

**MINUTES OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 6th &
WEDNESDAY 7th DECEMBER 2005**

Present:

Sir Peter Lloyd	- President, National Council
Mrs Muriel Blythman	- North East, Yorkshire & Humberside
Mrs Sheila Royle	- North West
Mr Simon Nieboer	- South West
Mr David Graham	- Eastern
Mrs Sue Nicholas	- East Midlands
Mrs Jill Berliand	- Kent, Sussex and Surrey
Mr Richard Gully	-Thames Valley, Hampshire & Isle of Wight, London
Mrs Jo Jenkins	- Wales & West Midlands
Mr Michael Wharton	- Immigration Removal Centres

In attendance:

Mr Peter Booth	- Immigration Removal Centres (elect)
Mrs Jane King	- Kent, Surrey and Sussex (elect)
Mr John Weightman	- North East, Yorkshire & Humberside (elect)
Mr Norman McLean	- Head of the IMB Secretariat
Mr Steve Kilbey	- Deputy Head of the IMB Secretariat
Miss Anne-Marie Stephens (Secretary)	- IMB Secretariat

Item 1 – Apologies for Absence

1.1. No apologies for absence were received. The Chairman welcomed Jane King, John Weightman and Peter Booth who will be joining the National Council from January 2006 and who were attending the meeting as part of the handover process.

Item 2 – Minutes of the Previous Meeting (1/2 November 2005)

2.1 The minutes of the previous meeting had been circulated and approved via e-mail and issued to Boards under cover of DC 20/05 and IMM 14/05.

Item 3 – Presentation on the Training Review

3.1 Bill Welstead and Chris Lock of Cornwell Consultants gave a presentation on the Training Review. The main conclusions were that training is critical for success;

emphasis in national training should shift from information transfer to interpersonal and team working skills; several pathways for transferring and updating specialist knowledge need to be created; development of the overall capacity of each Board is critical; training policies that are in place seem sound but must be implemented at local level; local training, particularly induction, has to be made to work; and the National Council should own the training strategy.

ACTION: Simon Nieboer and Norman McLean to prepare a paper identifying key issues arising out of the Training Review that require further work, including proposals for a training strategy group.

Item 4 – National Council stock-take 2005

4.1 The Council's achievements during 2005 were reviewed, in particular the establishment of working groups on communications and diversity and the formation of the Care Team and Discipline Panel pool all of which harness the skills and knowledge of IMB members outside the National Council.

Item 5 – Team Performance Review

5.1 Following a discussion focussing on its own organisation and working practices, the Council agreed that much of its future work over the next two or three years will arise out of its working groups and the Training Review although there will always be an ongoing requirement for input into the Annual Conference, IMB News, and conduct and discipline cases.

ACTION: Sir Peter Lloyd to contact all members of the NC to discuss areas of special interest and inter-faces.

5.2 There was some concern over the implications of overcrowding and whether this was being coordinated adequately at a national level by the National Council. Sir Peter would like to write again to the Secretary of State with evidence from areas where prisons are particularly feeling the strain.

ACTION: National Council members to provide Sir Peter with evidence where available.

Item 6 – Annual Reports

6.1 Sir Peter explained that the draft annual report template had been issued to 23 Boards as part of a pilot study and 22 of those Boards had recently taken part in a telephone survey conducted by Sir Peter, Jill Berliand and Anne-Marie Stephens to canvas their views about the report writing process. The main findings were that report-writing is a considerable burden on Chairs and acts as a deterrent for some members who may otherwise consider putting themselves forward for Chair. There is a lack of clarity as to what should go into reports. Some Boards commence the report-writing process quite late in the reporting year and rely on the various departments within the prison to provide information on the year's activities for the Board's report. Many Boards

question the time and effort spent preparing reports that do not receive a timely response from the Minister and/or generates a response that is identical to the one provided by the Governor some months before.

6.2 Some of the ideas and issues to come out of the phone survey included ensuring that Ministers are told only what is wrong or what is exceptionally good within each prison; issues raised should be properly addressed to those who are responsible for them and with a clear indication of the impact they are having on prisoners; the inclusion of certain subjects in the report should be mandatory; the appropriateness of including issues for local or staff consumption within the report; the Board's collective responsibility for the report; and format and timing of the ministerial response.

6.3 Peer feedback will have an influence on the way Boards prepare their report and this will be the subject of a future discussion.

ACTION: Sir Peter Lloyd will in due course allocate responsibility for annual reports to a member of the NC.

