

MINUTES OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL (NC) MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 6 FEBRUARY 2008

Present:

Dr Peter Selby (PS)	- President, National Council.
John Weightman (JohnW)	- North East, Yorkshire & Humberside
Mike Davis (MD)	- North West
Richard Brown (RB)	- South West
Sue Simkin (SS)	- Eastern
Barbara Bradbury (BB)	- Wales and West Midlands
Lesley Harvey (LH)	-Thames Valley, Hampshire & Isle of Wight, London
Jane Wright (JaneW)	- East Midlands
Jane King (JK)	- Kent, Sussex and Surrey
Peter Booth (PB)	- Immigration Removal Centres
Dencer Brown (DB)	- Co-opted for Diversity
Steve Reeves (SR)	- Co-opted for Training
In attendance:	
Norman McLean (NM)	- Head of the IMB Secretariat
Steve Kilbey (SK)	- Deputy Head of the IMB Secretariat
Nigel Mulcaster (Acting Secretary)	- IMB Secretariat

Action

Item 1 – Apologies for Absence

1.1 No apologies for absence were received. The NC took the opportunity to convey their best wishes to Anne-Marie Stephens.

Item 2 – Minutes of the Previous Meeting (5 December 2007)

2.1 The minutes of the previous meeting have been circulated and approved via e-mail and issued to Boards under cover of DC 01/08 and IMM 01/08 on 7 January 2008.

Item 3 – Matters Arising- Update on Actions (Paper 1-Feb/08) and Business Plan (Paper 2-Feb/08)

3.1 Paper 1-Feb/08 was noted and the following items updated:-

- *May 2007, Update Reports, Prison Rules* – it was agreed that SS, JohnW and PB will arrange a meeting with NM at the April meeting of the NC to discuss proposed changes. A summary of the proposed changes will then be presented for approval at the May meeting.
- *July 2007, Item 4, Inter Board Exchange* – PS noted that there seemed to be a lack of interest in pushing this work forward and asked that if any members

SS, JohnW,
PB & NM

	<p>of the NC were particularly interested in taking on responsibility for the subject to let him know.</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> September 2007, Item 13, Issues Arising from Constituency Meeting, IMB Clerks Working Group – SK reported that a survey had been conducted approximately two years ago to establish how satisfied Board Chairs were with the provision of Clerks. It was agreed that rather than conduct a fresh survey, SK would circulate the results of the original survey to all members of the NC. 	SK
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> November 2007, Item 6, Appointment of ex-offenders – NM explained that new legislation which is set to be introduced might require all those working with vulnerable people to obtain CRB clearance. Under these plans, prisoners would be classified as vulnerable people with the result that all IMB members would require such clearance. PS asked that NM provide a timetable of how this would be undertaken for discussion at the April meeting of the NC. Consideration would also need to be given to whether or not it would be appropriate to see if the clearances could be handled by the Prison Service. 	NM
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> November 2007, Item 10, Delays in payment of expenses – NM reported that discussions were ongoing within the Secretariat on whether or not it would be possible to acknowledge all expenses claims in view of the pressure of work. He confirmed that, as a first step, the Finance Officer would be asked to acknowledge the receipt of expenses from NC members. 	NM
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> December 2007, Item 5, Industrial Action – the draft DC was sent to Phil Wheatley, Lin Homer and Colin Moses on 23 January for information and will be issued shortly to Boards. (Secretary's Note: this was issued as DC 05/08 and IMM 04/08 on 14 February). 	
3.2	<p>It was noted that several items might need to be removed from Paper 1 – Feb/08 because of changes in personnel, and circumstances, and PS agreed to advise Nigel Mulcaster which items should be removed.</p>	PS
3.3	<p>Paper 2-Feb/08 (Business Plan) was noted. NM explained that the Business Plan for the next financial year would be presented at the April meeting of the NC. He envisaged it being a shorter, more coherent and more focused document which he hoped would be looked at more often at NC meetings and be updated more regularly. NM and PS agreed to discuss the Business Plan in advance of the April meeting.</p>	NM & PS
<p><u>Item 4 – Programme of the Meeting</u></p>		
4.1	<p>PS reported that he had found it useful to attend the Constituency Meeting the previous day. He expressed the view that it would be useful for members to present items of particular note from that particular meeting, in order that there could be a record of what had been discussed. NC members agreed</p>	

that this would be worthwhile, with the proviso that more sensitive information was not recorded. (But see also paragraph 9.1).

