

THAMES VALLEY PROBATION BOARD

**MINUTES OF A SPECIAL BOARD MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 14 MAY 2009
AT BICESTER HEAD OFFICE**

commencing at 12.00 pm and ending at 2.45 pm

MEMBERS PRESENT: Yashpaul Anderson, Hirak Chakravarty, Michael Day, Malcolm Fearn (Chair), Arif Hussain, Honor Juniper, Gerry Marshall, Michael Nolan, Phillip Perlin, Sue Seager, Zoe Smith

OFFICERS: Paul Gillbard, Lesley Hudson, Richard Lawrence-Wilson, Sean Quiggin, Anne Whitworth

APOLOGIES: Ian Menzies-Conacher

GUEST OBSERVERS: Barbara Swyer (SE Regional Manager, Community Services), Tess Kirkby (Regional Commissioning Manager)

1. Opening remarks from Chair and Chief

Performance

Malcolm Fearn reported that the provisional overall performance score for financial year 2008-09 was green, and circulated copies of the TVP and summary score sheets. This success meant that no 'moderation' was needed and TVP would be free to apply for Trust status in either May or July. The Board should therefore now consider whether the papers circulated for this meeting gave them confidence that a winning bid could be finalised by the deadline of 21 May, or whether it would be better to take more time and bid in July.

Mike Nolan proposed that congratulations should go from the Board to all staff acknowledging the effort and hard work that had culminated in the successful achievement of a green score. The Board agreed, and Malcolm Fearn said he would send out an appropriate note.

Action

Tess Kirkby added that the amber score for Offender Management might also go green when some discrepancies are corrected. Malcolm Fearn drew attention to the April sick absence level of 7.3 days (a record low) and the best ever rate of 2% for unpaid work stand-downs, both of which augured well for the new financial year.

Oxford re-site project

Letters to each Board Member from Ms Felicity Wenden of 46 Mill Street, Oxford, dated 2 May were distributed and Malcolm Fearn provided copies of his reply to her dated 14 May.

Malcolm Fearn reported that he had been in Westminster on 13 May to meet the Minister, David Hanson, and Evan Harris MP. Mill Street residents were talking about going to judicial review, but he now believed that no challenge was possible on planning grounds. Furthermore, the Minister had indicated that there had been no requirement for local or other consultation on the project.

Malcolm Fearn said he had committed TVP to look carefully at any alternative premises that might be proposed but none had been suggested so far. A TVP Open Day will be held in Oxford Town Hall, on 9,12,15 or 19 June.

Phillip Perlin asked if the signing of the lease of Trajan House had been delayed by the protests. Malcolm Fearn said not, although residents had asked for a delay. We have asked Pembroke College for a 3 month extension of the lease on Albion House.

He had met Tony Baldry, MP for Banbury, and had partially satisfied him about the Probation presence in Banbury, although Mr Baldry remained concerned about the proposed reduction in jobs there.

Gerry Marshall concluded by advising the Board that a Q&A document on all aspects of the Oxford re-site project was nearing completion and when it had been signed off by MoJ it would be copied to all Board Members and put on the TVP website.

Action

2. Annual accounts for 2008-09

Gerry Marshall reported that preparation of the final accounts was proceeding well. After consultation with the external auditors and NOMS he proposed that the Board Secretary should act as second signatory to the accounts, alongside himself as Accountable Officer. The Board **agreed**.

3. Information for Board Members

Copies of three documents, Trust Programme Briefing no. 7 (May 2009), the Probation Association's News Update for May, and the Director General's update on performance of the NOMS Agency, dated 13 May, were distributed to Board Members.

4. Application for Trust Status

Sean Quiggin introduced the five draft documents that had been circulated in advance:

- Trust application (version 1, 20pp)
- Trust Strategy 2009/13 (version 4, 15pp)
- Trust Business Plan 2010/13 (version 4, 36pp)
- Schedule A to the Business Plan (excel financial spreadsheet, version 5.1, 3pp)
- Medium term financial plan (version 3, 10pp)

He explained that the application comprised a series of questions subdivided into 4 domains. Every assertion, and each reference to an activity, a decision, or whatever, must be clearly cross-referenced to supporting evidence. To ensure that this would be guaranteed he had built the main supporting documents from the bottom up, starting from the raw evidence, which already exceeded 150 different documents. He expected this methodology to ensure that the answers were simply the cream of the supporting information and nothing was unsubstantiated.

Sean Quiggin said he felt there were perhaps 7-10 person-days of work left, which could probably be completed by the deadline of 21 May if he and others worked flat out over the weekend. However, he felt that a better result would be produced if more time was available and he recommended the Board to postpone the bid to July. Not least, it was essential that those who would be presenting the bid should clear their heads after the exceptional distractions of recent weeks. If the delay was agreed, the new deadline

would be 27 July, which would allow for work to be completed at a less breakneck pace, together with editorial checking and polishing, and a final meeting of the bid group.

Several Board Members spoke in favour of applying in July and none spoke against, and the recommendation was **agreed**. Interview practice dates will be rescheduled.

Kent's application document was circulated and generally admired. Board Members appreciated that the simple TVP mockup with photos of Chair and Chief was not intended as the final version or a finished piece of work. It helped them to decided that they favoured a more polished approach.

Board Members spent the remaining part of the meeting interactively reviewing the draft bid documents and contributing their experience during an extensive and wide-ranging discussion, notes of which have been delivered to officers.

The meeting ended at 2.45 pm so that the Chair, Sentencer Members, most officers and the guest observers could make their way to the meeting of the Thames Valley Sentencers and Probation Forum.

Signed CHAIR
Dated: 18 June 2009