

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CHESHIRE PROBATION BOARD held on  
1 August 2008 at Cheshire Area Headquarters, Beech House, Park West,  
Sealand Road, Chester**

PRESENT: L Robinson (Chair)  
A Backhouse  
Judge S Clarke  
M Darby  
J Eccles  
M Hogg  
R Howarth  
Y McLean  
J Miller  
M Roberts  
S Collett, Chief Officer

OFFICERS: C Evans, Assistant Chief Officer  
J Davidson, Assistant Chief Officer  
S Link, Assistant Chief Officer  
D Bryan, Deputy Secretary  
R Graves, Committee Officer

*There were no members of the public present at the meeting.*

**1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies.

**2 PROCEDURAL MATTERS**

**2.1 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

There were no interests declared at the meeting.

**2.2 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:**

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Probation Board held on 6 June 2008 be confirmed as a correct record.

**2.3 MATTERS ARISING**

2.3 Training and Staff Development Annual Review

The update report on liP would be brought to either the September or November meeting of the Board.

10 Criminal Justice Joint Inspection of Probation Approved Premises

The Board was informed that work to remove potential ligature points in the Approved Premises had been completed by a local contractor at a cost of £10,000.

**2.4 OTHER PROCEDURAL MATTERS**November Board Meeting

The meeting of the Board in November would now be held on Thursday 13 November 2008.

**3 CHAIR'S REPORT**Area

The Chair and Chief Officer had completed the Area-wide round of staff briefings on the Area Business Plan for 2008-09. The Chair thanked those Board Members who had attended meetings in their Board lead roles. The major concern of staff had been the current pay round and the Chief Officer had undertaken to write to Probation Association to press for progress with the pay negotiations. Another concern had been the sub standard working environments in which some teams had to work in and the Board would be reviewing progress on improving working environments.

The Chair reminded Board Members of the following diary dates:

- the Annual Reward and Recognition Awards ceremony, which would take place in the afternoon after the Board meeting on 26 September at Portal McDonalds Hotel, Tarporley
- the official opening of the new Cheshire East (Crewe) Offender Management Unit, Cedric Fullwood House, on 30 September
- the Staff Conference on 6 November at the Holiday Inn, Runcorn

Regional

The Chair had held an introductory meeting with Bill McHugh, new North West Regional Offender Manager, and had invited him to attend the Board meeting on 26 September to explain how he will go about his new role.

National

The national meeting of Board Chairs had taken place on 2 July when the two key topics discussed were the resources for Probation and the progress on the planned move to Trust status.

**RESOLVED:**

That the report be received.

## 4 CHIEF OFFICER'S REPORT

### Area

The first meeting of the Cheshire and North Wales Corporate Services Consortium Board had taken place in July with the Board being represented by M Roberts. A Memorandum of Understanding had been agreed and staffing issues and financial aspects of the agreement had been discussed.

In July, the Chief Officer had held a meeting at HMP Risley with key partners to discuss the basis of a future strategic and operational approach across the local authority area of Cheshire, including the two new emerging unitary authorities, Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester. The Board Deputy Secretary reported that the Chief Executives of the new unitary authorities had now been appointed – Erika Wenzel had been appointed as Chief Executive for Cheshire East and Steve Robinson as Chief Executive for Cheshire West and Chester. The Chair of the Local Criminal Justice Board – Peter Fahy, had been appointed as the Chief Constable of Greater Manchester Police. Ian Rushton, Chief Crown Prosecutor, had taken over as Chair of the LCJB. The appointment process for the new Chief Constable for Cheshire Police was underway.

### Regional

Bill McHugh, ROM, and Gail Porter, Deputy Director of Government Office Northwest, had attended the Probation Northwest Board in June. At the meeting G Porter had stressed the importance of maintaining strategic engagement with the Local Area Agreement process and she also highlighted the importance of Local Criminal Justice Boards in relation to reducing re-offending developments.

### National

The Probation Chiefs Association had now been incorporated as a Company Limited by Guarantee with an agreed Memorandum and Articles of Association.

### **RESOLVED:**

That the report be received.

## 5. PANELS

### 5.1 AUDIT COMMITTEE

The Audit Committee had met the previous week and R Howarth gave a verbal report on the meeting. Internal Audit had reported on the latest position with their Audit Plan for 2008/09. The final report on the audit of Approved Premises Timesheets had been published, with the Area being assessed as 'well controlled'. The External Auditors had presented their Annual Audit Letter to the Committee which summarised the key issues arising from the work they had carried out during the year. The Committee has also reviewed the Risk Register and received an update on Business Continuity Planning.

Following the meeting the Board Members had met privately with the Internal and External Auditors.

**RESOLVED:**

That the report be received.

**5.2 LOCAL JOINT NEGOTIATING AND CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE**

**RESOLVED:**

That the Minutes of the Local Joint Negotiation and Consultative Committee held on 23 May 2008 be received.

**5.3 HEALTH AND SAFETY PANEL**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Health and Safety Panel held on 4 June were received. The Panel had agreed the Annual Health and Safety Report, which was now brought to the Board for approval. The Board was also asked to note the Area's Health and Safety Policy Statement.

**RESOLVED:** That

- (1) the Minutes of the meeting of the Health and Safety Panel on 4 June 2008 be received;
- (2) the Annual Health and Safety Report 2007-08 be approved; and
- (3) the Area's Health and Safety Policy Statement be noted.

**5.4 DIVERSITY PANEL**

The Diversity Panel, at its meeting on 28 May, had considered the draft three year Race Equality Scheme 2008-2011. The Draft Scheme would now go out for consultation and the final version brought to the Board in September for approval.

