

**PPS Management Board**

**10.00 Thursday 5 September 2019**

**Board Room, Belfast Chambers**

**Members:** Stephen Herron (Chair)  
Ian Hearst  
Michael Agnew  
Marianne O’Kane  
Glenn Houston  
David Best  
Chris Welford

**In Attendance:** Tom Murphy  
Claire Harrison (PPS Comms)  
Conor McLoughlin (PPS Website)  
Ciaran Mc Quillan (SCU)  
SCU Engagement Manager (SCU)

**Secretariat:** Policy and Information Unit

**1. Apologies**

None.

**2. Welcome**

The Director welcomed members to the September 2019 Management Board.

**3. Declaration of Board Members’ Interests**

None

**4. Presentation on the new PPS Website.**

Members were provided with an overview of the layout and content of the Website including the new branding. It is anticipated that the site should be finalised and ready for go live at the end of September 2019, subject to availability of resources at NICS IT Assist. The Board thanked Mr McLoughlin for his presentation.

## **5. Management Board Minutes**

The previous minutes were agreed.

## **6. Actions from the Management Board meeting of 20 June 2019**

***AP 05 19/20 A further update on the outlying cases will be provided for the September Board.***

Cleared. See item 9

***AP 06 19/20 Ms O’Kane to provide assurances that offences against children/ vulnerable victims, and custody charge/remand case are being prioritised.***

Cleared. Ms O’Kane advised that she has consulted with the ADs and can assure the Board such cases are being prioritised as a standing instruction to staff.

***AP 07 19/20 Ms O’Kane to invite the Assistant Director of SCU to attend the September Board***

Cleared. See Item 9.

***AP 08 19/20 Mr Hearst to provide comparative figures and analysis of long and short term absences.***

Cleared. Mr Hearst updated members on the latest available analysis and figures relating to absences.

## **7. Reports from Management Board Committee**

### **Senior Management Group – 3 September 2019**

Mr Agnew provided a verbal update on the main issues discussed at the Senior Management Group meeting of 3 September 2019.

### **People & Resources Committee 28 August 2019**

Mr Hearst provided a verbal update on matters discussed at the meeting of 28 August 2019, including the People Plan, priority 4, Performance Management and Agile Working.

### **Performance & Delivery Committee 3 June 2019**

No meeting held since previous Board.

## **Policy and Quality Committee 14 June 2019**

Members noted the minutes and actions from Policy and Quality Committee meeting of 14 June 2019.

### **8. Strategic Improvement Board**

#### **Terms of Reference**

Members discussed and noted the Terms of Reference for the Service Improvement Board and Team, which will provide a framework for the oversight and delivery of key operational PPS projects and inter-agency service improvement initiatives.

#### **Business Case**

Board Members discussed the options, benefits, and costs associated with delivering change initiatives and agreed and approved option 2, the establishment of an internal team to meet the PPS requirements.

### **9. Performance Issues**

#### **Performance Summary**

The monthly performance summary for August 2019 was reviewed and discussed by the Board. Comparing the last 12 months the overall caseload figures has increased by 1.4%. Southern showed the largest regional increase of 16.8% with SCU having a decrease of 8.4%. However within the last three months (May - July 2019) there has been a 9.2% increase in caseload in SCU. Ms O'Kane advised that these figures will be interrogated further and enquiries will be made with the PSNI in respect of workflow and projections to gain an understanding of reasons for the fluctuations in numbers.

***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.***

The overall work queues have increased, with a slight increase also in files allocated and awaiting a decision. Decisions issued during the last 12 months have increased (up 2%) and decision standards for both SPPs and PPs for July were met.

In terms of staff resources it is noted that the SPP grade is at complement but there is a slight shortfall in PP numbers. However, overall this improvement, combined with the utilisation of counsel at courts should provide more stability and be reflected in performance.

Members discussed the quality of information/data recorded in the Prosecutor Activity Sheets and the requirement for accuracy and consistency. Quality Assurance checks should be completed on the current arrangements. It was agreed that the process should be considered with a view to identifying improvements and establishing options for a revised approach.

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

### **Overview of Old Cases.**

Ms O’Kane updated members on the latest figures and progress on clearing the outlying cases identified from the 80/40 day report. It is anticipated that cases in the older bracket should be sifted and substantially cleared by the end of December 2019, although noting that this is rolling data, with new cases appearing on the lists as older cases are cleared. Members noted the significant effort that have been made to reduce these figures and to establish a process for continuous monitoring. The Board extended their gratitude to Ms O’Kane for addressing this issue.

### **SCU Monitoring Report**

Members reviewed and discussed the report on the ring-fenced SCU cases as at 28 August 2019. Resourcing and figures for decisions, the unallocated queue and the overall number of cases pending decision were noted.

