
ESSEX PROBATION BOARD

MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 28 JULY 2009 AT 10.00AM AT ESSEX LEGAL SERVICES, NEW BRIDGE HOUSE, 60-68 NEW LONDON ROAD, CHELMSFORD C06 3QL

Members Present: Bill Puddicombe (Chair)
Mary Archer (CO)
Peter Wilcock
Martin Bates
Terry Collin
Rob Everitt
Jo Durning (from item 4)

In attendance: Gill Hirst (Director)
Debbie Came (Director)
Shirley Kennerson (Director)

ACTION

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None declared.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Judge Gratwicke, Richard Moore, Roger Lucking, Tim Young, Peter Sheldrake, Carol Mellow, Bernadette Barber, Sue Atkinson, Pete Mangan, Peter Jones and Alex Bamber.

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 22 JUNE 2009

The Minutes of the non-confidential part of the Board meeting held on 22 June 2009 were approved as a true record to be signed by the Chair.

4. MATTERS ARISING

Arising from the Minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2009:

- i) At the June 2009 meeting omitted to note Roger Lucking had offered apologies for March 2009

- meeting.
- ii) The Trust Development Group has held its inaugural meeting. PM
 - iii) Encryption of Board documents has been actioned. There was an issue this time, but this will be addressed for the next meeting.
 - iv) Restricted documents – need to ensure the board report template is corrected. Board members were asked to assume any papers that are included in Part 1 papers are Protected. Need to be more disciplined regarding which papers are presented at which part of the meeting. Classification guidance to be sent to members for information. All to note PM
 - v) Board standing orders have been actioned.
 - vi) Footer has been added to the IPPF.
 - vii) The annual report has been completed.
 - viii) Reduction of reoffending and HR performance figures will be included quarterly.
 - ix) Children and Families policy will be deployed 8 August 2009.
 - x) Complaints Policy will be deployed next week.
 - xi) MAPPA SMB governance proposals – the next meeting is 18 September 2009.
 - xii) Gym equipment has been moved.
 - xiii) Full report on EPAs responsibilities – this is not an agenda item today. This is a significant piece of work and time required – agenda item once complete in October/November 2009.
 - xiv) Offender Transport Developments – Pete Mangan has prepared a report (listed as oral report on the Part 2 agenda), which was sent in an encrypted email but members were unable to open the document and additional copies were not available in the meeting. Carry forward to next meeting. Agenda note Agenda note
 - xv) LDU presentation – due to the numbers present it was agreed to carry this forward to the next meeting.

5. CHIEF OFFICER'S REPORT

Mary Archer presented her report.

EPAs performance is continuing to improve; the pace of improvement needs to be addressed. When the IPPF first quarter report is published EPA need to look at this as there are a number of Areas applying for Trust status and this may affect how comparative performance looks.

The offender management inspection is scheduled for week commencing 30 November 2009.

There was a recent article on the radio where Andrew Bridges talked about Areas employing consultants to prepare for the forthcoming offender management inspection. Board members were assured EPA is not doing this. EPAs approach to the offender management inspection is to achieve a good assessment of the Service offered and to address any actions required as appropriate. The Board want to approach the offender management inspection with a spirit of openness with a look to improve the Service.

Rebalancing of OM3/4 was required as the workload management tool showed high workload; this was based on staff numbers and assessment of risk. Managers had been allocating on the basis of tiering and when this was taken into account rebalancing was required. This was really important in reducing organisation risk. The inspectorate have produced a document that explains what risk means to different organisations and EPA have reviewed our risk categories so they are comparative to other organisations. There is confidence that EPA is sufficiently resourced in offender management.

6. PERFORMANCE

Gill Hirst presented the report for June 2009 based on the Essex Scorecard.

The National Standards trend is still upwards, albeit modest.

Directors in LDU meetings are working hard with managers to look at performance against the National Standards. The trend is currently upwards and there is no evidence to demonstrate a reverse of the trend.

The apparent decline in ETE referrals is due to an external issue that is outside of EPAs control. The Centre has changed the way in which this indicator is measured and EPA is questioning this. The methodology was changed after the target was agreed but before the measurement started. This will be discussed with the Director of Offender Management at the SLA quarterly review meeting.

OASys is the major area that requires attention and the Directors of offender management are addressing this with managers in their forthcoming quarterly reviews and action plans will be implemented where required.

The internal Essex Scorecard is published every month to all staff. A large version of this is displayed in local offices (there were a few months where this was not provided to local offices but this has been addressed). There are also individual staff scorecards.

There a couple of offices who are not achieving the offender survey target – the Chief Officer discussed this with managers at the recent performance management meetings. This target will increase in September 2009 and managers are aware of the importance of achieving this revised target to achieve creditable analysis of the data.

A performance manager has been appointed and commenced employment last week.

7. FINANCE AND RISK

7.1 Quarter 1 Financial Report 09/10

Debbie Came presented her report in which she outlined the financial position to the end of June 2009.

There is an expected underspend of 5%.

The outturn for last year was £389k underspend, less than expected and an adjustment was made.

The Probation Board is 50% profiled due to upfront costs.
Debbie Came will check the profiling for SMT.

DC

8. REPORTS TO THE BOARD

8.1 Sonnex Case

Mary Archer presented her report.

