

PPS Management Board

10.00 Thursday 4 December 2019

Board Room, Belfast Chambers

Members: Stephen Herron (Chair)
Michael Agnew
Ian Hearst
Glenn Houston
David Best

In Attendance: Tom Murphy
Claire Harrison (PPS Comms)
Ciaran McQuillan (Item 8)
SCU Engagement Manager (Item8)

Secretariat: Policy and Information Unit

1. Apologies

Marianne O’Kane

2. Welcome

The Director welcomed members to the December 2019 Management Board.

3. Declaration of Board Members’ Interests

None

4. Management Board Minutes

The previous minutes were agreed.

5. Actions from the Management Board meeting of 16 October 2019

AP 12- 19/20 Ms O’Kane to provide the January 2020 Management Board with a progress update on the clearance of the outlying cases.

Ongoing – See item 8.

AP 09 19/20 - Ms O’Kane will liaise with PSNI to analyse trends and profiles of offences for the respective case weight categories and report findings to SMG.

Ongoing – The Board were advised that the 2019 report on Trends in Police Recorded Crime has not identified any change in previously reported trends. There is a continued increase in the numbers of sexual offences cases and there has also been an increase in the overall numbers of cases in the Western region.

Members agreed continued monitoring and engagement with PSNI is beneficial in identifying resourcing/capacity issues and any potential training needs.

AP 10 19/20 -Ms O’Kane to review the existing arrangements for completion of the Prosecutor Activity Sheets and provide options to supplement and improve the process.

Cleared – Mr Agnew provided an update on discussions held to progress this matter. It was agreed that this should be removed from the Management Board Agenda and taken forward at SMG.

6. Reports from Management Board Committee

Senior Management Group – 28 November 2019

Mr Agnew provided members with an update on the matters discussed at the Senior Management Group meeting of 28 November 2019, including proposals outlining the way forward in managing legal temporary promotions.

People & Resources Committee 21 November 2019

Mr Hearst provided an update on matters discussed at the meeting of 21 November 2019 including recruitment and absence management. Members were advised of a presentation delivered by NICSHR on Workforce Planning. The presentation included initial reports detailing the age and gender profiles of staff and projected staffing forecasts for PPS 2019-2022. This planning and early engagement is essential to improve and inform vacancy and skills/talent management. Members agreed that it would be beneficial to have an update on the PPS People Plan at the Boards Planning Day.

AP13 19/20 - Mr Hearst to schedule an item on the Planning Day Agenda on the PPS People Plan

Performance & Delivery Committee 14 October 2019

Members reviewed the minutes and actions arising from the Performance & Delivery Committee meeting of 14 October 2019. Members discussed the quality assurance findings for ‘no prosecution’ Working Together DV&A cases and noted

that further analysis is being taken forward and will be considered at the next Policy and Quality meeting.

Policy and Quality Committee

No meeting has been held since last Board meeting.

7. Strategic Improvement Board

Minutes of Board Meeting.

Members discussed and reviewed the minutes of the Strategic Improvement Board (SIB) meeting and noted the updates and current position of the projects.

Mr Agnew provided an overview of the Digital Strategy and the agreed initial phases of evidence sharing, with Phase 1 scheduled to go live in March 2020. There is a risk that the technical solution is introduced in advance of appropriate business processes. The March timescale would not allow sufficient time for the development of processes and for a SLA in respect of the sharing of digital media to be drafted and agreed. Members agreed that the risks should be documented and clearly communicated to stakeholders. Further discussions are scheduled with PSNI and this matter will also be raised at the Digital Strategy Board and the Disclosure Improvement Forum.

Competing priorities for the SIT team and resourcing issues are impacting capacity to conduct a review of the ICP processes. Concerns have been raised at the quality of engagement, in particular where cases are not ICP cases.

8. Performance Issues

Performance Summary

Members reviewed and noted the figures in the October Performance Summary. Comparing the last 12 months the overall caseload figure has increased by 1.0%. In case weight categories 1-4, Western and Southern Region continue to experience percentage increase of 19.8% and 24.5% respectively.

Members discussed and reviewed the figures for Timeliness Targets for 2019/20. Mr Herron compared the figures for the number of days required for the issue of 50% and 80% of decisions by decision type, both including and excluding DIRs, from 1 April 2019 to 31 October 2019, and highlighted the delays arising from DIRS.

