Item No 2 on the Agenda

Staffordshire Probation Board

MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING held at 10.00am on Friday, 27th March 2009

180. Attendance	**Members –** Roger Thayne (Chair); Rob Mandley (Chief Officer); Alan James; Tony Johnson; Mike Kemp; Ann Holmes; John Ryan; Graham Tritton and Graham Morley **Officers –** Bob Simpson (Treasurer) and Norman Stott (Secretary) **By Invitation –** Barbara Jones (Director of Offender Management) and Alec Rudd (Head of HR, West Mercia Probation Trust)
181. Apologies	Apologies were received from Clive Palmer (Director of Interventions and Business Development)
182. Minutes of the last meeting	The minutes of the last meeting of the Board, held on 27th February 2009, were agreed as a true record with the Chair being authorised to sign as such subject to the following changes:- a) Minute 152, line 7 – Delete "hat" and insert "that" b) Minute 173, line 16 – Delete "issued" and insert "issues" c) Minute 176 – Delete the words "… from East Staffordshire"
183. Matters arising from the minutes	Minute 152 – Noted that the production of an audit trail on actions to reduce expenditure was being addressed in the context of the Business Plan Minute 171 – Noted that Barbara Jones was addressing the issues arising out of holding/ dispensing medication to hostel residents
184. Declarations of Interest	Declarations of Interest – Recurring declarations of interest were made as follows:- a) Mike Kemp – Member of the Local Government Pension Scheme; b) Graham Morley - Principal of South Staffordshire College; and c) Alan James - Treasurer to the Derbyshire Probation Board (on a part time basis)
185. Draft committee minutes	Roger Thayne gave a brief oral update on the last JNC meeting held 18th March 2009. He reported that the unions had generally been supportive of the proposals to consider a merger with West Midlands

	as they felt this would represent the best chance for preserving jobs in Staffordshire. There were, however, also concerns about different practices between the two areas and the impact this could have on performance. The meeting had also endorsed the revised redundancy policy – see minute post **Resolved – That the verbal report be noted**
186. Chair's update	Roger Thayne reported that he had met with Steve Goode and Alan Harrison to progress discussions with West Midlands. The discussions with AH had highlighted the need to identify issues which both Boards could (hopefully) endorse, particularly in relation to maintaining performance and ensuring appropriate front line staff were in place to delver a good local service. The intention was to have something more specific in place for the next West Midlands Board meeting on 7th April, with a more detailed analysis of the likely costs of any combined Trust application/ merger coming back to this Board on 24th April.. The next planning meeting was due to be held on 17th April, following which he hoped a joint presentation could be made to the two Boards (at the same venue) then each holding separate meetings to make any substantive decisions. He was, however, not able to identify the precise date this might happen. Mike Kemp indicated that he was still struggling with the proposed business case for ay merger with West Midlands. In his view, we should be looking at improving the service and producing quantifiable gains rather than concentrating on retaining staff. He also queried why West Midlands appeared to be leading the merger application if Staffordshire was the better performing area. Ann Holmes said that she felt the staff were an integral part of any business, but that she shared Mike Kemp's reservations about West Midlands leading the bid. In response, Rob Mandley explained that the Trust application/ merger process effectively required that a "lead" Chief Officer and a "lead" Chair be identified. He and Roger Thayne had made their respective positions clear (ie that they would not be seeing positions with any new merged Trust) but that this did not mean Staffordshire's interests were being abandoned. Mike Kemp emphasised that he was not trying to derail any application(s) but repeated that if this was being predicated on the basis of a business case, there should be clarity about:- a) the intended outcome; b) the processes involved; and c) the criteria against which progress would be measured.

	In conclusion, Roger Thayne repeated that he needed to be convinced of the benefits of any proposed merger, and that he had told officers/ members from West Midlands that the Staffordshire Board would require compelling evidence. He also commented that there was no guarantee the existing Chief Officer and Chair of West Midlands would necessarily be confirmed in their respective posts even if the merger went ahead.
187. Chief Officer's report	Rob Mandley spoke to his report (copy retained with the signed minutes) and explained that the feedback from the IIP interview the previous week had been positive with significantly more strengths than areas for improvement being identified. The most recent IPPF figures were encouraging, with sickness levels in particular still showing a downward trend. The area could well achieve green status on the figures for the final quarter (1st January – 31st March 2009) but there was no guarantee the official figures would be available by the May deadline for Trust applications. The Chief Officer also repeated that a single red score in the public protection domain, however, had a disproportionate effect and prevented an area scoring green overall no matter how good overall performance might be. **Resolved – that the written report and verbal update be noted**
188 . Board Secretary's report	The Secretary reported that the national Secretaries' Group had rehearsed concerns about the continuing inability of NOMS to give an clear strategic lead about Trusts, and the increasing indications that the centre was not prepared to "let go". With regard the Secretary's tabled report on "The dangers of a target culture" (copy retained with the signed minutes), the Chief Officer expressed his concern that any new regime was likely to be just as strict on compliance with form and process. The Chair also expressed his frustration that many public services appeared obsessed with targets, but which did not necessarily reflect what the public actually wanted.
189. SMT reports	• Redundancy Policy – Alec Rudd explained that the Redundancy Policy document (item 9 i on the Agenda) had been through the JNC and that it was now coming to the Board for formal endorsement. In response to questions from members, he confirmed that any enhanced pensions costs following a redundancy would need to be met by the service. He also acknowledged that the events listed in para 2.1.3 (potential redundancies) were not exhaustive. Ann Holmes queried whether the provisions of para 3.6.3 (guidelines on

