

**PPS Management Board**  
**10.30am Wednesday 26 April 2023**  
**Belfast Chambers**

**Members:** Michael Agnew  
Marianne O’Kane  
David Best  
Glenn Houston  
Peter Luney  
JoAnne Quinn

**In Attendance:** Tom Murphy (Private Office)  
Claire Harrison

**Secretariat:** Policy and Information Unit

**1. Welcome.**

Mr Agnew welcomed members to the April 2023 Management Board.

**2. Apologies**

Stephen Herron.

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

None.

**4. Management Board Minutes.**

The previous minutes were agreed.

**5. Reports from Management Board Committees.**

**Senior Management Group 20 April 2023.**

Mr Agnew provided an overview of the matters discussed at the Senior Management Group Meeting of 20 April 2023.

Members were briefed on several people issues including recruitment competitions and apprenticeships. There are planned engagements to explore the potential of sequencing recruitment competitions in an effort to minimise disruption. An update was also provided on the position of managing requirements for reasonable adjustments and the figures and reasons for non-

attendance at court were noted. Sick absence trends are still causing concern with current performance not favourable in comparison to the wider NICS and our historical position, however several practical steps have been implemented to address this and these are being carefully monitored. Challenges with OHS referrals are also contributing to the inability to progress resolution of long-term sickness.

Mr Agnew updated members on recent meetings held to consider the constraints and options to reduce demand, including handling of no prosecution decisions. Members were also advised of non-compliance with mandatory team briefings, and it was agreed there was a need to reinvigorate and reinforce the conduct of these meetings.

Other matters discussed at the meeting included the requirement for updated guidance on data security in relation to home working with hard copy files. Mr Luney advised that the guidance had been updated to plug gaps, however some further work needs done and enquiries are being made with other Departments regarding their policies and practices. An update will be provided to the Audit and Risk Committee.

### **Performance and Delivery Committee – 17 April 2023**

Ms O’Kane provided members with an overview of the matters discussed and action points arising from the Committee meeting of 17 April 2023.

Members were advised that there are still ongoing resource pressures. The overtime worked between January 2023 and March 2023 had a positive impact by significantly reducing the caseload, however it is noted that the utilisation of overtime is not sustainable.

Discussions around the PPS Vision 2030 and role of PA Consulting highlighted an interest and requirement for communication with staff, particularly addressing the impact any changes will have for staff. Mr Luney advised that as part of the set up of the project a communications plan is being developed in conjunction with the Communications team which will provide briefings for staff as required.

Members also discussed how the impact on resources of various initiatives involving operational changes could be captured and assessed. It was agreed that whilst Business Cases and PIDS included projected benefits and constraints it was essential to analyse impacts and to have measurement of any savings or negative impacts on resources. This will be taken forward by Strategic Improvement Board.

## **6. Strategic Improvement Board**

### **Strategic Improvement Dashboard 2023**

Mr Agnew briefed members on progress of the key projects and advised a meeting is scheduled next week and the agenda includes a review of all the projects and dashboard.

The Content Manager Project rollout is progressing in a phased approach. Phase two rollout to HCI is complete. Roll out to Western and Southern is ongoing and VWCU have completed the file plan and roll out is scheduled to commence in coming weeks.

The RECS project is due to commence in May 2023. There may be a small transitional period of manual contingency which is manageable. Go live for CMS is scheduled for 31 May 2023.

Due to the reprioritisation of projects, the IT development in the DEMS project has been delayed and this has resulted in slippage to the go live date. Members were advised there is significant work and engagement required before the September Go Live date.

## **7. Performance Summary.**

Comparing the current financial year with the three-year average between 2017/18 and 2019/20, overall caseloads have increased by 4%. Categories 1-4 have increased by 10% while categories 5-8 had an increase of 3% in the volume of files received. Members noted the volume of domestic violence files has increased by 52% with the total figure now more than 10,000.

Overall caseload awaiting a decision has increased by 84% on the March 2020 baseline, however this baseline comparison may be less reliable as figures have been impacted by covid. Members also noted that there has been a favourable reduction in the volume of cases in recent months, with the use of overtime having been effective in clearing cases. Mr Best highlighted that the number of decisions per casework day was higher than the 2019/20 baseline for both SPPs and PPS.

There is an increase in the figures of cases for allocation and the approach to managing these is through filtering and prioritisation, however there is a cohort of cases which are not being reached. The number of cases being allocated to individual work queues is being capped to ensure workloads are manageable.

Mr Houston queried the latest position with the 365/500+ cases. Ms O'Kane advised that prosecutors have been requested to expedite decisions in these cases. A further appraisal of the cases is scheduled for mid-June and thereafter

case management meetings will be held to review cases that have not been directed on or progressed.