SCU Monitoring Report

Mr McQuillan and the SCU Engagement Manager attended and provided an update on the Serious Crime Unit, including the implementation of the new model, performance, quality and innovation and progress on clearance of older files.

Mr McQuillan advised the Unit has been fully staffed since 4 November 2019 and the new ways of working is also in operation, with PPs taking on responsibility for all post decision work. There are a number of files retained with SPPs, however there are legitimate reasons for this. All files are checked by the Gateway Team to ensure compliance with the agreed file builds. The Local Operating Agreement is ready for sign off and a number of other recommendations completed, including disclosure arrangements and improvements to ABEs. There have been a number of challenges impacting performance in particular staff changes and training requirements. There are also a number of Pre- July files within the Unit which have a combination of complexity and quality issues.

For the three month period since implementation there has been progress made in terms of decisions taken, with the new processes supporting a 20% increase in SPP decision making output, while factoring in continued prioritisation of older cases. During Q1 and Q2 of 2019/20 there have been modest improvements in the prosecution and conviction rates for sexual offences. Dip sampling also indicates decision making remains at a high quality.

Members were updated on the progress of cases dealt with outside SCU and advised of further measures planned to clear these cases, including an additional SPP resource and further allocation of cases to counsel. Members noted the progress made and thanked staff for their efforts.

Overview of Old Cases.

Members reviewed and discussed the latest figures and progress on clearing the outlying cases identified from the 80/40 day report. Members were encouraged with the positive progress made to date and extended their gratitude to all staff involved.

9. Finance

Finance Update September 2019

Members reviewed and discussed the paper outlining the key financial issues managed by the Finance Team as at September 2019, including the key financial outturn figures, financial impact of the use of counsel, funding position in respect

of 2019/20, in year monitoring arrangements and management and use of incentivisation fund. Members noted the latest projections for the year end outturn and funding position in respect of 2019/20 and beyond.

Procurement Report November 2019

Members noted the key issues in the November 2019 Procurement Report, including the major procurement activity, direct award contracts and contracts due to expire in the next three months.

Budget Engagement 2020-2021

Mr Hearst provided an overview of the budget engagement process. Members reviewed and discussed the content of the PPS submission and noted matters raised in respect of the baseline budget and the impact on sustainability, strategic improvement and legacy.

10. People Issues

NICSHR

Members reviewed the HR Quadrant Report for November 2019. Members discussed information on the resourcing, vacancy management, sickness absence and figures for performance reporting.

RMT Update November 2019

Board Members discussed the November RMT report and noted the updates on current staffing levels, training, health and wellbeing and corporate social responsibility.

11. Governance Issues

Corporate Risk Registers 2019/20

Members discussed and reviewed the 2019/20 Corporate Risk Register and noted the status and rating of all associated risks.

12. Criminal Justice Reports Update

Mr Herron updated members on the draft findings of the Criminal Justice Inspection in respect of Victim and Witness Care across the Criminal Justice System which has been received for factual accuracy check.

13. Any Other Business

Website Update.

Mr Hearst provided an update on the user traffic to the new website. Members were also briefed on a commercial issue with internet development and IT Assist.

NISRA Resourcing

Members noted the correspondence with NISRA regarding resources.

Lisburn Chambers

Mr Hearst provided an update on the latest position with letting of Lisburn Chambers and associated revenue.

Business Case - MFD

Members discussed the need, benefits, and costs associated with the additional MFD for SCU and accordingly approved the business case.

BCS Review of Case Prep

Members noted the review will be considered further at SMG.

14. Papers for noting

Six Week Forward Planner/ Communication Update

Board Members noted the six week forward planner and communication update.

15. Next Meeting

The Planning Day and Board meeting will take place on the 21 and 22 January 2020 in a venue yet to be agreed.

Summary of Action Points arising from Management Board

Meeting of 4 December 2019

AP 13 19/20	<i>Mr Hearst to schedule an item on the Planning Day Agenda on the PPS People Plan</i>
--------------------	---

Action Points carried over from previous meetings.

AP 09 19/20	<i>AP Ms O’Kane will liaise with PSNI to analyse trends and profiles of offences for the respective case weight categories and report findings to SMG.</i>
AP 12 19/20	<i>Ms O’Kane to provide the January 2020 Management Board with a progress update on the clearance of the outlying cases.</i>