

6. **Chairman's oral report**

6.1 **Responsibilities of Board Members**

Malcolm Fearn said that following the departure of Annette Griffiths and the decision not to replace her it was necessary to review the allocation of duties amongst remaining Board Members. Annette had been on the JNCC/Workforce Group and the Diversity Monitoring Group and he asked for expressions of interest in these vacancies.

He added that NOMS had begun to emphasise the importance of a structure based on Local Delivery Units (LDUs). We have 5 LDUs in Thames Valley – Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes, East Berkshire and West Berkshire – which are coterminous with police Basic Command Units and generally with local authorities. Senior management at Assistant Director level is already aligned with this structure and Malcolm Fearn said that it will be useful to have a nominated Board Member to take an interest in each LDU. The nominees could attend meetings of the Local Strategic Partnership to represent the Board, and could take an interest in the relevant LAA(s). He would look at the geography and approach individual Members.

6.2 **Budgets for the next three years**

Malcolm Fearn referred to background discussions about adjustments to indicative budgets. Despite promises from NOMS about the application of convictions data it was clear that Thames Valley would be relatively underfunded within the South East Region. He had made representations to Roger Hill, who had discretion to move funds within the Region, but to no avail. Malcolm had warned that he would have to consult the Board on this impasse and might need to consider approaching Phil Wheatley.

The Board discussed the timing and nature of any further representations to be made about funding, given the application for trust status that was in preparation. They concluded that the application itself must make the underfunding position clear, but not in an aggressive or negative way. Gerry Marshall said that Roger Hill did understand the point and had undertaken to review the funding position later in the year. Malcolm Fearn undertook to draft a letter to Michael Spurr (Chief Operating Officer), copy to Roger Hill, focusing on the disparity between funding levels and conviction figures and the need to implement the proposed change in the funding formula as soon as possible.

Action

Paul Gillbard drew attention to another issue of concern. The SBC (Specification, Benchmarking and Costing) exercise had identified a range of potential savings, but several of these depended upon the introduction of new National Standards from 1 April 2009. However implementation of the new Standards was delayed and not yet in sight, so a full year's savings was impossible. Malcolm Fearn said that he had made this point to Roger Hill. He had also pointed out that the cuts imposed on Thames Valley were larger pro rata than had been the Area's share of the additional allocation for reducing prison population, and that Thames Valley suffered a disproportionate hit from the deficits of its five Approved Premises.

Regrettably, the Area was also likely to suffer from the early freezing of the budget exchange scheme allowing transfer of funds between financial years. In previous years adjustments had been permitted until late in the preparation of the final accounts.

6.3 **Chief Officer's oral report**

Gerry Marshall advised the Board that he was writing to the 21 Members of Parliament in the Thames Valley and was offering a briefing session for each of the main political party groups about the bid for trust status and budgetary prospects.

He informed the Board that a new draft Single Equality Scheme would go on the TVP website by 31 March, as statutorily required. Due to the short time available it was not ready to come to today's Board meeting. Although there was no requirement to bring the Scheme to the Board for approval, this was good practice and the draft would be brought to the next meeting. Lesley Hudson said that initially the document was being put together from three existing documents. It would be possible to make changes after 31 March if required.

Action

Gerry Marshall alerted the Board to the reputational risk from potential publicity surrounding a case due in court, managed by the London Probation Service. MoJ had already answered a number of written PQs about Serious Further Offences and more interest is expected when the case comes to court. Paul Gillbard said that he had checked the soundness of the SFO learning process in TVP and had reviewed the Action Plan that was put in place following the last comparable case (Hanson and White).

Gerry Marshall reported that Slough has been selected to be a pilot area for a new government initiative (*Justice Seen; Justice Done*) which will allow members of the public to identify "grot spots" to be cleaned up by offenders on community payback sentences. A minister and Louise Casey were due to visit Slough on Monday 30 March for a launch event.

The Black Staff Group has been revived by a recent event run by Kilvinder Vigurs and Gabriel Amahwe and attended by 25 staff. A report will come to the Board.

Action

Finally, Gerry Marshall reported that Gaynor Mackenzie had recently started a year's unpaid leave, granted for personal reasons. In Gaynor's absence Lesley Hudson would extend her hours to cover the full duties of the post. Board Members asked Malcolm Fearn to write to Gaynor with their best wishes.

Action

7. **Performance report April 2008 to February 2009 (TVPB/P18/2009)**

Sean Quiggin presented the report. He said that it again indicated significant continuing improvement, but he did not think this would be enough to recover the underperformance in earlier months and he expected the final result for the year to be amber.

He reported that SLAs for 2009-10 have not yet been agreed and signed because Ministers have not yet agreed national targets. It is possible that volume targets may be raised. He pointed out that for the first time two local authorities in our area (Reading and Wokingham) have targets relating to reducing reoffending agreed with GOSE for inclusion in their LAAs. TVP's contribution will play a key part in achieving these targets.

