this stage it was not known if they would be sub-contracting any work. Discussion ensued around the issue of sub-contracted work and possible TUPE issues for staff. Mrs Ball confirmed that in terms of meeting national targets, GPA would be seeking sub-contracted work.

(vii) **Ryecroft**

Mrs Ball reported on the re-decoration work and advised Members that Ms Cathy Earlam, Public Protection Approved Premises Unit, NPD had visited the hostel.

(viii) **Staff Survey**

Mrs Ball reported that the results of the staff survey had been received. Initial indications were that GPA had scored highly on diversity and equal opportunities but not so well on workloads and managing change.

(ix) **Directing Diversity Group**

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 April would be issued to Members for information in due course. Mrs Ball reported on a lively meeting and advised that a Topic of the Month would be included in the monthly Communications Bulletin.

**26/05 AUDIT COMMITTEE**

(i) **Minutes of Meeting Held on 5 March 2005 and Draft Minutes of Meeting Held on 5 May 2005**

In relation to Mrs Hall's resignation from the Board, Mr Rowe raised the need to fill the resulting vacancy on the Audit Committee as soon as possible. Sir William Wratten would e-mail Members inviting volunteers.

**Action: Sir William Wratten**

Mr Rowe flagged up the difficulty GPA was experiencing in achieving 50% of PSRs being completed within 15 days as a risk. It was also noted that the results of the OLASS Bid posed a potential risk for GPA.

Mr Rowe recorded his thanks to Mrs Maloney, Finance Manager and Mr Stott, Treasurer, for their hard work in controlling and monitoring the GPA budget.

The Board was asked to approve the Financial Reporting Timetable.

**RESOLVED**

**THAT** the minutes of the Audit Committee held on 3 March 2005 and the draft minutes of the Audit Committee held on 5 May 2005 be noted, and the Financial Reporting Timetable be approved.

**27/05 ESTATES COMMITTEE**

(i) **Draft Minutes of the Estates Committee Meeting Held on 12 April 2005**

The following points were noted:

Oakes House:	the refurbishment is almost complete
Barbican House:	there are still some issues regarding the car park gates and heating system

Cheltenham Office: the square footage charge is being challenged in view of the fact that GPA is being charged for all communal areas used by the other residents of the building. GPA is paying for the cost of the re-charge. There has been no progress on finding alternative premises

Bewick House: The Unpaid Work Unit will be remaining at Bewick House  
Morelands: GPA is not paying for Morelands in 2005/06, although it is anticipated that the Area will be charged for it in 2006/07.

**RESOLVED**

**THAT** the draft minutes of the Estates Committee be noted.

**28/05 HEALTH AND SAFETY**

**(i) Update**

Mrs Ball reported that implementation of Health and Safety policies was well established in GPA. It was noted that on the national self-assessment exercise, GPA had achieved 71% which was a very good result.

**29/05 JOINT NEGOTIATING AND CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE (JNCC)**

**(i) Draft Minutes of the JNCC Meeting of 3 May 2005**

It was noted that the Car Parking Policy had been 'accepted with reservations' by the JNCC.

Mrs Abderrahim agreed to e-mail Mrs Cryer, ACO, to enquire if it would be appropriate for her to attend the ACAS Joint Training Initiative on 24 June as a reserve member of the JNCC.

**Action: Mrs Abderrahim**

**RESOLVED**

**THAT** the draft minutes of the JNCC be noted.

**30/05 BUSINESS PLAN 2004/05**

Mrs Ball informed Members that all the objectives had been achieved although there was still some work to be done on Objectives 1 and 2. The risks cited on the Risk Register were on-going and would be incorporated into the 2005/06 Risk Register.

**RESOLVED**

**THAT** the final quarter's review of the Business Plan 2004/05 be noted.

**31/05 PERFORMANCE**

**(i) Information Report – Mar 2004 – April 2005**

Mrs Ball reported that GPA was in line to get a Performance Bonus of around £140,000 and was very close to getting the Achiever's Bonus of £70,000. She also drew attention to the differences in the weighted scorecard targets for 2005/06.

Mrs Ball confirmed that the figure for DTTO completions was the actual number and not a percentage.