Item 7 – Extending the Remit of IMBs to Immigration Holding Rooms

7.1 The programme of visits to Holding Rooms had shown clearly that these sites require some form of independent monitoring and that IMBs have the necessary skills and knowledge to undertake this role. The Project Group, which met at the end of November, considered how such monitoring might be organised and agreed that there is a need for dedicated Boards to undertake this work. Three Boards were proposed—one each in the North & Midlands, the South East and in London, with centres in Scotland perhaps being monitored under the auspices of the Dungavel IMB. It was suggested that Heathrow might warrant its own dedicated Board and further consideration will be given to this. The IMB Secretariat and IND will commence discussions on funding following which proposals will be put to Ministers for approval.

Item 8 – Diversity Working Group

8.1 Representatives of the Diversity Working Group met the Minister on the 6th December. The Minister was welcoming but challenging as were the Working Group members. She explained that she wanted the proposals for a probationary period revisited to ensure they were diversity-friendly.

8.2 The working group is also finalising a diversity action plan.

ACTION: Norman McLean to review the probationary procedures in the light of the Minister's concerns.

Item 9 – Communications Working Group

9.1 Meetings of the Communications Working Group have been scheduled through to the middle of next year. In the meantime:

- Articles on the IMB have appeared in Kent Life, Surrey Life, Sussex Life and Yorkshire Life.
- Coverage in the national media and in the specialised press, in particular black and minority ethnic publications, is being followed up.
- A draft press release has been prepared for Boards to use in the event of chair/vice chair elections with a view to obtaining coverage in the local press.
- The draft key messages have been refined into a set that can be used internally and externally and these will be issued to Boards shortly. All except one (Preparing Prisoners for Release) are applicable in both IRCs and prisons.
- Examples of FAQ (frequently asked questions) are now being sought for inclusion in the public relations toolkit that has been developed for Boards.
- The Working Group is looking at how IMBs might benefit from corporate social responsibility initiatives and is considering ways in which the Minister might assist in raising awareness within the business community.
- Planning for the 2006 IMB conference will commence in January.
- The Communications Working Group will liaise with the Diversity Working Group over new leaflets and posters.

Item 10 – Handbook Working Group

10.1 The reference book is nearing completion and will shortly be sent for printing. A copy of the reference book will also be available on the IMB website from the day of publication. It is hoped that the Home Secretary will agree to provide a foreword to the reference book. A standing editorial committee will review the contents of the reference book three times a year and the website version will be updated as and when required. The Pocket Book should be completed early in 2006.

Item 11 – New Chairs Course

11.1 November's course had been attended by an impressive array of new chairs who had been very willing to absorb information and advice to take back to their Boards.

Item 12 – Next Year's National Council Meetings

12.1 The dates of next year's NC meetings were listed in paper NC 15/3. Alternate meetings will continue to be held "on the road" to provide an opportunity for chairs and NC representatives to meet and exchange views and information. The first meeting of 2006, in February, will be held in Ashley House.

ACTION: Anne-Marie Stephens to draw up a schedule for "on the road" meetings.

Item 13 – Secretariat Report

13.1 In addition to the meetings and engagements listed in Paper 15/4 Norman McLean had met with the Minister on 29th November to discuss diversity issues and the proposed

probationary period. Interviews for the Discipline Panel pool had been held in November and 10 appointments made out of a strong field of candidates.

Item 14- Matters Arising

The following actions were agreed.

ACTION: (Item 9.2 – Training course take up rates) NC representatives to take up issue of non-attendance with chairs at area meetings.

ACTION: (Item 9.2 – Training course take up rates) Steve Kilbey to send data on course take up rates to new NC members.

ACTION: (Item 13.2 – PSOs/PSIs) Steve Kilbey to take forward.

Item 15 – Any Other Business

15.1 Michael Wharton reminded the Council to send representatives to next year's Chaplain's Conference and Lay Observers' Conference.

15.2 Sheila Royle reported that she had received a response from Security Policy Group regarding the review of PSO 1700 and the use of body belts. Although the National Council's recommendations appear to have been accepted the documents will be examined carefully to ensure IMB concerns and requirements have been addressed.

15.3 Steve Kilbey issued:

- a report on the reasons given in the exit questionnaires by those who had left IMBs;
- statistics on conduct and discipline cases;
- reports from the secretariat staff who had attended the Mubarek Inquiry seminars.

ACTION: Steve Kilbey to issue to the NC reports from IMB members who attended the Mubarek Inquiry seminars.

15.4 The Chairman thanked Jill Berliand, Muriel Blythman and Michael Wharton for their enthusiasm and hard work over the past two years and wished them well with their continuing Board duties.

Item 16 – Date of next meeting

16.1 The next meeting will be held in Ashley House on 7th and 8th February 2006.

December 2005