

## **CHAIR'S LETTER August 2017**

Dear Board Members

Although I have not been in the Centre much myself over the past weeks I pick up that the month has been quieter though the feeling of understaffing continues, especially as officers take their annual holidays. A new ITC is due to start 21/8 and Brook IMB are invited to speak at an induction session again. (Tinsley had intended to cover it but Anne's husband booked her on a cruise). Gareth might mention this in his handover report but Tinsley is in quarantine with a flu pandemic – on Friday there were 12 detainees, with another 2 possibles, currently affected and HC do not think it has necessarily peaked yet.

The planned pre-board session with Owen is once again postponed as he is still off sick. Nurse Emily has also been unwell and may or may not be able to come to our meeting. It will probably be wise to stick to the 12.00 start time. No apologies received so far.

### **Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group**

You are aware of my recent interchange with GDWG. This, plus the arrival of James their new director seems to have helped trigger a review of their relationship with Brook House. I had not known that GDWG has been allowed the use of a room to see detainees newly referred in the legal corridor for a couple of years now. Like the board, Home Office and G4S managers absolutely recognise the immensely good work GDWG does supporting detainees. As discussed in the past, the problem for HO/G4S is one of trust and hinges around the question of whether the organisation sees itself as existing to befriend detainees or as a protest movement against detention, or at least some of their members might think of it as such. Having had a few conversations on the subject this week (Steve, Paul, Michelle B) I propose we have it on the agenda for an open discussion – Paul was very much in favour of this idea.

### **IMB Annual Report 2016**

Still no news. I presume Alan Gibson continues to chase up action plans as none of the IRCs had received a reply to their ARs. The minister is reportedly one who wants to read each one himself.

### **Visits**

As you know, Heathrow IRCs (Harmondsworth and Colnbrook) have requested a visit to Brook House, partly to see the centre and partly to talk to us about our take on IMB methodology, systems, etc. The final decision is to split the group into two and I know Gareth has gone as far as setting the dates for Friday 22 and Friday 29 September. He will be able to update us on further details at the BM.

### **IMB Office Phone**

Lorraine tells me it is not working. When she phones it flags up as "operator's office". Apparently, some numbers were used in error when Tinsley was being set back up. I understand that there are currently 80 issues pending for the (external) IT department to resolve.