**RESOLVED:** That

- (1) the Minutes of the meeting of the Diversity Panel held on 28 May 2008 be received; and
- (2) the Race Equality Scheme 2008-2011 be brought to the Board in September for approval.

**5.5 COMMUNICATIONS PANEL**

The Communications Panel had met on 14 July 2007 and A Backhouse gave a verbal report on the meeting. The Panel had discussed the Area's Website and had agreed that it now required upgrading. SMT would be approached as

to how this could be achieved. The concept of an Offenders' Newsletter had been discussed and the Panel thought that this idea should be considered in more detail.

**RESOLVED:**

That the report be received.

**5.6 SECURITY FORUM**

**RESOLVED:**

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Security Forum held on 29 May 2008 be received.

**6 AREA PERFORMANCE**

**6.1 1<sup>st</sup> QUARTER OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The Board received the 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter Operational Performance Report which documented performance for the period April to June 2008. Of the 47 performance targets, it was not yet possible to report on 5 as these required the results of stakeholder surveys that would be conducted and reported upon later in the year. Of the remaining 42, the Area was meeting or exceeding the targets in 24 of them. This was an improvement on the same period last year. The remaining 18 were currently performing below target in line with other Areas in the region and the report detailed the actions being taken to improve the performance of these.

The Board discussed the target for commencement of offenders on Drug Rehabilitation Requirements (INT12) and suggested that consideration be given to briefing sentencers on adjourning cases so that full assessments by Drug Agencies could take place.

**RESOLVED:** That

- (1) the 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter Performance Report be received; and
- (2) consideration be given to CJSSS conferences on adjournments in Magistrates' Courts for offenders with drug misuse issues to assist in achievement target INT12

**6.2 1<sup>st</sup> QUARTER HUMAN RESOURCES REPORT**

The 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter Human Resources report was received. In respect of sickness, absence the Area currently stood at 9.51 days/FTE against the target of 9 days. Absences in May were 7.53 days which was the lowest figure over the periods reported since 2004/05. Although short term absence showed further reductions in June, long term absence increased significantly to 6.46 days. The introduction of the Sickness Absence Management Policy

in February was beginning to impact on short term absence and this was reflected in the figures. The Board expressed their gratitude at the reduction in absences and asked that this be passed onto staff.

Table 7 in the report gave details in respect of the number of appraisals completed in the period to June and to date the Area had achieved 79%. Difficulties had been experienced in the area of Unpaid Work due to changes in the management structure and the delays in moving to appoint two Practice Managers who would be responsible for the supervision and appraisal of all Unpaid Work Supervisors. An update would be provided to the Board in September. A management training day was being planned which would include training on the completion of the appraisal form to ensure the same standard was being used across the Area.

**RESOLVED:** That

- (1) the 1st Quarter Human Resources Report be received; and
- (2) the Board's gratitude at the reduction in staff absence be communicated to staff.

## **7 AREA FINANCE**

### **7.1 1<sup>ST</sup> QUARTER FINANCE REPORT**

The 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter Finance Report was received. The forecast position at Quarter 1 was an underspend of £225,000. This would be closely monitored by SMT during the year to ensure the underspend remained within the allowable limits set by NOMS Finance under the budget exchange scheme. The forecast assumed that the outstanding pay award amounts would be paid in full. There was currently no information on a likely settlement/timescales and this could, therefore, become a significant risk in respect of forecasting later in the year.

**RESOLVED:**

That the 1<sup>ST</sup> Quarter Finance Report be received.

## **8 REVIEW OF SICKNESS ABSENCE MANAGEMENT 2007/08 (NOMS AUDIT AND CORPORATE ASSURANCE REPORT)**

The Thematic report *Sickness Absence Management* represented work undertaken on behalf of the National Probation Service by Audit and Corporate Assurance and draws on the findings of a questionnaire completed by all Areas and detailed visits to 12 Probation Areas.

A summary of the proposed actions suggested by Audit and Corporate Assurance with the Area's position in relation to these was presented to the Board for their approval.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Cheshire Probation Area Action Plan be approved.

**9 REWARD AND RECOGNITION**

The Reward and Recognition Group had reviewed the criteria for the Long Service Recognition and had agreed the following proposals:

- (a) introduction of new 'trigger points' for service recognition, i.e. 10,15, 20, 25 and 30+ years
- (b) reversion to 'Cheshire only' eligible service.

There would be a cost implication of £7,150 for the first year, as under the new criteria it had been identified that 96 staff would become eligible, which would come out of the reward and recognition budget.

The Reward and Recognition Group also proposed that the monetary award for staff retiring from the Area with 15 plus years' service with Cheshire be increased as follows:

- £100 for the first 15 years' service
- £10 for every completed year thereafter
- £80 for an 'official' retirement function

J Miller reported that two nominations had been received for the Board Award and details would be sent out to Board Members in due course. It was proposed that Board Award Scheme be revamped for 2009 and the revised scheme details be brought to the Board for agreement.

**RESOLVED:** That

- (1) the proposed changes to the current criteria for Long Service and Retirement monetary awards be endorsed; and
- (2) the Board Award Scheme be revamped for 2009.

**10 URGENT BUSINESS AND EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC****RESOLVED:**

That the Press and Public were excluded from the meeting for the items of business listed below on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt or confidential information.

Paragraph

Minutes of the Previous Meeting  
(6 June 2008)

Matters Arising and Review of Action

Serious Incidents

- 2(a) Where the disclosure of information to the public would be prejudicial to the public interest by reasons of its confidential nature
- 3(a) A victim, an offender, a person charged with an offence but not convicted, a person who is or has been resident in premises approved under section 9 of the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000 or relative of such a person
- 3(e) The prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime