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**ESSEX PROBATION (THE 'TRUST')**  
**MINUTES OF A BOARD MEETING HELD ON**  
**TUESDAY 25<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2011 AT 9.30AM AT**  
**COLCHESTER TOWN HALL, HIGH STREET,**  
**COLCHESTER, ESSEX CO1 1PJ**

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**Members Present:** Bill Puddicombe (Chair)  
Mary Archer (Chief Executive)  
Terry Collin  
Jo Durning  
Rob Everitt  
Carol Mellow  
Richard Moore  
Peter Sheldrake  
Peter Wilcock

**In attendance:** Sue Atkinson (Director)  
Alex Bamber (Director)  
Bernadette Barber (Board Secretary)  
Robin Brennan (Director)  
Debbie Came (Director)  
Shirley Kennerson (Director)  
Pete Mangan (Director)  
David Messam (Director)  
Kate Sale (IOM Co-ordinator)

**ACTION**

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Tim Young. Kate Sale was welcomed to the meeting.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

**3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23<sup>RD</sup> NOVEMBER 2010**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2010 were agreed to be accurate and approved for signature by the Chair.

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### 4. MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF 23<sup>RD</sup> NOVEMBER 2010

The following matters arising from the Minutes of the Board meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2010 were noted:

- The feedback report on the Probation Experience together with other information was being sent to Crispin Blunt,
- Board meetings for the first 6 months of the year had been booked at a variety of venues around the county. Raleigh Fire Station and Essex University Business Hub in Southend were suggested as possible future venues. Further suggestions were requested, ALL/MA
- The request for the May agenda to be kept as brief as possible had been noted,
- The Chair thanked those Board members who had expressed an interest in being part of the Business Plan working group. The group's first meeting had been held,
- The Chair confirmed that he had personally spoken to those staff who had been successful at the national probation awards,
- It was confirmed that the decision that savings plans would only be disclosed in Part 2 of the meeting had been noted,
- It was confirmed that the Impact Assessment for the Victim Service Policy had been carried out,
- It was confirmed that the Sustainability Policy had been deployed,
- The request for LDU presentations to be placed early on the agenda had been noted,
- The request for LDU presentations to address the interaction between sentencers and other partners had been noted,
- It was confirmed that the Action Plans arising from the staff satisfaction survey would be presented at the next meeting,
- Presentation of the Community Engagement Strategy had been postponed until March to allow time to carry out the Impact Assessment,
- The Workload Tool presentation would be added to the next agenda or a subsequent meeting if time did not permit.

### 5. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

Mary Archer presented her report, highlighting the main focus at present as the Green paper, 'Breaking the Cycle: Effective Punishment, Rehabilitation and Sentencing of Offenders', alongside other publications such as the MoJ Business Plan. Preparation of responses to the consultations was being progressed, but clarity of certain issues was

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also still awaited.

It was noted that Essex had been selected to participate in a national offender engagement pilot. There were no resource implications during the pilot phase.

Current performance, which continued to improve, would be reported at the next meeting when the Q3 PTRS would be available. Variation of the DRR target as requested had been granted. A contract review meeting was scheduled for February.

An initial meeting regarding the 2011/12 contract had been held and expected savings of 4.6% had been confirmed. The Workload Tool indicated more than adequate resource levels at present leaving good scope for future savings.

Trevor Williams' early retirement in March and the appointment of Colin Allars were noted. It was agreed that the Chair should write to Trevor Williams on behalf of the Board and also that Colin Allars and other BP directors should be invited to a future Board meeting.

### 6. LDU PRESENTATION – MID ESSEX

David Messam presented his report, focussing on improvements already achieved in performance and those still being worked towards. The Board endorsed the improvements made so far and the aim to continue enhancing performance as swiftly as possible.

### 7. OFFICERS' REPORTS

#### 7.1 FINANCE REPORT

Debbie Came provided an oral update noting that the previously forecast underspend of £250,000 had now increased to £450,000 due to continued vacancies, early progress on savings plans and the unexpected receipt of the Estates rebate. No carry-over of funds was permitted.

The budget for 2011/12 was expected to achieve savings of around £1m or 4%. At the recent contract meeting it had been indicated that an additional £150,000 might be available dependent on suitable business cases being made. The draft budget would be presented to the next meeting but in the absence of a confirmed pay settlement, appropriate assumptions would be used. Staff would be updated on the draft budget as soon as it was close to finalisation to alleviate staff concerns. DC MA

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### **7.2 APPROVED PREMISES SBC REGISTER AND PROCESS UPDATE**

Robin Brennan presented his report which confirmed that the specification for Approved Premises was being met at Felmores.

The proposal to change the current Approved Premises staffing structure was queried. It was confirmed that risks were being assessed against potential savings and those savings would only be delivered if they were consistent with continuing to deliver against the Trust's public protection obligations. The proposed changes would be reported at the next meeting. RB

### **7.3 COMPLAINTS REPORT**

Mary Archer presented her report covering complaints received in the last year. Although the increased use of informal complaints resolution at lower levels within the organisation had delivered favourable results, better logging of complaints was required by local managers.

It was confirmed that feedback was given to individuals cited in complaints, both of the outcome and of any lessons which had been learned during investigation of the complaint. No trends had emerged from the complaints.

### **7.4 WORKING WITH WOMEN OFFENDERS**

Shirley Kennerson presented her report on the ongoing work to develop strategies for ensuring more equitable outcomes for women offenders compared to their male counterparts.

