

**THAMES VALLEY PROBATION BOARD****MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 26 NOVEMBER 2009  
AT MILTON KEYNES CENTRAL PROBATION OFFICE****COMMENCING AT 1.30 P.M. AND ENDING AT 4.10 P.M.**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Yashpaul Anderson  
 Hirak Chakravarty  
 Michael Day  
 Malcolm Fearn Chair  
 Arif Hussain  
 Honor Juniper  
 Gerry Marshall Chief Officer  
 Ian Menzies-Conacher  
 Michael Nolan  
 Phillip Perlin  
 Sue Seager

**OFFICERS:** Paul Gillbard Director, Offender Management  
 Richard Lawrence-Wilson Board Secretary  
 Sean Quiggin Director, Interventions  
 Anne Whitworth Interim Treasurer

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

Apologies were received from Lesley Hudson and HHJ Zoe Smith.

**2. Welcomes**

Malcolm Fearn welcomed Dr Rosemary Preston representing WOCAMP, who had asked to address the Board on the subject of the Oxford probation office.

He explained that, as on the three previous occasions when WOCAMP representatives had addressed the Board, Dr Preston's address should be confined to about 5 minutes and no questions or discussion would be allowed.

**3. Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest to add to those already on record.

**4. Minutes of the meeting of 17 September 2009 (TVPB/M6/2009)  
Notes of the workshop meeting of 22 October 2009 (TVPB/P71/2009)**

The minutes were agreed and signed by the Chair. The notes were agreed and noted.

**5. Matters arising from the meetings of 17 September and 22 October 2009****Action list – 17 September 2009**

Gerry Marshall explained that the table of risks showing the "risk status" had not yet been circulated to the Board because the definitions of the 4 status descriptors had not yet been fully clarified. He hoped this would be possible at the forthcoming

Audit Committee meeting on 4 December.

***Action continuing***

In the absence of Lesley Hudson the action to check on the procedures for informing recruits of their pension rights and report back was carried forward.

***Action carried forward***

#### **Action list – 22 October 2009**

Richard Lawrence-Wilson said that several of the planned dates of Board meetings in 2010 had proved not to be a good fit with the NOMS financial timetable. He would circulate a revised table of meeting dates for 2010.

***Action***

The revised Terms of Reference for the Audit Committee would be signed off by the Committee at its meeting on 4 December.

***Action***

All other actions from previous meetings had been completed or were covered by later items on the agenda.

#### **6. Chairman's and Chief Officer's introductory remarks**

Malcolm Fearn said that he was pleased to confirm that TVP's revised trust bid had passed the initial assessment with excellent marks in all domains and TVP would now proceed to interview on 11 December. Performance as measured by the IPPF was becoming more solidly green each month, although some LDUs perform better than others and there was still room for improvement and for embedding best practice across the whole TV area.

He would be attending a event for senior leaders convened by Phil Wheatley and would also be going to a communications meeting in the coming week. He undertook to email Board Members with any highlights. Along with several Board Members he had attended the TVP leadership forum on 24 November, which had focused on preparations for the next Offender Management Inspection in April 2010. On Friday 27 November he would be at the graduation ceremony for cohort 10 of the Trainee Probation Officers and he was pleased to confirm that TVP would be taking on all those graduating this year.

Gerry Marshall reported that in addition to being Chair of TVPB, Malcolm Fearn also chairs the charity PACT (Parents and Children Together) which has led (jointly with Thames Valley Partnership) a bid for £420k funding for a project – the Women's Community Resource Centre in Reading – to provide a service to women offenders, prompted by the recommendations of the Corston Report. The project has recently been approved and is one of only 4 nationwide that have been fully funded. The funding is for a period of only 16 months after which continuing funding at a rate of £200k per annum must be found. Gerry Marshall added that the new Chair of the Thames Valley Partnership is Sir Ian Blair, which is likely to raise its profile.

#### **7. Public representations**

Dr Rosemary Preston spoke to the meeting on behalf of WOCAMP and has kindly provided the text of her address, which is attached as an annex to these minutes.

With the Board's agreement the agenda item providing for an oral situation report to be given on the Oxford re-site project was brought forward to enable Dr Preston to hear it and then leave the meeting if she wished.

Malcolm Fearn said he regretted to report that there was no concrete news on any alternative sites. In the period since the developer of Trajan House had ruled out letting it to the probation service, TVP had ensured that the Home Office (HOPG) employed experienced local agents. They had trawled the Oxford property market in great detail. The underlying problem is that development in central Oxford is difficult and the University, colleges and related organisations have a strong appetite for property and tend to take up every building or development opportunity that comes onto the market. Macclesfield House is one example of a building suitable for TVP that has been lost for this reason. Just about everything on the initial list has now been ruled out.

