

**THAMES VALLEY PROBATION BOARD****MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 24 APRIL 2008  
AT BANBURY PROBATION OFFICE****COMMENCING AT 1.30 P.M. AND ENDING AT 4.30 P.M.**

<b>MEMBERS PRESENT:</b>	Yashpaul Anderson	
	Hirak Chakravarty	
	Michael Day	
	Malcolm Fearn	Chair
	Annette Griffiths	
	Arif Hussain	
	Honor Juniper	
	Gerry Marshall	Chief Officer
	Ian Menzies-Conacher	
	Michael Nolan	
	Phillip Perlin	
	Sue Seager	
<b>OBSERVER:</b>	Sue Carrie	Improvement and Development Manager, London and South East Region (part 1 items only)
<b>OFFICERS:</b>	Lesley Hudson	Director, Human Resources
	Sean Quiggin	Director, Interventions
	Malcolm Vine	Treasurer and Director, Finance
	Richard Lawrence-Wilson	Board Secretary

**PART 1****1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Paul Gillbard.

**2. Opening remarks****Membership of the Board**

Malcolm Fearn welcomed Arif Hussain to his first meeting as a member of the Board. Richard Lawrence-Wilson reported that although nothing had yet been received in writing, he had been assured by the MoJ that ministerial approval had been given to Arif's appointment and all the formalities had been completed.

**Observer**

Malcolm Fearn welcomed Sue Carrie, Improvement and Development Manager, London and South East Region, who was attending as an observer.

**Local Area Agreements (LAAs)**

Gerry Marshall reported that TVP was at a critical and difficult stage in engaging with LAAs. Due to variations in the structure of local government across the Thames Valley, TVP has 9 LAAs, more than any other probation area except London. Currently 198 priorities had been reduced to 26 targets for each LAA and the plans would soon be going forward to the Government Office of the South East (GOSE). The negotiations had been different from one LAA to another and although our contribution had been consistently focused on the primary aim of reducing crime and reoffending it was not possible to insist on this being one of the

explicit targets. It had been necessary to look at other targets that we could support, for example in the field of health, or community safety, that would contribute towards probation priorities.

Gerry Marshall added that he was not sure that NOMS understood the complexities and challenges of the LAA system. It was tough simply trying to ensure that TVP was properly represented in discussion of all the 9 LAAs. He had written to the Chief Executives of every local authority, and he, Sean Quiggin or Paul Gillbard would be meeting each of them before the LAAs are finalised.

Yashpaul Anderson asked how LAAs would be signed off. What was the governance model? Gerry Marshall said that they would be submitted to GOSE by the Local Authorities and GOSE would accept them (or not) on our behalf. Malcolm Fearn said that no single agency has the authority to sign off an LAA. Gerry Marshall said he would report to the Board on what commitments had been made in each LAA

**Action**

Arif Hussain said the main aim of each LAA would be to satisfy local people. The LAA would run for 3 years, with a refresh point after 1 year. Sean Quiggin said that the Local Authorities have ownership of LAAs. They are not a contractual matter for TVP. Our contract is with the ROM through the SLA and we cannot subdivide or re-tune our targets between 9 LAAs.

Ian Menzies-Conacher asked if LAAs had any financial consequences. Malcolm Fearn said that these were not direct, but if partner agencies could choose common targets and work together on them the benefits would be enhanced.

Gerry Marshall added that monitoring would still be carried out against the initial 198 priorities even though they had been reduced to a much smaller number of targets for the purposes of the LAAs. Signing off was scheduled for the end of June. GOSE would be examining the LAAs to see that they addressed issues in local plans and also satisfied the aims of government departments.

Malcolm Fearn suggested that it would be useful to review the LAAs and the process through which they had been negotiated and finalised.

**Action**

### **Middle management events**

Malcolm Fearn said that in the last 12 months two events had been held for middle managers, and two more were planned for 15 July and 25 November. He asked Board members to let him know if they would be available to attend these events, which will be held in Stokenchurch from 9.30 to 4.30.

**Action**

### **Regional report**

Malcolm Fearn confirmed that the SLA had been signed off. The regional meeting of Chairs and Chief had discussed the role of the ROM. This might be clarified at a further meeting on 30 April, following which he would report back.

**Action**

### 3. **Minutes of the meeting of 27 March 2008 (TVPB/M2/2008)**

The minutes were **agreed** and signed by the Chair.

### 4. **Matters arising**

#### **Declarations of interest**

There were no new declarations of interest.

## **Oxford accommodation project**

Gerry Marshall reported that the response to his submission had asked several questions that seemed to suggest our proposal was not fully understood. The process meant a delay in approval from May to July.

## **Action list from the meeting of 27 March 2008**

Malcolm Fearn reviewed the action list.

- Lesley Hudson said that a review of the pensions policy was in the work plan for the coming year.
- Richard Lawrence-Wilson had yet to discuss with Fiona Tarrant how to ensure that Board members see important items that appear on the intranet.
- Honor Juniper had provided a contact on the reported Google issue relating to court lists. Richard Lawrence-Wilson would follow this up.

