

**MINUTES: BOARD MEETING**  
**23 February 2026, RMA Office, Paisley**

**Present**

Dr Geraldine O'Hare – Convener  
Mr Jim Farish  
Mr James Maybee  
Mr Stephen McAllister  
Dr Alain Zysset  
Prof Kieran McCartan (via MS Teams)

**In Attendance**

Mr Paul Keoghan, Director Corporate Services  
Mr Geoff Tordzro-Taylor, Head of Research & Development  
Ms Lauren McClintock, OLR Team Manager  
Mr Edward Kotrys, Head of Effective Practice  
Mrs Sophie Farnell, Finance and Governance Lead (Minute Taker)  
Miss Holli Anderson, Researcher  
Mr Sam Conway, Researcher  
Dr Elaine Ferguson, Policy Lead – Paper 1158 only  
Mr Graeme MacMillan, Policy & Practice Lead – Paper 1159 only

**Welcome**

1. The Convener called the meeting to order at 09:45am and welcomed all present.

**Apologies**

2. The Convener noted apologies from Mr Mark McSherry.

**Declarations of Interest**

3. The Board noted no declarations of interest.

**Approval of Previous Minutes**

4. The Board reviewed and approved the minutes from 17 November 2025 as a fair and accurate reflection of the meeting.

**Matters Arising**

5. The Board noted all completed actions with specific updates on those noted below.
6. The Board noted an update on action 20.2 (11/25) regarding Register of Interest forms. These are completed annually as part of the Board appraisal process in April.

7. The Board noted progress on action 13.1 (10/25) regarding accreditation of Assessors. This will be given further consideration as part of the ongoing recruitment process.
8. Action 15.3 (10/25) relating to monitoring of the impact of the new Sexual Offences Court on OLR numbers is now categorised as Business as Usual.

## **Agenda Items**

### **9. Interim Chief Executive Update – Board Paper 1155**

- 9.1. The Interim Chief Executive (ICE) provided an update to the Board advising that on 1 December, the RMA appointed an Interim Chief Executive and Accountable Officer. Both Internal and External Auditors have been informed of this change and audit planning for 26/27 is unaffected.
- 9.2. The ICE updated the Board on recent attendance at various meetings and events including the Sponsorship Meeting, a Scottish Human Rights Council (SHRC) event at Scottish Parliament, Criminal Justice Board and a meeting with the Deputy Director.
- 9.3. The Board noted the Interim Chief Executive updates.

### **10. Convener Update – Verbal**

- 10.1. The Convener reported to the Board on regular contact with the ICE and ongoing meetings with Scottish Government.
- 10.2. The Convener reported that Board interviews will begin next Monday. A high volume of applications has been received however some of those were relating to Corporate Risk Management so not for consideration.
- 10.3. The Convener mentioned the Criminal Justice Social Work conference in June which will be attended by at least one Board member. The ICE confirmed, in addition to staff attending, the RMA have also acquired a stand at the conference.
- 10.4. The Convener reported that Board appraisal and review of Board effectiveness is due.
- 10.5. The Convener thanked the Heads of Department for their update papers which are very welcome and detailed. The Board agreed future update papers from the Heads of Department need only contain headline information.
- 10.6. The invitation for employees to attend Board meetings was further encouraged and it was confirmed that invitations have been extended to staff for the coming year.
- 10.7. The Convener suggested a Board Development Day be planned for September when newly appointed members will hopefully be in post.  
**Action: FGL**
- 10.8. The Convener suggested a paper from the outgoing Board member would be welcomed with recommendations for possible improvements.  
**Action: Outgoing Board Member**

- 10.9. The Convener advised of the imminent appointment of a new Chief Executive for SPS and would write a letter when details are published.

**Action: Convener**

- 10.10. The Board noted the Convener's verbal update.

#### **11. Head of OLR Update – Board Paper 1156**

- 11.1. The Head of OLR (HOLR) updated the Board on recruitment, an overview of OLR key performance indicators, Assessor recruitment, the Serious Incident Review process and attendance at a meeting with SHRC at which further engagement was agreed.

**Action: HOLR**

- 11.2. The Head of OLR provided an update on the assessor application process and confirmed that there are seventeen assessors currently in post.

- 11.3. The Board noted the update from the HOLR.

#### **12. Head of Effective Practice Update – Board Paper 1157**

- 12.1. The Head of Effective Practice (HEP) updated the Board on attendance at the Criminal Justice Board, attendance at Parole & Social Work Scotland Strategic Oversight Group and attendance at the Multi-Agency Prison Population Taskforce.