Item 5 – Members to share issues and experiences from institutions and areas of concern, followed by evaluation of implications

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| 5.1 | PB reported that Oakington IRC had been due to close over a year ago but that this had still not happened and it was unclear if and when it would. The result of this uncertainty was that material improvements had not been made. The Chair of the Board had raised the issue at meetings of the IRC Forum, in the presence of senior managers from the BIA, but no action appeared to have been taken to improve the situation. PS asked for PB to consult with his colleagues on the Forum about how they would like to pursue this further; PS indicated that he would be happy to write to the Minister about this issue. | PB |
| 5.2 | It was highlighted that the role of the NC to provide leadership to Boards involved it formulating 'lines to take' on certain subjects, such as the proposed introduction of 'Titan' prisons and the publication of the Corston Report, which could then be made known to the media. It was agreed that it was appropriate for the NC to undertake this role on behalf of IMBs as a whole, since members had been elected to represent individual Boards. | |
| 5.3 | It was reported that there was uncertainty amongst Boards to whom Annual Reports should be addressed following the Secretariat's move to the Ministry of Justice. NM undertook to ensure that the prison IMBs Annual Report template did not refer to the Home Secretary and, if it did, to ensure that the necessary amendment was made. On the subject of Annual Reports, PS stressed that as part of the analysis of Annual Reports which is now being undertaken in the Secretariat, it was important that significant issues which were not referred to by Boards were also recorded; SK agreed to ensure that this was the case. PS hoped that, in due course, NC members would be able to ask the member of staff in the Secretariat who has responsibility for handling Annual Reports, for statistical information about their regions or areas of responsibility. | NM

SK |
| 5.4 | JohnW reported that Subutex is not included in Key Performance Targets at the moment but will be from March or April; this might lead the figures to give a misleading impression that drug use in establishments had increased dramatically. | |
| 5.5 | It was noted that 'fish knives' had been issued to IMB members at an establishment. It was agreed that a DC and IMM should be issued to stress that Board members should not carry such implements. | NM |
| 5.6 | It had been suggested that GSL had a limit on the amount of petrol it was contracted to use in a year, with the result that the number of prisoner transfers had been reduced. It was agreed that a letter should be written to PECS to seek clarification on this. | PS |

- 5.7 Another area of concern was the treatment of elderly and/or disabled prisoners and BB undertook to look into the Prison Service's policy with regard to elderly prisoners and to report back. Also of concern was the lack of provision of sex-offender treatment programmes for under 18s.

BB

Item 6 – Objectives, priorities and patterns of working (Paper 3 – Feb/08)

- 6.1 Paper 3 – Feb/08, a SWOT analysis of the NC, was noted and discussed. The issue of leadership of Boards emerged during the discussion, with members reporting that it seemed that some Board members had a tendency to look to the Secretariat for leadership, rather than to the NC. NM emphasised that the Secretariat sought only to give guidance to Boards, and not to lead, but that it was understandable that there might be confusion in the minds of members. He agreed to look into the possibility of the roles of the NC and Secretariat being clarified on every training course. PS stated that he would look again at the document from time to time and amend it as necessary.

NM

- 6.2 PS asked members of the NC to focus on which issues they would particularly like the NC to concentrate on. Responses included:

- Mental Health issues
- The provision of Resettlement initiatives
- Population pressures
- The specific needs of prisoners in terms of their gender, age and ethnicity
- Foreign National prisoners and their continued detention after expiry of their sentence
- Raising the profile of IMBs
- Strategic issues
- Training of Board members

Item 7 – Ratification of roles and unallocated functions (Paper 4 – Feb/08)

- 7.1 Paper 4 – Feb/08 was discussed. It was noted that 1 (b) of the paper should be amended to reflect that some members of the NC do come from Cat B establishments. JaneW highlighted that her work with HMIP on property issues had not been allocated; she advised that she would speak to members of the group and report back to PS whether she wishes to continue with this responsibility or if it will need to be reallocated. The roles and responsibilities as set out in Paper 4 – Feb/08 were agreed.