All other actions had been completed or were on the agenda.

## **5. Comments from Sue Carrie, Improvement and Development Manager, London and South East Region Probation**

### **TVP performance and Trust Status**

Sue Carrie began by reminding the Board that less than twelve months ago Thames Valley was in 'special measures' and since then had been subject to 'directed intervention'. She said she and her colleagues had watched with pleasure as performance strengthened and she wanted to pay tribute to Gerry Marshall, his top team and all the staff of TVP who had worked so hard and effectively. The TV Capability Assessment Framework had been well received and mostly endorsed. With the end of the year approaching, the final results for 2007-08 would determine whether or not Thames Valley will be in wave 2 for becoming a Trust.

Sue Carrie said that on the basis of the most recent data she hoped that TVP would come out of 'directed improvement' and go into wave 2. However there were a couple of aspects of performance where she felt help would still be needed in the coming year. The remaining question mark hung over the long term sustainability of the improvements that had been seen.

She said that the Centre wants to see as many Boards as possible becoming Trusts in the second wave. However it was not yet clear how the transition would be handled and there was ongoing discussion about whether it would be sensible to have 42 Trusts, in the context of a need for efficiency savings and an increasing level of work carried out in partnership with the Prison Service. No decisions had been taken yet but there will be a need to make savings. She said there was some talk about having only 10 regional Trusts. Short of this extreme it was likely that some smaller Areas would not become Trusts and would be merged. In consequence regional collaboration was high on the agenda.

Michael Day asked what are seen as the benefits of becoming a Trust. Sue Carrie said that details had still to be finalised but the scope of additional freedoms and flexibilities was limited so far. However, the flavour would be different, and (for example) Trusts would be able to say "No" to new tasks that were requested without new funding, in a way that Boards cannot.

Hirak Chakravarty said that the need now was for TVP to get out of directed intervention and start preparing for the transition. He asked if the agenda was set for this over the next year, or 2 years. Gerry Marshall responded, saying that Sue Carrie has been our judge on the self assessment we submitted. The transition work should start now, whether or not we are in wave 2, and will be either a 12 or 24 month process.

Summarising, Malcolm Fearn said that as an Area we had been in a bad state but had improved very markedly over the last year. We need to keep the level of performance up and hold fast to the business plan. The South East Region itself is not as coherent as other Regions but its component Areas are getting better at working together. He thanked Sue Carrie for coming and for giving the Board her view of the current position.

### **Prison population**

Sue Carrie said that statements on the exceptional level of the prison population were being issued weekly and all possible actions were being considered to try to reduce it.

The imperative need to handle the pressure on prison places has superseded the previous focus on contestability and engagement with the private and third sectors. The key criterion now is value for money.

## **6. Performance report**

Sean Quiggin reminded the Board that they had received a full performance report on March 27<sup>th</sup>, based on data to the end of February. He was not yet able to provide definitive data for the full year but would give an update on the emerging results.

He said that out of 21 headline indicators measured locally, there remained 6 on which we are underperforming. The first three were priorities in the Business Plan: timely OASys assessments for offenders in tiers 1-3 and for PPOs, and orders/licences successfully completed. Consistent improvement has been seen on unpaid work stand-downs and Community Domestic Violence Programme (CDVP) completions. The sixth missed indicator was sickness absence, which was greatly improved at 9.5 days against the target of 9 days (10.5 in March).

Sean Quiggin said the final returns for the year will be submitted in mid-May. The performance rate means that many targets were met early, and some will be greatly exceeded at the year end. He explained that some of this resulted from large, unplanned increases in demand which had nevertheless been met – an example being a very high volume of DID programmes which had raised completions in year to date to 384% of target. Overall we have delivered the same as last year or better without the same excessive hours having to be worked.

Sean added that Sue Cooke would shortly be receiving an award from Baroness Scotland for her work on end-to-end enforcement in partnership with Frances Mallowan, Business Manager for HMCS in the Thames Valley. Thames Valley was the fastest improver, having risen from last place to 19<sup>th</sup> out of 42 areas.

Honor Juniper said that there was a huge difference in the performance compared with 18 months ago, and this was due to consistent hard work by the staff. Sue Carrie endorsed this comment. Sue Carrie added that attention should be focused on remands in custody. We must hit the assessment target to keep people out of prison. Gerry Marshall said that the target had been restored to 10 days from 1 April 2008, having been temporarily relaxed to 15 days. Essential videoconferencing facilities were now in place to help achieve the tougher target.

Mike Nolan asked for the Board's appreciation of the achievement to be fully recorded in the minutes and suitably published on the intranet.

The performance report was **noted**.

## **7. Finance report (TVPB/P22/2008)**

Malcolm Vine said that little had changed since his report to the March meeting. Work had continued on securing income from other agencies, some of which related to 2008-09. The figures for 2008-09 remained fluid, with no final response on the issue of pensions contributions. Senior Managers would be reviewing the position using the best available figures, to ensure that any necessary action was prepared in good time.

