

---

# ESSEX PROBATION BOARD

## MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD

### ON TUESDAY 8<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2009 AT 9.30AM

### AT THE HOLIDAY INN, ABBOTTS LANE,

### COLCHESTER, ESSEX C06 3QL

---

**Members Present:** Bill Puddicombe (Chair)  
Martin Bates  
Terry Collin  
Richard Moore  
Peter Sheldrake  
Peter Wilcock  
Tim Young

**In attendance:** Bernadette Barber (Board Secretary)  
Sue Atkinson (ACO)  
Alex Bamber (ACO) (item 6 onwards)  
Debbie Came (ACO) (item 6 onwards)  
Peter Jones (ACO)  
Gill Hirst (ACO)  
Shirley Kennerson (ACO)  
Pete Mangan (ACO)

#### ACTION

**1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Terry Collin declared an interest in the LSC.

**2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Mary Archer, Alex Bamber, Jo Durning, Rob Everitt Judge Gratwicke, Roger Lucking, and Carol Mellow.

The Chair undertook to speak to Carol Mellow regarding her attendance, given that this was the third consecutive meeting for which she had tendered her apologies. He had also been informed previously by Roger Lucking about the difficulties he encountered in attending meetings and would speak to him about whether he would be seeking re-appointment upon conversion to Trust status.

BP

## PROTECT

### 3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 28<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2009

The Minutes of the non-confidential part of the Board meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> July 2009 were approved as a true record to be signed by the Chair.

### 4. MATTERS ARISING

Arising from the Minutes of the meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> July:

- i) The previous problems with providing Board members with encrypted documents for the confidential part of the meeting had been resolved. After discussion, it was agreed that to overcome the problem of members needing to download restricted documents onto insecure PCs and laptops, electronic copies would in future be sent on encrypted memory sticks, to be returned at each Board meeting. Board members were reminded that any loss of these memory sticks would need to be recorded under the relevant procedures covering loss of confidential data. Separate arrangements might be required for Judge Gratwicke. PM
- ii) It was confirmed that document security classification guidance had been issued to all Board members.
- iii) It was confirmed that the SMT year-to-date costs, which had been impacted by budgeted savings due to be made later in the year, had been verified.
- iv) Gill Hirst confirmed that the positive feedback on impact assessments given at the previous meeting had been passed on to the Diversity Manager and that it had been decided to incorporate the comments into an article for a staff publication once some forthcoming changes to the impact assessment process, which would also be covered in the article, had been made.
- v) It was confirmed the transition to Trust status had been added to the next JNCC meeting agenda.
- vi) It was noted that the Audit Committee had not met since the previous meeting and therefore had not had an opportunity to respond to the Local Government pension Scheme – Delivering Affordability, Viability and Fairness consultation. However it was confirmed that Debbie Came had prepared a response.

## PROTECT

vii) It was reported that, due to Mary Archer's absence, the LDU presentation would be carried forward to the next meeting. MA

viii) Peter Jones confirmed that the update of the OASys software had been completed and that a brief report would be provided to the next meeting. PJ

### 5. CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

#### 5.1 DASHBOARD OF ORGANISATIONAL PROGRESS

The Chair tabled a proposed dashboard he had developed to review the organisation and the progress it was making against measures other than service delivery standards. Members were invited to e-mail any comments on the proposed measures to the Chair. All/BP

#### 5.2 ANNUAL AGENDA PLAN

The Secretary presented, and invited comments on, a draft annual agenda plan which she had prepared as requested in the recent governance discussions.

The following amendments to the plan were suggested and agreed:

- that the annual Health & Safety report be supplemented by updates on Health & Safety to be included in the quarterly HR Report
- that Committee terms of reference should be reviewed annually
- that the references to "month" should be changed to "meeting".

It was also noted that the cost and purpose of the annual public meeting would need further consideration, particularly in the light of the organisation's focus on local engagement.

The Secretary was asked to amend and re-circulate the annual plan and to arrange for its implementation. BB

### 6. CHIEF OFFICER'S REPORT

In her absence, the Chief Officer's report was presented by Peter Jones who firstly commented on the national Specification, Benchmarking and Costing programme and the impact that could have in determining how EPA would deliver Community Payback and victim contact. The information generated from the national SBC programme would be used to compare EPA costs against the national average before a decision on whether these services should be commissioned externally was taken. Using the Best Value process, a specification had been written for offender accommodation. This had been previously identified as a priority for potential tender.

## PROTECT

It was noted that the move in IPPF rating from Green Star to Green would be addressed within the Performance Report.

Preparations for transition to Trust status would also be discussed later in the meeting. However, the issue of the name for the new Trust was discussed. Given the general consensus that the word “probation” should be retained within the name, the two most obvious options were identified as either “Essex Probation Trust” or simply “Essex Probation”. After some discussion, it was agreed that the new Trust should be named “Essex Probation” and that this decision should be fed into the current staff logo design competition. A preference for the logo to include a strapline clarifying the aims of the service was agreed.