A short-life working group had been established until April to consolidate previous developments. Questionnaires were being sent to all female offenders within the current caseload to explore their experiences and whether their needs were being met. Assistance would be given to offenders with completion of the questionnaire where required.

Although Essex had not had any pilot funding for work with women, outcomes for women offenders in Essex were recognised as generally being good and it was suggested that details of how such results were being achieved could be written up for professional journals etc. Key to the success was recognising individual needs rather than taking a one-size-fits-all approach. Mary Archer's role as lead on diversity and

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women offenders in East of England was noted.

### **7.5 POLICY ON DOCUMENT PROTECTIVE MARKINGS**

The summary reminding Board members of the protective markings policy was noted. Pete Mangan confirmed that documents marked PROTECT could be made public and that the policy adopted was based on NOMS requirements.

### **8. ESSEX PROBATION THREE YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN 2010-13 PROGRESS REPORT Q3 2010/11**

Mary Archer presented her report which set out the progress made against the current year objectives which had been drawn from the strategic plan. Progress against these objectives was reviewed quarterly in the Chief Executive's meetings with Directors.

The Chair congratulated the management team on the significant progress which had been made.

### **9. BUSINESS PLAN DRAFT AND OBJECTIVES FOR 2011/12**

Debbie Came presented the objectives for 2011/12 which were drawn from the business plan within the Trust application. The proposed objectives were confirmed and approved. It was noted that quarterly reports on progress against the objectives would be provided to the Board. MA

### **10. REPORTS AND MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

#### **10.1 DIVERSITY COMMITTEE**

It was noted that this Committee had not met since the last Board meeting.

#### **10.2 AUDIT COMMITTEE**

The draft Minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2011 were noted. Terry Collin observed that his name was listed in error as having attended.

Richard Moore reported that following the Committee's review of the Annual Audit letter certain amendments had been requested. The audit opinion was unqualified.

The Committee had also approved replacement of the originally-planned Serious Further Offences and Serious Case Review audits with an audit

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of MAPPA arrangements. Some savings were anticipated.

The Committee's recommendation of the three-year flat rate funding option to deal with the existing pension scheme deficit was noted.

### **10.3 JNCC MEETING**

The Minutes of the JNCC meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2011 were not available and would be reported at the next meeting.

There was a positive perception amongst the unions that many of the national changes currently proposed were already in place within Essex so that local changes were minimal at present.

### **10.4 HEALTH & SAFETY MEETING**

It was noted that the Health & Safety Committee had not met since the previous Board meeting.

### **10.5 URGENCY COMMITTEE DECISION**

Debbie Came presented her report which set out the decision of the Urgency Committee on 21<sup>st</sup> December 2010 to approve expenditure of up to £60,000 in respect of a contract to transfer historical manual HR and Offender Management records into electronic format in order to save storage space and to improve the efficiency of document retrieval. The Urgency Committee had also waived the contract standing orders in respect of the tendering procedures which would otherwise have been required.

A further proposal to extend the project to further offices was outlined and discussed. The extended project would increase the cost of scanning documents to £70,000.

Adherence with relevant EU procurement requirements was queried and this was confirmed.

The risks relating to electronic file storage were also raised. It was confirmed that the key data loss risks around electronic storage were understood to relate to the transfer process rather than on-going storage. Appropriate confidentiality provisions had been included in the draft contract and the transfer process would be carefully managed.

Following some discussion it was agreed that a contract for up to

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£70,000 be approved.

### 11. SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS AND FUTURE PRESENTATIONS

#### 11.1 INTEGRATED OFFENDER MANAGEMENT PROJECT PLAN

Kate Sale provided an oral update on the project. Central Government direction on practice at local level had been reduced but the IOM approach was still being encouraged. Police and Probation were the lead agencies on the project but many other partners were also involved and their buy-in was being actively sought.

The aim of the programme was to reduce reoffending by concentrating on the most problematic offenders, including non-statutory offenders in order to improve outcomes. A governance board had been established, chaired by Bill Puddicombe, and had reviewed the project initiation plan. The inaugural meeting had been well attended by relevant partner organisations. The project would build on existing PPO structures and would link into the reducing reoffending responsibilities of the IOM partners.

It was agreed that the project plan would be presented to the Board at a future meeting. It was noted that Kate Sale's role was funded for a further year. BP

#### 11.2 BREAKING THE CYCLE GREEN PAPER

The Chair proposed that the consultation questions annotated with bullet points be circulated to all Board members for comment. Responses from Board members and SMT would be collated to form a response from the Trust which the Chair agreed to co-ordinate.

ALL/BP

#### 11.3 COMMUNITY BUDGETS

Alex Bamber reported that Essex County Council had been selected for a Community Budgets pilot focussing on complex families, which Essex Probation would be part of. Further details would be reported to the Board when available. AB

### 12. PROBATION ASSOCIATION

The Chair reported that the Probation Association review was to be discussed by the PA Board and that he would then report back to the Board. BP

It was also noted that pay negotiations were expected to be the main item on the next PA Council meeting agenda. There was a clear need to remain competitive. The Chair would report back when the relevant information BP

was available.

**13. REPORTS TO THE BOARD FOR INFORMATION PURPOSES**

**13.1 AMM**

Peter Wilcock tabled a report on the recent AMM meeting he had attended. He encouraged his fellow Board members to take the opportunity offered to attend future meetings – they provided a good way of adding context to the Board’s discussions.

**14. URGENT BUSINESS**

There was none.

**15. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

It was resolved at 11.30am to exclude the press and public from the remainder of the meeting due to the confidential nature of the matters to be discussed.

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Chair