Malcolm Vine reminded the Board that staff shortages in the Finance Department had been identified as a key risk. He was pleased to report that he had managed to recruit some experienced temporary staff to reduce the risk.

The finance report was **noted**.

8. **Additional funding allocation**

Gerry Marshall said that he was not yet able to share the plan that was being drawn up for the deployment of the additional funding allocation provided to assist in addressing the prison population crisis. There were several ways in which probation might help to reduce the number of prison places needed, for example by changing the approach to breaching offenders and towards licence recalls. However, this could not and should not be achieved by being more lenient; the changes must change the behaviour of offenders, especially through improved compliance.

As an example, Gerry mentioned an increase in the work of trackers who go to offenders' homes when there is a risk of breach, improving compliance rates. He added that it may be possible and helpful to set up a group to discuss measures with sentencers. This could also come up at the Sentencers Forum on 15 May.

Malcolm Fearn said that the use of the allocation would inevitably be skewed towards the end of the year since measures could not be developed and implemented instantaneously. Gerry Marshall undertook to share the plan with the Board as soon as possible.

**Action**

The oral report was **noted**.

9. **Annual report on Governance (TVPB/P23/2008)**

Richard Lawrence-Wilson introduced this report, which responded to Audit concerns about whether Board members were adequately briefed on governance issues. He reminded the Board of the Code of Conduct for Local Probation Board Members, and gathered in signed copies. He had recently sent out the annual forms seeking declarations of interest and of related party transactions, and he explained how these were used respectively as the Board's Register of Interests and in support of the annual accounts.

Ian Menzies-Conacher said that he felt that the Auditors had over-interpreted some answers to the questionnaire circulated to Board members in the autumn of 2007. He had made this point to them when they had presented their report to the Committee. Nevertheless it was useful to have an annual review of governance issues.

Board Members agreed that they were content with arrangements for obtaining external legal advice, should this ever be required, with the Board Secretary as the first port of call.

The report was **noted**.

10. **JNCC minutes, 8 February 2008 (TVPB/P24/2007)**

The minutes were **noted**. Sue Seager asked about the outcome of the stress survey. Lesley Hudson said that preliminary feedback had been considered and an action plan was being drawn up. She would be discussing this with the workforce group before publishing it. Some of the actions would cost money. She undertook to report to the Board when consideration was complete.

**Action**

11. **Probation Association summary (TVPB/P25/2008)**

Malcolm Fearn pointed out the mention of work commissioned by the Association “to identify the key concerns of probation boards in relation to trust status and the process of transition, learning from the first wave six”. He and Gerry Marshall had been interviewed that morning as part of this study.

Gerry Marshall said he would be attending a first meeting of the new Chief Officers’ body – ACECOP. He would report back to the Board at its next meeting.

**Action**

12. **Appointment of committee and link members for 2008-09**

Gerry Marshall said that the senior managers had been very appreciative of the positive work done by link members, working groups and committees over the past year.

Copies of a table showing the agreed distribution of duties were tabled. Malcolm Fearn mentioned that Honor Juniper and Michael Day would remain key consultees on communications. He particularly highlighted Honor’s membership of the LCCS National Steering Group.

13. **Probation Association report on the OMNI project (TVPB/P26/2008)**

Ian Menzies-Conacher said that the concerns about the IT expressed in this report echoed those expressed at each meeting of the Audit Committee. They were serious concerns and there seemed to be no solutions. He promised to ensure that the Committee continued to keep a close eye on the issues.

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

**Probation circulars**

The list of probation circulars issued since January 1 was noted.

**Forthcoming meetings**

Next workshop meeting: At Bicester Head Office from 10.30 on 29<sup>th</sup> May.

Next public meeting of the Board: 26 June at 1.30 pm at Reading Crown Court.

There was no other part 1 business.

**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:**

- Minute 15: relates to personal details of individual victims and offenders.
- Minute 16: relates to decisions about financial and planning issues.

The meeting closed at 5.15 p.m.

## THAMES VALLEY PROBATION BOARD

### ACTIONS FROM THE MEETING ON THURSDAY 24 APRIL 2008

<b>Minute</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible</b>	<b>Completion</b>
2	Report to the Board on commitments made in each LAA	Chief Officer	When LAAs have been finalised
2	Report on LAAs outcome and process	Chief Officer	Autumn
2	Advise Malcolm Fearn if able to attend events on 15 July and/or 25 November	All Board Members	ASAP
2	Report to Board on outcome of regional meeting of 30 April	Malcolm Fearn	May 29 workshop
8	Report to the Board on the plan for deploying additional funding	Chief Officer	When available
10	Report on the Stress Action Plan	Lesley Hudson	When completed
11	Report to Board on ACECOP meeting	Chief Officer	May 29 workshop
16	Report to Board on Slough staffing	Lesley Hudson	June meeting

### Actions brought forward from previous meetings

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible</b>	<b>Completion</b>
March	Consider how relevant items from the Intranet can be sent to Board Members in good time	Board Secretary & Fiona Tarrant	ASAP
March	Investigate reported Google problems	Board Secretary	Immediate