

MINUTES OF THE SCOTTISH PRISON SERVICE ADVISORY BOARD MEETING HELD IN THE DUMYAT MEETING ROOM, SPS COLLEGE, POLMONT ON 29 MAY 2024

Present: Ann McKechin, Non-Executive Director and Advisory Board Chair
 Teresa Medhurst, Chief Executive, SPS
 Linda Pollock, Deputy Chief Executive, SPS
 Rachael Blackburn, OCE Administrator - attended virtually (Minutes)
 Sue Brookes, Interim Director of Strategy and Stakeholder Engagement, SPS
 Lynne Clow, Non-Executive Director
 John Evans, Non-Executive Director
 Ian Harley, RMAC Chair and Non-Executive Director
 Adam Jobson, Head of Organisational Development, SPS
 Gerry O'Donnell, Director of Finance, SPS
 Ali Purdie, Interim Director of Operations, SPS
 Gill Stillie, Non-Executive Director
 Lisa Taylor, Head of OCE Branch and Acting Head of Strategy and Planning, SPS
 Stephen Uphill, Non-Executive Director
 Billy Watson, Non-Executive Director

In Attendance: Sarah Angus, Deputy Project Executive, HMP Glasgow
 Declan Walsh, Head of Finance

Introduction and Welcome

1. The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting and referred to several issues that had arisen since the last meeting, including:

- Wishing to formally note the Advisory Board's condolences to family and colleagues of Tom Fox, who sadly passed this month. The Chair expressed her appreciation of Tom's efforts and work over the years with SPS.
- Thanking the Non-Executive Directors for their participation in the self-evaluation exercise which is now complete.
- A special welcome and congratulations to Sarah Angus who will be taking over from Sue Brookes as the new Director of Policy, and to Declan Walsh, new Head of Finance.
- Congratulations to Adam Jobson who had been successful in becoming the new Director for Organisational Development.
- Further congratulations to Andy Hodge and Ian Whitehead, who have been appointed jointly as the new Director of Operations from September.
- Thanks were also extended to Rob Strachan, who is currently seconded to Education Scotland, for his work with the Advisory Board over the last 2 years, noting that Lisa Taylor will be taking on his role in the interim in addition to her current role as Head of Office of the Chief Executive.
- It was highlighted the Terms of Reference review which was to be discussed today would be re-scheduled to a bespoke Teams meeting at a later date due to other business priorities.
- Thanks were extended to Non-Executive Directors for their support in compiling the recent letter sent by the Chair on behalf of the Advisory Board to the Cabinet Secretary.

Apologies for Absence

2. Apologies for absence were received from Ms Lawson and Mr Rose.

Declarations of Interest

3. There were no new declarations of interest.

Draft Minutes of the Advisory Board Meeting Held on 27 March, Action Points and Matters Arising

4. The draft minutes of the meeting held on 27 March were agreed as a true record. The Action Tracker was updated during the discussion, with several items being closed.

5. The Chair noted that the current tracker is becoming lengthy and proposed to remove items 18, 23, 14, 20, 40, 43, 11, 34, 35, 38. Action 36 is still to be completed and Mr Harley undertook to send a photograph to Mr Rose before the next meeting in July.

Action: Ms Lawson

Chief Executive's Update

6. The Chief Executive advised members that:

- Following a considerable increase in the prison population since 29 March, numbers have reached the second highest on record since 2012, prior to the opening of HMP Low Moss.
- Ms Medhurst provided an overview of Deaths in Custody over the period.

7. Members thanked Ms Medhurst for her helpful update.

Prison Population

8. There then followed a detailed discussion on the current high prisoner population and the measures being taken by SG and SPS operational response to mitigate these.

9. Ms Medhurst provided a detailed summary of the current population position, highlighting that between January-December 2023, there was a 10% rise in population. However, since 29 March, SPS has experienced a considerable increase in population rising from 7,977 to a peak of 8,365 in May, placing increasing pressure and risk to the Service and staff.

10. Members were made aware that SPS are continuing to maximise space across the estate, noting that HMPYOI Polmont is at half capacity, and once the young people under 18 years of age in custody are moved, this will provide further spaces for the adult population.

11. A detailed discussion on the current population pressures and operational challenges and risks faced followed. The Chair advised that all Advisory Board members were ready to support Ms Medhurst in identifying next steps to make further notifications to the Cabinet Secretary regarding population capacity if required.

AB(MAY)01/24: Improvement Framework Report: Quarter 4 (including Private Sector Contracts Report)

12. This report provided an integrated account of organisational performance (including review of the Annual Delivery Plan (ADP)) and risk as at the end of Quarter 4 (Q4) of the 2023-24 reporting year.

13. Of the 37 items on the Corporate Annual Delivery Plan, only 2 items ended the year with a 'red' status denoting very limited/no progress made. This represents a substantial volume of complex and organisationally significant work being delivered successfully, but also speaks to a context that became increasingly challenging throughout 2023-24.

14. Ms Taylor noted that the data highlighted the impact of a rising population on system and service delivery. From March, there has been an increase in the number of individuals placed on Talk2Me, increased rates of self-harm and the numbers of individuals placed on Rule 95.

15. Despite the increase in population in the past year, SPS had not seen a matching rise in violent incidents, however, all assault types were up from Q3, except serious prisoner-on-staff.