It was observed these cases have become known by the offender's name rather than the victim's.

Chief Officer has a date set to meet with Essex Criminal Justice Board representatives for a workshop to discuss this in relation to Essex.

EPAs staff are well trained to assess risk.

Board members were advised that offender managers make a professional judgement on OASys scores in terms of risk. It was noted OASys does not provide a recommended risk category.

Issues have been identified in the way in which the Police, the Court Service and the Prison Service handled this case.

Communication with courts – in similar circumstances EPA will be requesting clerks do not recommend technical bail. There was a discussion regarding the pressures that magistrates are under and the increasing workload and how this may have affected the decision to grant technical bail in this case.

Within Essex, the responsibility of enforcing warrants lies with Essex Police and there are issues around this. Chief Officer has a meeting scheduled with Essex Police to address these issues, including out of area warrants. There was a discussion questioning if this is this a national issue that needs highlighting at a national level.

Board members support Chief Officer in the attempts to engage other agencies and will provide assistance as required.

Agenda
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Agenda item for next quarter for update.

8.2 EPA's Responsibilities and Potential Liabilities from

Partnership Arrangements

Agreed to carry this forward to a future meeting.

8.3 Accessible Services

Mary Archer presented her report which included revision following an audit.

The Board noted the revisions.

8.4 Offender Management Policy

Shirley Kennerson presented her report.

This revised policy merges the principles of the existing Breach and Compliance Policy and Offender Management Policy.

Board members welcomed this integrated approach.

Page 9 – appendices will be inserted once deployed to staff.

Board agreed to adopt this version.

8.5 Risk Register

Debbie Came presented the Summary Risk Register, which was reviewed by the Audit Committee on 9 July 2009.

The Trust Transition Group will address the pension fund liabilities (Risk 1).

Risk 6 – there was a discussion regarding the terminology and it was agreed to revise this to ‘public confidence in the Service’.

Risk 2 – there are contingency plans in place, however these are the same for other issues. If the pandemic does affect the Service there will be an impact. EPAs biggest risk area is approved premises – there are two offenders infected who are currently in isolation. There is an extensive rota of sessional workers for the hostel; if these became infected then staff from local offices would be drafted in.

Board approved this version for adoption.

8.6 Organisational Risk Management Policy

Debbie Came presented her report.

Board approved this version for adoption.

9. COMMITTEE MEETINGS

9.1 Diversity Committee

The Minutes of the Diversity Committee meeting held on 9 July 2009 were noted.

Rob Everitt feedback that he is always impressed by effort that goes into the impact assessments and would like this message shared with all staff.

GH

9.2 Audit Committee

The Minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 22 June and 9 July 2009 were noted.

9.3 JNCC Meeting

The Minutes of the JNCC Union meeting held on 13 July 2009 were noted.

Agenda item re Trust transition for next meeting.

SA –
Agenda
note

9.4 Health and Safety Meeting

The Minutes of the Health and Safety meeting held on 9 July 2009 were noted.

9.5 Trust Fund Panel Meeting

The Minutes of the Trust Fund Panel meeting held on 9 June 2009 were noted.

10. SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS AND FUTURE PRESENTATIONS

10.1 OASys 4.3.1

Mary Archer, Gill Hirst and Shirley Kennerson provided an oral update.

There is a new version being implemented next week which introduces layered assessment, new scoring on some areas, an option to fast review and a user-friendly option to print reports. This is linked to the specification, benchmarking and

costings initiative.

Managers have all been briefed on the new version and are now in the process of briefing their teams.

The new version has been tested in other Areas. Steria will be available to offer any support during implementation next week.

Requested future agenda item – update on OASys presentation. If the version to be implemented in November includes significant changes, the presentation can be delayed to after implementation.

Agenda
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11. VALUE OF THE PROBATION ASSOCIATION TO THE BOARD

To be discussed in Part 2 of the meeting.

12. REGIONAL TRANSITION BOARD MEETING

Bill Puddicombe reported on the last meeting.

There will not be a shadow board during transition to Trust status.

It was noted Item 2 requires amendment as it states the DOM is responsible for appointments and name of Yvonne Thompson.

If Norfolk and Suffolk are unable to merge there is no anticipated risk to Essex.

The meeting scheduled for 27 July 2009 was cancelled.

13. REPORTS TO THE BOARD FOR INFORMATION PURPOSE ONLY

13.1 Feedback from Meetings

No relevant meetings had been attended by the Board members present.

13.2 Local Government Pension Scheme – Delivering Affordability, Viability and Fairness

Noted.

Requested agenda item for next Audit Committee.

DC –
Agenda

EPA are stakeholders and are required to respond. There will be a wider consultation. The main aspects are to lessen impact, and proposals around employee contribution tariff. EPA will provide a response, which will be informed by discussions at the Audit Committee. Delegated to Audit Committee to action.

note

Audit
Committee

At the recent national finance meeting the lead was unaware of the issues for Probation. EPA need to highlight the issues to ensure they are considered. Concern for EPA is performance will be affected as the budget will be impacted by increasing pension contributions. Need to include the PCA in our preparations to respond (Chas Dowden).

14. URGENT BUSINESS

None.

15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 8 September 2009 at 10 am.

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Chair