### **Serious Crime Unit (SCU)**

Mr McQuillan, Head of SCU and the SCU Engagement Manager, provided an update on the Implementation of the BCS recommendations.

Mr McQuillan outlined that a significant restructuring of SCU occurred over the summer months, with resourcing and accommodations issues addressed. There have been a series of meetings held with PSNI to inform of the new SCU structure and advise of future expectations on police in respect of file builds and revised approach to disclosure. A PSNI Gatekeeper resource has been agreed in principle to assist in ensuring quality standards are maintained. In addition a number of file builds have been developed and agreed with Senior PSNI which

will be used to set the minimum standards required for decision making and all cases received from 2 September 2019 will be assessed according to these standards.

A number of process changes have also been introduced internally in PPS, including assessment of files by the Gateway Team lawyers prior to allocation to ensure compliance with file build protocols. All post decision work will be directed to PPs, with administrative duties and liaison in respect of file requests and DIRs undertaken by the Admin Team.

Case progress details, including cases received, allocated and decisions taken for July and August were outlined. ICT have developed measures to assist the team to carry out analysis of capacity and performance. Targets will also be revised with the restructuring and introduction of the new standards and processes. Members were briefed on further planned activities including the quality assurance and the establishment of additional protocols with the PSNI.

Members were updated on progress of the older ring-fenced cases allocated to other operational areas. A further update will be provided at the next Board meeting.

***AP 11 19/20 Progress update on files allocated outside SCU to be provided to next Board.***

## **10. Finance**

### **Finance Update June 2019**

Board members reviewed and noted the paper outlining the key financial issues managed by the Finance Team as at 30 June 2019, including the key financial outturn figures, financial impact of the use of counsel, funding position and budget pressures in respect of 2019/20, the in year monitoring arrangements and management and use of incentivisation fund.

### **Budget 2020/23.**

Members reviewed and discussed the paper detailing proposals and projections for the Budget 20-203. A one year budget will be set for 2020-21.

The Department of Finance has requested Departments to set out plans to operate within their baselines over the Budget 2020-23 period. This baseline has been set at the 2017/18 figure, and this will be rolled forward indefinitely.

Members discussed the overall budget projections and noted the anticipated operational shortfalls. Figures considered included operational forecasts and

pressures anticipated, additional expenditure pressures over the baseline, savings initiatives and work that may have to be ceased. Members noted the risks and impact of the proposals and limited scope to make any further suppressions. The report will be finalised and submitted to the Department of Finance by 20 September 2019.

### **Procurement Report August 2019**

Members noted the key issues in the August 2019 Procurement Report, including the major procurement activity and the PPS Procurement Plan for 2019/20.

## **11. People Issues**

### **RMT Update August 2019**

Board Members noted and discussed the RMT report, including current staffing levels as of August 2019, management of vacancies, corporate social responsibility, training analysis and PPS People Agenda.

## **12. Governance Issues**

### **Corporate Risk Registers 2019/20**

Members discussed and reviewed the 2019/20 Corporate Risk Register and noted the status and planned actions to mitigate all associated risks. It was agreed that Risk 4 should be revised upwards to reflect the current position on Brexit negotiations.

## **13. Criminal Justice Reports Update**

Mr Agnew updated members on the initial findings of the Criminal Justice Inspections in respect of Victim and Witness care across the Criminal Justice System and the report on Child Sex Exploitation.

## **14. Any Other Business**

### **Business Case**

Members discussed the business need and cost and approved the request for additional Multi-Functional Print Devices.

## **Board Thanks**

On behalf of the Board, Mr Herron paid tribute to Mr Chris Welford who is stepping down as a non-executive member of the Management Board after eight years' service. On behalf of the Board and the staff of the PPS, Mr Herron thanked Mr Welford for his dedication to the PPS and for sharing his wealth of experience to provide effective challenge and support to the organisation throughout this time. He wished him well for the future.

## **15. Papers for noting**

### **Six Week Forward Planner/ Communication Update**

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

### **Communication Report**

Members discussed and noted the key issues raised in the Communication Report.

## **16. Next Meeting**

The next Management Board will take place on the 16 October 2019 in Belfast Chambers.

**Summary of Action Points arising from Management Board**

**Meeting of 5 September 2019**

<b><i>AP 09 19/20</i></b>	<b><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></b>
<b><i>AP 10 19/20</i></b>	<b><i>AP Ms O’Kane to review the existing arrangements for completion of the Prosecutor Activity Sheets and provide options to supplement and improve the process.</i></b>
<b><i>AP 11 19/20</i></b>	<b><i>AP Progress update on files allocated outside SCU to be provided to next Board.</i></b>

**Action Points carried over from previous meetings.**

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