16. Members noted this paper with thanks to Ms Taylor's team in development of robust performance reporting throughout the year. In addition, staff were commended for the delivery of a range of business deliverables over the course of a very challenging year.

17. An active discussion took place on the response to the data highlighted in the report. Ms Pollock advised that Annual Delivery Plan (ADP) priorities had been shifted in response to rising population, however further discussions will be discussed with EMG, including the new Directors, when in post.

18. The Chair wished to note a decrease in staff absence during this period. This was encouraging, particularly when considering the scale of the challenges faced by staff in establishments. However, she acknowledged that the realistic expectation is that with the continued pressure on staff, SPS will eventually start to see an increase in absences.

19. It was noted that the number of deaths by natural causes has increased significantly. The Board discussed aspects of post-op healthcare, and discharge protocols provided to individuals in custody, noting this may benefit from further discussion with NHS colleagues and relevant Health Boards. Ms Pollock indicated that she would take this forward and provide an update in September. It was also agreed that the Board would benefit from hearing from Prof Towl and senior members of SPS Psychology team once Prof Towl's review of psychology services was completed.

Action: Ms Pollock

AB(MAY)02/24: Financial Update/Budget Monitoring

20. This paper provided an update on the 2023-24 financial position as at 31 March and was noted by members.

21. The Board were advised that the team hit the deadline this week for submission of the annual accounts.

AB(MAY)03/24: People Metrics

22. This paper provided a revised approach to the way in which workforce metrics are reported. In previous years, people metric reports have focused specifically on one set of data in a particular area. From 2024-25, it is proposed to provide a quarterly report that will provide an update on core people metrics and a deep dive into a priority area of focus.

23. This first interactive workforce metrics report contained updates on Workforce Demographic; Organisational Design and Succession Planning; Employee Health and Wellbeing; Enabling Talent and Performance; Culture, Equalities and Inclusion, and Reward and Recognition.

24. Members noted the updates contained within the report and all were in agreement that the presentation and content of the revised report was welcome and provided greater clarity.

AB(MAY)04/24: Reforms to Prison Officers' Hours of Work

25. This paper provided an update on the reduction of the working week following agreement with Trade Unions in January 2024 to reduce the standard contractual working week from 37 to 35 hours from 1 December 2024 without a reduction in pay. Mr Jobson provided an overview of the paper which members noted with thanks.

26. It was requested that Mr Jobson provide an update to members on this issue for discussion in January 2025.

Action: Mr Jobson

AB(MAY)05/24: Young People's Strategy

27. This paper provided Advisory Board members with an update on the Young People's Strategy (YPS).

28. With its central premise to help young people in custody to prepare for a positive future, the 'Vision for Young People in Custody' has guided work at both a strategic and local level since initial publication in 2014 and its subsequent refresh in 2021. Considerable progress has been made in implementing and embedding the Vision, including the development and use of Quality Indicators, professional development for staff and actions to support young people's mental health and wellbeing.

29. The Executive Management Group (EMG) had recently agreed to commission a literature review of the needs of people in custody aged 18-under 26 (on the proviso it was funded from within the existing budget); and to engage with SG colleagues about the potential for a new model of custody for young people 18-under 26.

30. Members noted the contents of the paper.

31. Ms Brooke sought advice from members on approaching the next steps in the project which included suggestions for stakeholder engagement and learning from other systems such as Children's Hearings. It was agreed a key concern is support available to vulnerable young people on release.

RMAC Chair's Verbal Report

32. Mr Harley advised that RMAC had met on 27 March, and provided the following updates:

- The Annual Audit Plan was presented by Audit Scotland, with focus on non-financial areas of their audit, including ex-gratia payments, valuation and provisions, financial stability, IT planning and cyber security.
- In relation to the risk management progress report, Mr Harley advised that HR and Finance have yet to adopt the template, but it was hoped they would do so shortly. Additionally, it was agreed that a Major Projects section would be included in subsequent risk update papers.
- A "Deep Dive" on Data and Evidence Risk has been undertaken.
- Internal Audit provided their Progress Update and Annual Plan. It has been agreed that where recommendations are not accepted, the risk must be formally accepted.
- The revised Terms of Reference were agreed and going forward, RMAC minutes will be made available on SPS' website.

33. Members thanked Mr Harley for this update.

Major Projects Management Group (MPMG) Verbal Update

34. Mr Evans advised that MPMG had met on 30 April, and provided the following updates:

- HR Transformation: there are up-and-coming milestones around HR and the payroll system. There will be dummy pay runs expected to take place for switch over in October. The project is facing additional budget pressures due to the cost of the pension interface and colleagues are currently looking to extend the project beyond the end of 2024-25.

- The Learning and Development Strategy has been brought forward and will return to EMG in due course.

35. Members thanked Mr Evans for this update.

Any Other Business

36. Members extended their good wishes to Ms Brookes on her upcoming retirement and thanked her for her dedicated services to SPS. There was no further business discussed.

Draft Agenda for July 2024 Meeting

37. The agenda for the next meeting was agreed as drafted.

Action: Ms Lawson

Date of Next Meeting

38. The next Advisory Board meeting will be held on Wednesday 31 July from 1300-1630hrs in the Dumyat Meeting Room, SPS College, Polmont.

**Advisory Board Secretariat
May 2024**