

Staffordshire Probation Board

MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING held at 10.00am on Friday, 17th July 2009

31. Attendance	<p>Members:- John Ryan (Chairman); Alan James; Mike Kemp; Rob Mandley (Chief Officer) and Graham Tritton</p> <p>Officers:- Norman Stott (Board Secretary) & Bob Simpson (Board Treasurer)</p>
32. Apologies	<p>Apologies were received from Ann Holmes, Tony Johnson and Graham Morley (all Board members)</p>
33. Declarations of Interest	<p>Mike Kemp and Alan James declared their interests as members of the Local Government Pension Scheme and as a part time Treasurer to the Derbyshire Probation Board respectively (both recurring declarations)</p>
34. Minutes of the last meetings	<p>The minutes of the meetings held on 24th April 2009 and 26th June 2009 were approved as accurate and the Chairman authorised to sign as such</p>
35. Matters arising from the Minutes	<p>a) Minute 04 from 24th April – Development of the Equality Scheme 2009/2012. The Chief Officer confirmed that all 42 probation areas needed to have their Equality Schemes re-accredited, but that this has presented particular issues for Staffordshire due to the departure of Clive Palmer and the lack of information from the DOM’s office. This was, however, now being progressed using some specialist resources within West Midlands. Tony Johnson was also involved at Board level.</p> <p>b) Minute 09 from 24th April – Sickness Monitoring. The Chief Officer acknowledged that sickness levels had gone up slightly over the last few months, but confirmed that the service was now more discerning about the enquiries into the reasons for sickness, and addressing the wider implications eg the impact swine flu might have on business continuity.</p> <p>c) Minute 11 from 24th April – Staff Survey. The Chief Officer explained that the results from the Staff Survey had been sent out with the Board papers for the meeting on 26th June. Para 20 highlighted the issues needing to be addressed excessive workload, stress, career progression and Board leadership. An action Plan was being prepared to address these points. Alan James commented that it was important for the Board to take the survey seriously, and suggested that one way in which the Board could better connect with the staff would be to resume the former practice of going to different local offices rather than always holding meetings at Head Office.</p> <p>d) Minute 27 from 26th June – Impact of the resignation of Roger Thayne. The Chief Officer acknowledged that there had been concern within the staff following Roger Thayne’s resignation, largely attributable to articles in the local press. He had therefore met with HQ staff to try and reassure them. The</p>

	Board Secretary also confirmed that he had written to Mr Thayne as requested thanking him for his service as Chairman since April 2007.
36. Chairman's update	<p>Following his appointment as Chairman a few days ago, John Ryan said he felt it was appropriate to make some comments about his assessment of the current situation.</p> <p>His philosophy would not be to interfere in management issues, but rather to concentrate on the strategic issues facing the service. In his view, the priorities for the Board should be performance, finance and the structure of the service with an emphasis on developing the proposed LDU arrangements. Local / community development was also vitally important. On the joint Trust bid with West Midlands, he was intending to establish early contact with Alan Harrison with a list of issues to be addressed.</p> <p>Mike Kemp indicated that he could not oppose a suggestion that finance and performance be given priority, but was concerned about how differences of approach might be resolved.</p>
38. Chief Officer's update	<p>a) Rob Mandley spoke to the report circulated with the papers for the meeting on 26th June, and confirmed that the DOM's office had endorsed the joint Trust bid with West Midlands as fit for submission by the July deadline. Assessment would be undertaken by the DOM's office from another region, with the final stage being an interview (likely to be late August) if the initial assessment scored at least 70%. Work could therefore be required on a joint implementation plan as soon as early September. He also confirmed that NOMS had issued a draft plan for identifying the new Chairman, Chief Officer and members of new Boards following merger, but that there was no clear time scale for implementation.</p> <p>Bill Cash MP had indicated his concerns about the retention of Staffordshire's identity, the wider regionalisation agenda and also resources. A meeting scheduled for the previous day (16th July) for the Chief Officer to meet the Secretary of State with Mr Cash MP had, however, been cancelled at the last minute.</p> <p>b) On performance, the Chief Officer spoke briefly to the provisional IPPF results. These were encouraging, but he stressed that too much significance should not be read into them as the results were effectively showing 4th quarter data from 2008/ 09 being processed under the new 2009/ 10 assessment rules. He also explained that it was too early to say if Staffordshire would necessarily be rated as green or green star when the official results were published as this depended in part on the relative performance by other areas. Having said that, early indications were that reporting and OASys timeliness was improving. Work was also being done to improve ATR completions and reports for remands in custody.</p> <p>c) Following the Sonnex case in London, NOMS had identified the need to monitor workloads. The Chief Officer explained that while it was impossible to guarantee such an incident could never occur again, Staffordshire did have processes in place to try and monitor workload and minimise the risk of cases not being properly supervised.</p> <p>e) Consultation on the Probation Qualification Framework – The Chief Officer refereed members to the review papers previously sent out, and explained that the consultation period was due to end on 31st July. His overall</p>