Malcolm Fearn emphasised that it remains essential for TVP to continue to have a probation office serving the Oxford area, with good transport links, located in or near Oxford city centre. The need to replace Albion House is now critically urgent. Pembroke College have offered to extend the lease from April to September 2010 but it may become uninhabitable before then. We are therefore now looking for temporary accommodation, available almost immediately, as well as for permanent premises for the longer term.

Malcolm Fearn repeated his previous undertaking to make a public announcement as soon as any definite information is available.

Dr Preston thanked the Board and withdrew from the meeting.

#### 8. **Trust Bid**

Malcolm Fearn enlarged on his earlier remarks and the Board discussed prospects for the interview on 11 December. A mock interview by members of the regional team and a P A consultant had been arranged for 8 December. Malcolm acknowledged that following feedback on the bid documentation, which had mentioned its tight focus on “answering the questions”, the TVP team should prepare to go ‘off piste’ a little during the interview. Board Members agreed that it will be very important to be forward looking, and not be tempted to spend time commenting on the bidding process or other past difficulties.

Malcolm alerted the Board to three issues mentioned by the assessors, which will be amongst the topics that the interview panel will explore:

- How to achieve substantial savings without affecting front line services
- Reward and recognition at the level of individual staff
- Development of the balanced scorecard.

Malcolm Fearn and Board Members recorded their appreciation of the huge efforts put in by senior managers in the brief period available for rewriting the bid documents. Brian Clark had played an important part, but he would now bow out, as his experience of the bid process in several Areas had not extended to the interview stage.

Malcolm told the Board that Ministers have to approve the creation of a Trust and he therefore did not expect to hear the final result until early in the New Year. He would then set up a Trust Project Board to plan the work required to enable the Trust to come into being on 1 April 2010 with all the powers, tools and documentation that it will need.

Phillip Perlin asked about appointments to the Trust Board. Malcolm said that appointment of Trust Board Members would be on the recommendation of the Trust Chair. He had recently been advised that interviews would be held to identify the

Chair and Chief Executive, presumably in January after the outcome of the bid is known. Trust Board Members will be appointed thereafter.

9. **Performance report April to October 2009** (TVPB/P72/2009)

Sean Quiggin introduced the report, which recorded further improvements and an overall green rating. He focused on remaining challenging areas. He reminded Board Members that local practice was not to use the “amber” rating, as this tends to cause an easing of effort before a target is reached. All targets that are not achieved, by however small a margin, are shown as red and this makes the local report look much redder than it otherwise would.

Sean highlighted the introduction of the generic parole process management indicator and explained the risk it creates for TVP.

Looking ahead to 2010 Sean warned that some elements of the IPPF will change, as they have in past years, continuing progress from targets based on inputs through outputs to outcomes.

The headline re-offending rate across Thames Valley has fallen from 6.42% to 4.03% - an excellent result, but not easily attributed to any particular factors, in a complex situation involving many different agencies.

Success in meeting two priority LAA targets in Reading and Slough will contribute to reward funding earned by those local authorities, and TVP should in theory receive some benefit.

Paul Gillbard said that a most pleasing aspect was that there were no longer any weak LDUs pulling down the overall performance, and no sizeable weak offices. The performance of both West and East Berkshire was strong, and the Slough and Aylesbury offices were doing well.

Members welcomed the continuing improvements in performance. Some of the contributory factors were identified:

- The availability of detailed IPPF statistics has enabled drill-down, diagnosis and action at local level.
- The change to the new DAM arrangements has been a success.
- Case administrators have been integrated within the OM stream.
- The special retention allowance introduced by the Board in some highly pressed areas has given the right signal and has had the intended effect.
- Leadership generally has improved.

Malcolm Fearn summarised this as a success attributable to freedoms, recognition and to good leadership at many different levels.

The Board **noted** the performance report.

10. **Finance report: April to September 2009** (TVPB/P80/2009)

Anne Whitworth presented the table of figures at the half-year point, for the KPIs (key performance indicators) agreed at the October workshop. Picking up the action on her, she said that although other Probation Areas are willing to share financial and other information, differences in accounting treatment and in the breakdowns that are maintained may make useful comparisons difficult. There would also be timing problems.

Malcolm Fearn asked for future reports to show the budget or percentages of budget to enable the Board to see which items were over or under planned levels.

**Action**

Anne Whitworth agreed with Hiram Chakravarty that a series of KPIs for TVP and internal comparisons between LDUs were likely to be more immediately fruitful than benchmarking against other Probation Areas. Gerry Marshall said that work on these issues will be progressed in a "Best Value" context by the new Performance Development Group that is due to be established early in 2010.

Anne Whitworth wound up her report by advising the Board that the latest overview of the financial position at the end of October indicated a slight underspend. She had no doubt that a balanced outturn could be achieved by the end of the year.

The Board **noted** the finance report.

11. **Procedure for review of policies and strategies** (TVPB/P79/2009)

Sean Quiggin introduced the revised paper and accompanying table of policies and strategies, which had been expanded with the addition of columns showing the proposed review body and review dates on the assumption of a three year cycle.