Paul Gillbard said that performance in the public protection domain was catching up, but would have to be exceptional in the final months for the year as a whole to be green.

Commenting on the report, Hiram Chakravarty identified three points: possible failings on recording rather than on performance; very small volumes in some measures so that a small failure has a disproportionate effect; and a need to contact the voluntary sector about offenders stood down. Malcolm Fearn said that managers were eager to continue improving performance and were keenly aware of the importance of recording actions. Sean Quiggin said that stand downs were not attributable to any single cause and were not consistently concentrated in any particular part of the TV area. Constant vigilance on all aspects was necessary to achieve a low rate of stand downs.

Sean Quiggin expressed concern that the prototype IPPF reporting tool for 2009-10 will not be shared with Areas by NOMS until May, when in previous years it was available in April. This will hamper our ability to report performance accurately in the early months of the new financial year.

The Board **noted** the performance report.

8. **Probation Trust application**

Sean Quiggin reminded the Board that he had accepted overall responsibility for coordinating the bid across the four domains, including originating the write-up and selecting and collecting the evidence. Every assertion made and fact claimed must be evidenced and cross-referencing would be an important aspect. He said that assuming we get over the first hurdle and progress to the interview stage we will be able to make a presentation lasting strictly 15 minutes. We will need a good rehearsal of this.

Dates have been fixed for Ian Menzies-Conacher and Phillip Perlin to review and criticise the application. At present, despite the position regarding performance reported under the previous agenda item, we were proceeding on the assumption that we will have green status on IPPF allowing us to apply in May. Scrutiny of our application by the SE ROM team and by other Chairs and Chiefs is built into our project plan for the application process.

Gerry Marshall said that several updated strategies that are needed to underpin the application would be coming to the Board for approval in April.

9. **TVP Business Plan 2009-2010 TVPB/P19/2009)**

Gerry Marshall presented the business plan, which would be one of the key documents supporting the trust application. Unlike some Areas, TVP had been producing a business plan for some years and it was now a rolling, evolutionary process. The present iteration had elided 8 priorities into 6.

Sue Seager asked why there was no explicit mention of communications and Gerry Marshall replied that it was an automatic aspect of every element of the plan, and key within the stakeholder strategy.

The Board **adopted** the updated version of the business plan.

10. **Finance report: year to date (TVPB/P20/2009)**

Anne Whitworth presented the report, explaining that staff were working hard to balance the accounts. There was now a tendency for the forecast underspend to increase and it was a question of working to minimise it within the normal expenditure

rules. She was carefully monitoring and taking action on budget holders who were spending below their allocation.

The Board **noted** the report.

11. **Indicative budgets 2010-2013 (TVPB/P21/2009)**

Anne Whitworth said that a lot of work was now going on behind the scenes on preparing for the budgetary reductions that were envisaged in the next three years. Savings of 5% per annum were a challenging target and could only come from staffing, which in turn means that offender management must bear the brunt of cuts. In response to a question, Anne explained that in the past a substantial saving based on an assessment of staff turnover has been built into the budget. In view of the economic climate turnover is likely to be lower than in the past and is hard to assess. A saving of £248k has been assumed, the difference between the internal budget allocations of £26,268k and the grant allocation of £26,020k.

Having reassured themselves that there was no double counting of savings, the Board accepted the indicative budgets set out in the appendix to the paper.

Board Members thanked Anne Whitworth for stepping in at short notice and getting to grips with the Board's business so quickly.

12. **Unapproved minutes of the JNCC meeting of 9 February 2009 (TVPB/P22/2009)**

Malcolm Fearn drew attention to the minute recording his view that a zero pay award in 2009 would be preferable to redundancies. He confirmed that he had raised this with Christine Lawrie of the Probation Association.

The minutes were **noted**.

13. **Probation Association – weekly news digest (TVPB/P23/2009)**

All Board Members expressed interest in receiving the weekly email containing hyperlinks to media reports relevant to the Probation Service that had been commissioned by the PA. The Board Secretary was asked to organise this.

14. **Any other business (part 1)**

Forthcoming meetings

Next public meeting: Thursday 23rd April in the Council Chamber, Maidenhead Town Hall, by kind permission of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.

An additional extraordinary meeting will be held in private to review and agree the application for trust status at Bicester Head Office, 12 noon on Thursday 14th May.

A resolution to meet in private session was proposed and seconded, and agreed by the Board, by virtue of the nature of the business to be transacted:

Minutes 15 and 16 include references to confidential financial issues.

Minute 17 relates to the minutes of the Audit Committee which are classed as restricted in accordance with the classification adopted by the Ministry of Justice.

Minute 18 relates to the salaries of named members of staff.