## **7. PERFORMANCE**

### **7.1 PERFORMANCE REPORT**

Peter Jones presented his report which included the 2009/10 Q1 IPPF and Essex Scorecard for July together with an analysis of, and commentary on, trends in national standards and other targets. No obvious cause for a recent dip in performance against national standards had been identified but managers were working to ensure the overall improving trend would not be affected and that performance levels increased again.

The disappointment at losing the Green Star status was acknowledged and the underlying cause (late delivery of data on performance against the sex offender programme target) explained and discussed at some length. The importance of data integrity and timely delivery for EPA’s public profile was well illustrated by the impact of this single omission and this message had been emphasised with staff. Summarising the key points, the Chair noted that it was heartening that the cause of the drop in performance was known and important to acknowledge that no actual loss in service to the public had occurred, despite the drop in the performance rating.

The drop in DRR starts shown on the Essex Scorecard and the cause and potential future impact of this on the DRR completions target was queried. Various factors which may have given rise to the fall in DRR starts, such as changes in police and sentencer practices may have played a part in the drop. Given the current level of completions, there was confidence that the completions target would still be met for the year.

The lower rate of DV completions was also the subject of ongoing

## PROTECT

investigation. The rolling nature of the IDAP programme made calculation of completions more complex and to overcome this 18 months' data had been reviewed. Some fluctuation in performance was expected as IDAP improvements took full effect.

### **7.2 HUMAN RESOURCES PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The Human Resources performance report covering the period April – June 2009 was noted. Commenting on various aspects, Sue Atkinson highlighted that:

- staff turnover was slightly reduced, as might be expected given the current economic environment,
- the report analysed the outcome of the annual appraisal process completed during the period. A higher level of returns had been made by the deadline set, with 86% of appraisals being submitted within one month of the year end. The lower percentage of appraisals returned by Cullen Mill within timescale was an issue which would be addressed,
- training event cancellation data would be used to challenge wastage,
- concerns over falling Identicom usage would be addressed,
- a majority of disabled staff were being supported through Access to Work provision.

It was confirmed that, as suggested in the Dashboard tabled earlier in the meeting, staff vacancy numbers could be provided.

## **8. REPORTS TO THE BOARD**

### **8.1 COMPLAINTS POLICY (AMENDMENT)**

An amended Complaints Policy was presented. The first amendment was intended to clarify that complaints outside of the statutory complaints policy requirements could still be dealt with under the policy at the discretion of the Chief Officer, although such complaints would not have recourse to the Prison and Probation Ombudsman. Further amendments addressed the need for the policy to operate in tandem with EPA's Capability and Disciplinary policies and procedures where appropriate.

The amended policy as presented was adopted.

MA

### **8.2 OFFENDER MANAGEMENT POLICY**

Shirley Kennerson presented an amended Offender Management policy. The amendments dealt with issues around the caretaking of cases and extremist offenders.

## PROTECT

The amended policy as presented was adopted.

SK

### **8.3 APPRAISAL POLICY**

Sue Atkinson presented an amended Appraisal policy. The amendments had been drafted to strengthen the policy so as to exclude under-performing staff from incremental progression. Staff subject to Capability or Disciplinary procedures would, in future, have incremental progression withheld pending the outcome of those procedures. The timing of the appraisal process would also be changed to link more closely with the October increment. The proposed changes had been shared with the Unions and were in line with national guidance. The outcome of the diversity impact assessment would be presented at the next meeting.

SA

The amendments to the policy were welcomed as an important step in underlining the connection between performance and pay and were adopted, subject to a review of the emphasis within the policy wording of the responsibility for addressing, as well as identifying, individual development needs.

SA

## **9. COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

### **9.1 DIVERSITY COMMITTEE**

It was noted that this committee had not met since the previous meeting of the Board.

### **9.2 AUDIT COMMITTEE**

It was noted that this committee had not met since the previous meeting of the Board.

### **9.3 JNCC MEETING**

It was noted that this committee had not met since the previous meeting of the Board.

### **9.4 HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE**

It was noted that this committee had not met since the previous meeting of the Board.

## **10. SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS AND FUTURE PRESENTATIONS**

None.

## **11. REGIONAL PROBATION TRANSITION BOARD MEETING**

It was noted that the Regional Probation Transition Board had not met since

**PROTECT**

the previous meeting of the EPA Board.

**13. REPORTS TO THE BOARD FOR INFORMATION PURPOSE ONLY**

**13.1 FEEDBACK FROM MEETINGS**

None.

**14. PROBATION ASSOCIATION AND PCA**

The Chair reported that the PA was coming to the end of its current three year business plan and that he had been appointed as the regional representative for the group looking at the PA's future plans. The PA was currently an employers' organisation, with its role mainly restricted to joint negotiations. One possibility is that it could move towards being a trade body for probation providers. Pete Mangan expressed concern that providers could be taken to encompass entities engaged to deliver interventions as well as those with statutory responsibilities and that the PA should continue to represent only those bodies commissioned directly by NOMS to deliver probation services.

**15. URGENT BUSINESS**

There was none.

**16. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> October 2009 at 9.30am.

---

.....  
Chair