	<p>assessment was that the process was “limping along”</p> <p>f) “Justice Seen/ Justice Done”- Little to add to the written note as the project was still in its infancy, but Phil Wheatley had been positive on his recent visit.</p> <p>g) DOM office structure – The general view was that it was difficult to see how this could represent any efficiencies, with Mike Kemp in particular querying what the DOM’s office knew about partnerships or commissioning. His impression was of unnecessary duplication which begged the question of how the Board was going to respond. While not endorsing the structure, the Chief Officer indicated that he understood these arrangements to be typical of those being implemented by all the regions.</p>
39. Board Secretary’s report	<p>Norman Stott reported that the national Probation Secretaries’ Group had met at the PA offices in London on 19th June, where there had been continuing frustration about the lack of progress from NOMS on a number of key issues including:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) the status of Trusts (would they be classed as NDBPs?); b) the extent to which NOMS would interfere in the employment contracts for Chief Executives; and c) the freedoms/ business flexibilities which Trusts would actually enjoy in practice.
40. Annual report of the Audit Committee	<p>Alan James explained that the report was an initiative taken by the Audit Committee which its members had felt consistent with the principles of good governance. The Board endorsed the principle, and agreed to receive the report.</p>
41. SMT report	<p>Performance having been addressed earlier in the meeting, (see minute 38b above) the members concentrated on finance. The Treasurer reported that the budget for the current year was generally felt to be on track, with 11 staff likely to have left the service by 30th September against a target of 20 by the end of the financial year.</p> <p>The Treasurer also explained that the Stoke on Trent reducing re-offending programme had been endorsed by the local CRDP which had the potential to bring in an additional £2m</p>
42. Member feedback	<p>Alan James - attended the Stoke on Trent LSP when their funding had been confirmed, and where he had taken the opportunity to update their Chair with this Board’s proposals for joint working.</p> <p>He had also attended a meeting of Audit Committee Chairs at the PA on 8th July which had focussed largely on IT and the greater role being played by HM Treasury in internal audit. NOMS had given the impression of recognising that there was no obvious justification for external auditors to operate to international standards then use this as a basis for charging higher fees, but time would tell whether this would actually result in fees being held down.</p> <p>Graham Tritton - attended a Supporting People meeting and also an Approved Premises meeting. Due to attend the South Staffs LSP next week.</p>

	<p>Mike Kemp – nothing happening at Burton. Pete Scott had attended a recent meeting of the Tamworth LSP with a focus on reviewing its priorities which both raised concerns, and also offered some opportunities. The concerns were summarised as uncertainty about who would be attending future meetings, the lack of clarity about the real issues, and the implications of “locality problem solving” ie downsizing by another name. There were, however, potential opportunities for probation to become more involved, particularly with Staffs County Council undertaking a review of its property portfolio which could lead to an increase in joint use arrangements.</p> <p>John Ryan – Moorlands currently only meet every 6 months, but this may become more frequent. The probation service is also likely to become more involved in setting priorities.</p> <p>Newcastle meetings generally well attended, but they too are moving towards “locality problem solving.” Clive Palmer’s departure has complicated matters, but probation will continue to be represented on the CRDP substance misuse group.</p> <p>Rob Mandley commented that these reports showed how the service needed to identify its priorities, but that local liaison would be a key role for staff like Heather Sutton and Paul Darby. Mike Kemp agreed, and felt it was imperative that local/ community work in the future was seen as a key part of the “day job” rather than something which was just added on.</p>
43. Revision of the quorum	<p>The Secretary spoke to his report on a possible revision to the quorum. Members indicated that while they did not disagree with the logic, they felt the quality of meetings could decline if the number of members fell too low, and that there was a danger of issues not being tested. A reduction in the quorum was therefore felt to be the wrong solution, with the preferred option being an increase in the number of members. Rob Mandley indicated that he felt unlikely NOMS would wish to become involved with new appointments at this stage in the Board’s life, but it was agreed that the Chairman would try to secure this.</p>
44. AOB	None
45. Date/ time of next meeting	<p>Confirmed as 10.00am on Friday, 25th September, but with informal workshops being held at 10.00am on Friday 31st July and 10.00am on Friday 11th September to discuss developments in the joint bid for Trust status with West Midlands, and in particular the development of an implementation plan.</p>
46. Exclusion of the public	<p>Resolved – That the public be excluded from the meeting for the items of business which were felt likely to involve the disclosure of confidential information as defined in the Board’s approved scheme for meeting in private.</p>

Signed.....
(John Ryan, Board Chairman)

Dated 2009