### **Serious Crime Unit Monthly Caseload Report.**

Members reviewed the Monthly Caseload Report and Ms O’Kane provided an overview of key aspects of the SCU performance. The latest figure for cases awaiting a decision is 327 which is a significant decrease when compared with the figure of 500 in June 2022. There are 211 files allocated and the number of unallocated files is currently 113 which compares favourably with the figure in July 2022 (307). The decision taking output has risen significantly in March (288) since the previous month (161) and an accuracy check of the figures is ongoing. Potential reasons for the spike include a drive to have cases pushed through by year end.

There are continued improvements in the standards and compliance of file build in cases recommended for both prosecution and no prosecution. The profile of the cases cleared highlights a gradual increase in the indictable prosecutions and an increase in no prosecution decisions.

Members were advised that the positive overall performance can be attributed to a number of factors including resourcing of the team with substantive staff, more files passing the gateway checks with higher quality files expediting decision making, post-trial work being completed and a number of historical institutional abuse clinics leading to clearances.

The Board members were encouraged with the performance figures and conveyed their thanks to Mr McQuillan and the Unit for their hard work and corporate effort to reduce the caseload. Members agreed to maintain the status quo in respect of resourcing and to review the position again in June.

## **8. Finance Update**

### **March 2023 Finance Report**

Ms Quinn provided an overview of the key financial issues being managed by the Finance Team as of March 2023. The 2022/23 general ledger is still open to accommodate year-end adjustments and at this stage a slight underspend is projected.

A formal announcement of the settled budget for 2023/24 is anticipated in the next few days. Ms Quinn outlined the PPS’s indicative budget allocation and advised it is expected funding will also be received over the course of the year for a number of initiatives including recovery. The allocation for recovery is significantly below the required funding. This has been flagged with DOJ and it

is planned to work with them throughout the year to have the full allocation reinstated.

Members discussed how the PPS budget allocation and the various representations made by the Board and Finance team to advocate for a positive outcome should be communicated to staff. Ms Quinn provided an overview of the projected costings for resources for 2023/24. Discussion ensued regarding the options available and the implications arising from this. It was agreed that these will be fully considered and will help inform final proposals when the final settlement has been allocated.

Members noted work is progressing with the Annual Report and Accounts. It is understood the outstanding issues in respect of the 16/17 supply issue and the prior year error have now been resolved. It was noted that the work of the independent expert will provide an analysis of how the discrepancy arose and any actions required to satisfy both NIAO and Department of Finance that it has been resolved. An update will be provided to ARC.

The performance of procurement is generally good, although statistics are showing a slightly lower performance in compliance of the prompt payment 10-day target in the last couple of months. This can be attributed to issues with available resources in the finance team.

## **9. People**

### **NICS HR Summary Report April 2023**

Members noted and reviewed the NICS HR March report, including the latest staffing figures, vacancies and recruitment, absence management and compliance in respect of performance management and employee relations.

Mr Luney provided an update on the options and planned competitions for recruitment of legal staff at both DP and G7. A paper presented to SMG detailing the resourcing position will be shared with the Board. Members were informed that a bid for 3 legal students from the apprenticeship scheme had been successful however the candidates would not be available until June.

***AP 01-23/24 Mr Luney to circulate the PP resourcing paper to members for information.***

A meeting has been held with the Police Retraining & Rehabilitation Trust and further training has been agreed. Discussions have been held regarding the potential to have one to one counselling for staff who wish to self-refer. A Service Level Agreement will be drafted detailing the service and costs and this will assist in informing affordability. It was also noted that there have also been enquiries from operational administrative staff seeking to benefit from these services.

## **New Ways of Working.**

Ms O’Kane provided an update on the New Ways of Working and members noted improvements in office attendance levels. It was agreed that NWW was no longer required to be a standing agenda item and will be reported on an exception basis.

## **10. Governance Issues.**

### **Corporate Risk Register 2022/23**

Members reviewed and discussed the 2023/24 Risk Register and noted the planned actions, mitigations, status, and rating of all risks.

Mr Luney advised that SMG will give further consideration to the Information Management Risk and it will be updated to reflect the revised guidance. Members agreed that the funding risk will be reviewed when the final budget settlement has been allocated.

### **ARC Update**

Mr Houston updated members on the four work areas proposed for internal audit in 2023/24, which were put forward for approval by ARC. Discussion ensued regarding other potential areas that may benefit from a review. It was agreed that this will be further discussed at the Directors Review Meeting.

## **11. Communication Update.**

Ms Harrison provided a verbal update on recent communications, including media handling, stakeholder engagement, digital communications, and internal communications.

**Communication Planner.** The Board Members discussed and reviewed the communications planner and update.

## **12. Next Meeting.**

The next Management Board will take place on the 24 May 2023 at 10.00 am in Belfast Chambers.

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

**Meeting of 26 April 2023**

<b><i>AP 01-23/24</i></b>	<b><i>Mr Luney to circulate the PP resourcing paper to members for information.</i></b>
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**Action Points carried over from previous meetings.**

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