Ian Menzies-Conacher expressed concern that three years might be too long a period. He favoured annual reviews. Sean Quiggin agreed that it might be too long for some policies, but the capacity of TVP management to cope with the workload would be reducing. Other Board Members felt that three years was a reasonable compromise.

Gerry Marshall said that the task was now for each Committee or group, at its next meeting

- to consider each of its batch of policies and decide on the frequency of review;
- to identify whether it could take responsibility for reviewing any of the policies and strategies currently allocated to the full Board;
- to look at the policies allocated for review by other groups to see if it wished to be consulted when these were reviewed.

**Action**

The Board noted that the Audit Committee would be the first to address these actions, on 4 December.

12. **Ministerial announcement of additional funding** (TVPB/P73/2009)

Gerry Marshall said that £3.6M of the £26M announced by Ministers as an additional allocation to Probation was available to the South East Region, to be bid against locally for something new or done differently. It could not be used simply to increase or extend an existing activity.

He emphasised that this was a once-off pulse of funds, which would not be sustained. The prospect for subsequent years remained year-on-year reductions. Therefore these funds cannot be deployed on anything that will need funding into the future. The bid will not detract from the business plan. It will focus on integrated offender management, with a view to working with some non-statutory cases. Extra resources in relation to health and alcohol would be a priority.

13. **TVP Human Resources statistics 2008-09** (TVPB/P77/2009)

In the absence of Lesley Hudson, Gerry Marshall presented the annual booklet of graphs, charts and statistics. Members had found the information interesting, and

made observations about a number of the charts. It was agreed that statistics presented by LDU were very useful.

Sickness data were a focus of interest; the Board was reminded that the Workforce Group takes a close look at these data on a regular basis.

Board Members agreed that trends from year to year would be useful. The thrust of future development should be to move forward from statistics that were interesting towards analysis and trends that would be useful in helping to develop policies and strategies.

Members were asked to send suggestions for next year to Lesley. New ideas will be welcomed.

**Action**

14. **Minutes of the JNCC meeting of 14 September 2009** (TVPB/P74/2009)  
**Minutes of the Health & Safety Committee of 14 October 2009** (TVPB/P75/2009)  
**Minutes of the TVP & Sentencers' Forum of 5 November 2009** (TVPB/P76/2009)

These three sets of minutes were **noted**. Michael Day highlighted the attendance of Roger Hill at the Sentencers' Forum, where his remarks had been of great interest. It had been an excellent meeting which Roger had subsequently mentioned favourably in his letter relating to TVP's Trust bid.

15. **Probation Association: Probation Trusts in Partnership Update No. 1** (TVPB/P81/2009)

The paper was noted.

16. **Diversity Week 2009**

Paul Gillbard reported that it had been decided to have a TVP 'celebrating Diversity week' this year. Whilst it included a series of theatre workshops the majority of activities had been left to teams to come up with themselves. The results had been excellent, with many imaginative events that had genuinely sprung from the diversity that actually exists amongst staff and in the communities we serve. Many teams had organised sessions every day of the week and he felt that the response had been very encouraging and healthy. There will be a report in the staff magazine in February.

17. **Probation Instructions 2009** (TVPB/P78/2009)

The list was **noted**.

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

**Leadership meeting, 24 November**

Board Members who had attended the leadership meeting gave feedback. There was some concern that there had been no coherent corporate message and that the presentations had been aiming low. Malcolm Fearn said that the focus on basic aspects of OM had been deliberate, as the last Inspection had identified that more attention needed to be given to these.

**Offender awards**

Malcolm Fearn mentioned the awards made to offenders who had turned their lives around, which had been presented during the leadership meeting. Board Members wondered whether the awards might usefully be publicised and agreed that this should be mentioned to Fiona Tarrant.

**Environmental strategy for TVP**

Malcolm Fearn reminded the Board that at the September meeting he had asked Sue Seager to develop thoughts on an environmental strategy. Sue Seager said that she felt the time was right for such a development. With greenness now mainstream there was currently a gap. She was sure there would be operational savings as well as reputational benefits to be gained. The first step would be an audit of where TVP is now, and she suggested that a time-limited working group should be established to develop the strategy after April 2010, once Trust status had been achieved. Meanwhile she would welcome further input from Board Members and managers.

**Action**

**DVD on unpaid work**

Gerry Marshall said that a DVD about unpaid work was being produced, to be distributed to all Neighbourhood Action Groups and Police Community Officers. Michael Day agreed to be recorded saying a few words about the magistrate's view on unpaid work.

**Action**

**Forthcoming meetings**

Next workshop meeting: Thursday 10 December, Head Office at 10.30.  
Next public Board meeting: Thursday 21 January 2010, Oxford Town Hall.

**PART 2 (CONFIDENTIAL)**

- 19. There was no confidential business.

The meeting closed at 4.10 p.m.

Signed ..... CHAIR  
Dated: 2010