	possible re-employment) were too liberal, with a number of other members expressing concerns that the document was not sufficiently precise. It was accordingly agreed that the policy would be adopted as an interim measure, but that a final version following a "tidying up" would go to the JNC and then be brought back to the Board. • **Equality Scheme 2009/ 12 –** The Chief Officer explained that all areas were required to have an Equality Scheme in place by 1st April. Graham Tritton commented that while the document identified a number of actions which needed to be taken, there was uncertainty about who was going to address them, or the deadlines which needed to be met. He was also concerned that a need for training was identified, but with no obvious statement about who was going to deliver the training, or how the benefits would be fed through the service as a whole. It was therefore again agreed that the policy would be endorsed as an interim measure, recognising that the issues raised in the debate would need to be addressed. • **"Management of Sex Offenders in the Community"** - Barbara Jones reported that a recent thematic inspection had vindicated much of the local work as being good practice, but with concerns raised that VISOR was not working as intended, and that the MAPPA Board should have a stronger strategic oversight. • **Finance Report** – Bob Simpson spoke to his report, and confirmed that the Finance Team was very close to achieving a balanced budget by the year end. The budget for 2009/ 10 would be very tight, with reductions in the staff complement anticipated of 20 FTE. He also acknowledged that Unit Costs were still cause for concern, with UPW Programmes and DRR going into the red, largely due to the required percentage of completions not being hit. The hostel budget was essentially on target Roger Thayne expressed his reservations the processes used to calculate Unit Costs. He accepted that the costs for each completion might come down if the numbers were increased, but felt that this did not properly reflect the costs actually incurred.
190. SPA Business Plan 2009/ 10	Rob Mandley introduced the Plan, and explained that it had been amended to reflect previous comments made by Board members. He also stressed that some of the targets needed to be treated with caution as they had still not been approved by the Minister. Mike Kemp commented that in the past, members had been able to see what had happened in critical areas (eg FTE staff numbers and the proposed budget), but which he felt did not come through in the Plan. He acknowledged that there were references to staff in the Plan, but could not see where the proposals to achieve a net reduction of 20 FTE were addressed, or the workload/ service delivery consequences. In his view, the Board had a duty to address areas of concern, and that if problems were anticipated, then they should be recorded. Graham

	Tritton also expressed his concerns at the uncertainty on how reductions in staffing levels would impact on performance In response, the Chief Officer explained that he could not be fully confident about performance being maintained, but that the Board would be alerted to problems as they were identified. Similarly, if other opportunities arose, then they would be considered. **Resolved – That the Business Plan 2009/ 10 be approved subject to the provision of further (ie more detailed) information at the next meeting on the budget and proposals to achieve a reduction of 20 FTE staff in the coming year**
191. Service Level Agreement 2009/ 10	The Chief Officer introduced the proposed SLA for 2009/ 10, and explained that its terms were still being discussed with the ROM's office. The format was, however, much the same as for last year. Graham Tritton expressed his concern that the SLA did not appear to replicate the Business Plan (see minute 190 above). In particular, he queried why the service was initiatives like "Embedding reduction of re-offending into the LAA" or "Improving services for women offenders" when they were not mentioned in the BP, and where success/ failure could not easily be measured in any event. In response, Rob Mandley explained that it was probably unrealistic to expect the two documents to be obviously compatible as they were designed for different audiences, and that the (imposed) style of the SLA in particular was not helpful. Targets were, however, carried across from the Business Plan to the SLA so far as possible. **Resolved – That completion of the SLA 2009/ 10 be approved, subject to the rider that targets in the Business Plan would, so far as possible, be carried across.**
192 . Member's feedback	Tony Johnson reported that he there had not been any meetings at Lichfield recently, but that he was kept well informed. Mike Kemp had nothing to report, and indicated that East Staffordshire did not appear to be proactive. Ann Holmes similarly had nothing to report. John Ryan reported that he had attended a Moorlands meeting the previous day, and that one issue which had come to the fore was the likely impact of the current recession. Finally, Graham Tritton commented that little had been done about Supporting People since his last report to the Board.

193. AOB	No points of AOB raised
194. Date of the next meeting	Confirmed as 10.00am on Friday, 24th April 2009 in Training Room 1 at Probation Head Office, Stafford but subject to the possibility of the venue being changed if this was also to double as a joint meeting with West Midlands
195. Exclusion of the public	**Resolved – That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business which involve the likely disclosure of confidential information as defined in the Board's approved scheme for meeting in private**

Signed: …… Date: ……..

Roger Thayne, Board Chair