JW

- 7.2 It was noted that there was a need for the NC to take particular notice of issues affecting those estates which do not have representatives on the NC, such as the High Security estate. It was also noted that responsibilities had not been broken down to the extent which they had been previously; PS explained that this was not an attempt to prevent members from dealing with

these subjects but rather to keep the meetings to an acceptable length.

Item 8 – Board roles for new members during probationary year (Paper 5 – Feb/08)

- 8.1 The National Council was invited to consider adopting a policy which prevented IMB members from being elected to, or appointed to, the posts of Chair, Vice Chair or Board Development Officer whilst they were on probation. Whilst it was appreciated that some new members learn very quickly, it appeared to be inappropriate for a member to be elected during their probationary period, when they would end up having to assess their own suitability for appointment as an IMB member. The NC agreed that in principle such members should not be appointed to these posts but it was felt that there might be situations where it was unavoidable. It was agreed that in these exceptional circumstances the confirmation of a member's appointment would be brought forward if agreed by NM, SR and the NC Area Representative.

Item 9 – Role of and items from 'constituency' meeting

- 9.1 PS explained that he considered there was a need for some thought to be given to the role of constituency meetings since he was not convinced of the necessity of having two separate meetings. He highlighted that if the constituency meetings were ended, it would ensure that not all NC meetings would need to be residential. Some members expressed the view that the constituency meeting provided a useful opportunity to discuss more parochial issues and for members to share experiences. PS felt that this needed careful consideration and agreed to draw up proposals to be discussed at the April meeting.
- 9.2 Whether or not NC members should continue to produce diary, constituency and areas of responsibility reports was discussed. PS stated that he did not want the production of such reports to be burdensome but that he was content for the practice to continue as long as the total reports from each member did not cover more than two sides of A4. These reports should be received in time to be circulated with the other NC papers.
- 9.3 The Secretariat Report, which is circulated in advance of every meeting, was also discussed. It was agreed that rather than providing a diary report, NM would set out what he considered to be the most important issues which had arisen between meetings.

PS

NM

10 – Secretariat report and issues (Paper 6 – Feb/08)

- 10.1 JK reported that at the constituency meeting some members had expressed the view that the website did not reflect well on IMBs and that they wished it

- to be completely redesigned. The other concern was ensuring that the website was regularly updated. NM reported that he was satisfied that the website was updated regularly since the appointment of a new member of staff and also that other members of the Secretariat had been trained in how to perform this task. NM confirmed he was prepared to look into the feasibility of paying a specialist to redesign the site but that there were limitations in what could be achieved because of Home Office/Ministry of Justice restrictions; the overall cost could be between £10,000-£20,000 which would impact on other areas of spending; he did not want to spend a large sum of money only to find that the quality of the website then slipped back afterwards. NM agreed to report back at the April meeting. NM
- 10.2 NM reported that revised guidance on how to resolve conflicts on Boards would be submitted for approval at the April meeting. PS indicated that he would like to meet with the Care Team and NM agreed to look into arranging this. NM

11 – Any Other Business

- 11.1 PS asked about the possibility of arranging a meeting with the Chairs of all Boards in the next financial year. NM
- 11.2 JK reported that the press event for PS's appointment as President of the NC will take place on 27 February 2008 at Holloway. Invitations will be issued shortly and a press pack will be made available to all those attending.
- 11.3 NM confirmed that he would email SS about Deportation with Assurances, setting out suggested criteria for a sift of the applications received, by 11 February. NM
- 11.4 Expenses of Trainers: SR reported that this issue was not brought to the meeting because the process of appointing a Lead Tutor was still ongoing and it was felt that he or she should be involved in this work.

Item 12 – Date of Next Meeting

- 12.1 The next meeting will be held on 3 and 4 April 2008 at the Royal York Hotel.

February 2008