- 12.2. The Members commented on the amount of training noted in the report and queried who delivered it. The HEP advised there are five team members delivering training and the current development of online training will widen access.

- 12.3. The HEP advised that data is used in the approach to delivering social work training including linking with Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) datasets to inform the most beneficial attendees. The impact will be evident across Home Detention Curfew (HDC) and the First Grant of Temporary Release (FGTR) and will have a positive impact upon RMPs for those in the community.

- 12.4. Members queried how the RMA is fulfilling the duty of providing training as a legislative requirement. The HEP advised that there are thirty Local Authorities requiring qualified people. In addition to in person training, the online training offer is the strategic approach to reach more people in the justice arena.

- 12.5. The Board noted the update from HEP.

#### **13. Sentencing and Penal Policy Commission Report – Board Paper 1158**

Dr Elaine Ferguson, Policy Lead joined the meeting.

- 13.1. The Policy Lead advised the Board of the publication of the Sentencing and Penal Policy Commission (SPPC) report, the Scottish Government's response, and implications for the RMA.

- 13.2. Members discussed the report, challenges and what the implications mean for the RMA

and wider justice sector. Members agreed that it is essential to voice the RMA perspective to influence policy and requested the SMT produce a report noting the RMA's view on the impact of each recommendation for the next Board meeting.

**Action: SMT**

13.3. The Members discussed the implications of a new government administration and requested a paper led discussion be scheduled for the next Board meeting.

**Action: ICE**

13.4. The Convener is content for the RMA statement to be released.

13.5. Members noted the Sentencing and Penal Policy Commission Report.

## **14. Proposed changes to the automatic release point for eligible short-term sentenced individuals – Board Paper 1159**

Mr Graeme MacMillan, Policy & Practice Lead joined the meeting.

14.1. The Policy & Practice Lead updated the Board in relation to the RMA's response to the Scottish Government's consultation on proposals to change the point at which short-term sentenced individuals are automatically released from custody.

14.2. The Board acknowledged the tight timescale for the report and expressed thanks to the Effective Practice Team for the timely response.

14.3. The Policy & Practice Lead provided a summary of the report. Most individuals are released after serving 40% of sentence (excludes those convicted of domestic abuse and sexual offences). The proposal is a reduction to 30% of the sentence served.

14.4. Members discussed the challenges and concerns of the RMA and requested a formal response to the report be drafted for publication.

**Action: HEP**

14.5. Members noted the proposed changes to the paper on the automatic release point for eligible short-term sentenced individuals.

## **15. Head of Research and Development Update**

15.1. The Head of Research and Development (HRD) updated the Board on SAFERR, RATED and recent research workstreams including presentation of the Psychopathy report at various conferences.

15.2. Members mentioned the Academy for Social Justice online training arm of HMPSS (England/Wales) are ambassadors of RMA so will promote our work.

15.3. The Board noted the update from HRD.

## **16. Quarterly Business Plan Performance Report – Board Paper 1161**

16.1. The ICE presented the Quarterly Business Plan Performance Report to the Board

updating progress of strategic and operational work.

16.2. Members were informed the 2025-26 business plan contains 36 objectives. 25 objectives are categorised as High confidence of completion and 9 are categorised as Medium. As of Q3, two objectives have been marked as Low.

16.3. The Board noted the Quarterly Business Plan Performance Report.

#### **17. Quarterly Financial Performance Report – Board Paper 1162**

17.1. The FGL presented the Quarterly Financial Performance Report advising of the key issues likely to affect the expected financial position at year end. The FGL confirmed total grant funding for 2025/26 is £2,473,000 and the current financial forecast indicates an underspend of £97,000.

17.2. The Board noted the update on the Quarterly Financial Performance Report.

#### **18. Human Resource Performance Report – Board Paper 1163**

18.1. The FGL presented the Human Resource Performance Report to the Board updating on activity and key performance indicators for Q3.

18.2. The FGL confirmed the 2025-26 pay award was implemented in the November pay, employees have been reminded of the maximum carry over amount for Annual Leave, and sickness levels are 2.8% which is below the public sector national average.

18.3. The Board noted the update on the Human Resource Performance Report.

#### **19. Data Breach Report – Board Paper 1164**

19.1. The FGL advised the Board of data breach activity in January 2026 advising that there were two data breaches reported.

19.2. Members request to be kept informed of all data breaches when they occur.

19.3. Members noted the Data Breach Report.

**Prof K McCartan left the meeting.**

#### **20. Sponsorship Framework Agreement Review – Board Paper 1170**

20.1. The ICE presented the Sponsorship Framework Agreement Review to the Board requesting approval of the proposed amendments.