Mrs Jago drew attention to the fact that in relation to reports, the emphasis in the courts was to request fast reports (SSRs) which were expected to be completed within 5 days and flagged up serious concern as to GPA's ability to meet these targets. Mrs Ball responded that the courts were being frontloaded with staff but probation officer resources were low. Discussion ensued regarding the possibility of Probation Services Officers undertaking the writing of reports. It was recognised that this would raise industrial relations issues although Mr Howe indicated that there was a will amongst managers and staff to move towards this. Whilst recognising that this was a problem for GPA, it was noted that it was not yet a national issue. Mrs Jago advised Members that the Courts would normally enquire as to how long it would take to produce a report and would prefer to have a realistic indication of the timescale, ie. 6 – 7 days, rather than the statutory 5 which might not be met. This would better assist the courts for their scheduling purposes. Mrs Ball would pass this information to Mrs Oulton, ACO – Offender Management, and would check the impact of this in relation to the relevant national performance target. Sir William Wratten requested an update at the next Board meeting.

**Action: Mrs Ball**

Mr Raine suggested that clarity was needed from the NPD HR Department on the issue of flexibility, and pay and reward between grades.

**RESOLVED**

**THAT** the report be noted.

**(ii) Complaints Monitoring**

There were no complaints recorded for the period 1 January – 31 March 2005.

**RESOLVED**

**THAT** the report be noted.

**32/05 PUBLIC PROTECTION POLICY AND STRATEGY**

The Public Protection Policy and Strategy papers were presented.

**RESOLVED**

**THAT** the Public Protection Policy and Strategy be approved.

**33/05 SPECIAL LEAVE POLICY**

The Special Leave Policy was presented.

**RESOLVED**

**THAT** the Special Leave Policy be approved.

**34/05 CAR PARKING POLICY**

The Car Parking Policy was presented and discussed.

**RESOLVED**

**THAT** the Car Parking Policy be approved subject to a review in six months' time.

**35/05 STAFF CODE OF CONDUCT**

The Staff Code of Conduct paper was presented.

**RESOLVED**

**THAT** the Staff Code of Conduct be approved.

**36/05 RECRUITMENT OF EX-OFFENDERS**

The Recruitment of Ex-offenders Policy Statement was presented.

**RESOLVED**

**THAT** the Policy Statement be approved.

**RESOLVED**

**THAT** the update be noted.

**37/05 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**(i) Committee Structure/Links to Teams**

Some discussion took place regarding changes to both committee membership and individual Board members' links to teams. Sir William Wratten would pursue this with Members outside of the meeting.

**Action: Sir William Wratten**

**(ii) Car Sharing/Park and Ride**

Some discussion took place regarding the possibility of Members sharing lifts or being collected from the Park and Ride to attend Board/Committee meetings. Rev A Davies would pursue this outside of the meeting, if appropriate.

**(iii) Criminal Justice Act**

Mrs Ball advised Members that not many offences committed post the Criminal Justice Act 2003 had come before the courts but anticipated that the workload would pick up through the year with the new requirements and new prison release targets having an impact. There would be further demand on resources and although there had been a 10% increase in budgets to allow for this, in reality this amounted to a 0.5% decrease for GPA. Sir William Wratten confirmed that the National Workload Measurement Tool would be adopted by GPA when it was rolled out.

**(iv) Ambassadorial Role**

Mrs Jago informed the Board that 8 Gloucestershire schools had responded to her article regarding the delivery of presentations on the work of magistrates and enquired again as to whether it might be appropriate for GPA to become involved with these through Board Member representation. Discussion ensued regarding the stance previously taken that Board Members should be supported by an operational member of staff in delivering such presentations. Mrs Ball advised Members that a Communications Officer had recently been appointed to the Gloucestershire Local Criminal Justice Board who would be moving this facet of work forward. Trainee Probation Officers also undertook such presentations as part of their NVQ 4 in Criminal Justice. Mr Gooch, Mrs Abderrahim, Mrs Jago and Rev Davies indicated that they would be confident in participating in events such as this and in presenting on the work of GPA and the Criminal Justice Act. It was agreed that they would bring presentation and event proposals to the next Board meeting.

**Action: Mrs Jago, Mr Gooch, Mrs Abderrahim, Rev Davies**

**38/05 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Board will be held on Wednesday 20 July 2005 at 9.45am in the Boardroom at Bewick House.

The meeting closed at 1.05pm.

CHAIRMAN