20.2. The Board **approved** the amendments made to the Sponsorship Framework Agreement Review and noted the agreement will now be submitted to Scottish Government for final approval.

**Action: ICE**

## 21. Business Plan 2026-27 – Board Paper 1165

21.1. The ICE presented the Business Plan 2026-27 for approval advising that the plan contains 33 objectives compared to 36 objectives in 2025-26. Fifteen objectives are strategic and eighteen are operational. The ICE confirmed an uplift in funding has been considered as part of the process.

21.2. Members discussed the high number of working groups listed and advised that attendance should be carefully considered to ensure attendance is necessary and impactful.

**Action: SMT**

21.3. The Board approved the Business Plan 2026-27.

## 22. Annual Financial Budget – Board Paper 1166

22.1. The ICE presented the Financial Budget for 2026-27 for approval and advised Scottish Government confirmed the RMA's budget is set to increase by £133,000 to a total grant in aid of £2,601,000. The ICE highlighted the budget includes a 2.5% (£56,000) vacancy target and represents a possible overspend risk.

22.2. The Board discussed the risks arising from loss of temporary staff and approved the extension of temporary contracts to the end of 26/27. The Board also requested a paper on permanent workforce plans be presented at the next meeting.

**Action: SMT**

22.3. The Board approved the annual financial budget for 2026-27.

## 23. Medium Term Financial Forecast – Board Paper 1167

23.1. The ICE advised members purpose of the Medium-Term Financial Forecast is to ensure the RMA has adequate resources to deliver its legislative functions. The ICE presented the report informing members the forecast contained financial analysis to the year 2029-30. The ICE also highlighted the key financial assumptions used to determine key forecast data.

23.2. The Board noted the Medium Term Financial Forecast.

## 24. Chief Executive Pay Review – Board Paper 1168

24.1. **The Convener requested all staff, excluding the Interim Chief Executive, to leave the meeting while this paper was under discussion.**

24.2. The ICE presented the paper which considered matters relating to Chief Executive pay award for 25-26. The ICE highlighted the publication of the CE pay policy in December 2025 and the 4% cap to basic pay uplift.

24.3. **The Board noted the paper and requested the Interim Chief Executive leave the meeting in order that the Board could hold a private discussion on this matter.**

24.4. Following the private meeting, the Board noted its approval of a 4% pay award for the

Chief Executive to be backdated to 1 April 2025. The Board requested the pay award be implemented with immediate effect.

**Action: FGL**

**25. Board Performance Report – Board Paper 1169**

25.1. The ICE presented the Performance Report to the Board.

25.2. The Convener agreed to lead the review and collate members responses to the 32 questions presented in the self-assessment.

**Action: Convener**

**26. Accreditation Committee Chair Report - Update**

26.1. The Chair of the Accreditation Committee provided an update to the Board and noted a recent recruitment campaign resulted in three new applications and a further campaign is scheduled for March 26.

26.2. The Board noted the update from the Accreditation Committee.

**27. Audit & Assurance Committee Chair Report - Update**

27.1. The Chair of the Audit & Assurance Committee updated the Board on review of the Corporate Governance Statement, the Internal and External Audit plans and the Risk Register update.

27.2. The Board noted the update from the Audit & Assurance Committee.

**28. Research & Ethics Committee Chair Report - Update**

28.1. The Chair of the Research & Ethics Committee updated the Board on the review of research proposals which include HDC and responsivity and how these items fit with the broader view of the OLR populations.

28.2. The Board noted the update from the Research & Ethics Committee.

**29. Strengthening the RMA's Human Rights Narrative – Board Paper 1171**

29.1. Dr Alain Zysset presented the Strengthening the RMA's Human Rights Narrative Beyond Compliance to the Board.

29.2. The paper considered the current approach and possible future developments by including human rights into RMA reporting. The Board requested this matter be considered further by SMT and reported back to the Board.

**Action: SMT**

29.3. Members noted the paper presented by Dr Zysset.

**30. Strengthening the Relationship between the RMA and the SHRC – Board Paper 1172**

- 30.1. Dr Alain Zysset presented the Strengthening the RMA's Relationship between the RMA and the SHRC to the Board.
- 30.2. The SHRC report considers the availability and timely delivery of rehabilitative programmes and the potential impact on the mental health of individuals subject to OLR.
- 30.3. The HOLR advised that engagement has been established and there will be further meetings with SHRC.
- 30.4. Members noted the paper presented by Dr Zysset.

**Other Competent Business**

- 31. No other competent business to report.

**Date of Next Meeting**

- 32. The Board members noted the next meeting date will be 20 April 2026.
- 33. The Convener thanked everyone for attending and drew the meeting to a close at 15:00.