

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD

**MINUTES OF THE 28th MEETING IN PUBLIC OF THE NORTHERN
IRELAND POLICING BOARD HELD ON WEDNESDAY,
1 DECEMBER 2004 AT 12:00 NOON IN WATERSIDE TOWER, BELFAST**

PRESENT:

MEMBERS:

Professor Desmond Rea (Chairman)
Mr Denis Bradley (Vice-Chairman)
Mr Alex Attwood
Viscount Brookeborough
Mr Joe Byrne
Mr Fred Cobain
Mr Brian Dougherty
Mr Sam Foster
Mr Barry Gilligan
Mr Willie Hay
Lord Kilclooney
Mrs Pauline McCabe
Mr Alan McFarland
Mrs Rosaleen Moore
Mr Sammy Wilson

**POLICE SERVICE OF
NORTHERN IRELAND IN
ATTENDANCE:**

Mr Hugh Orde, (Chief Constable)
Mr Paul Leighton (Deputy Chief
Constable)
Mr Duncan McCausland, (ACC Urban
Region)
Mr Peter Sheridan, (ACC Rural
Region)
Mr Joe Stewart (Director of Human
Resources)
Ms Sinead McSweeney (Head of
Media)
Chief Superintendent Phil Wright
(Crime Operations)
Chief Superintendent, Command
Secretariat
Inspector Blayney (Musgrave Street)

OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr Trevor Reaney (Chief Executive)
Mr Peter Holt (Director of
Communications)
Mr David Jackson (Director of
Community Affairs)

Mr Sam Hagen (Director of Corporate Services)
Mr David Wilson (Director of Planning)
Mrs Sinead Simpson (Director of Policy)
One Board Official

Due to technical difficulties with the recording system a verbatim transcript of the meeting is not available.

Apologies were received from Mr McGrady and Mr Paisley.

The Chairman welcomed the public and media present to the meeting and outlined the format of the meeting.

The meeting opened with a presentation from Inspector Ian Blayney, Sector Commander, Musgrave Street, on the 2004 Christmas Policing Plan for South Belfast. In introducing the presentation, ACC McCausland informed the meeting that it was anticipated that over 1 million people would visit Belfast city centre during December and that the priority for police would be to provide a safe environment for those using the city centre shopping and other facilities.

During his presentation, Inspector Blayney highlighted:-

- that a major reduction in crime of 33% had been achieved in 2003 using a Christmas Policing Plan;
- the objectives of the 2004 Plan were to reduce crime, tackle anti-social behaviour and ultimately to provide a safer city;
- following a number of recent incidents a training session would be provided to city centre traders on dealing with incendiary devices;

- that a partnership approach had been adopted with Belfast City Council, Chamber of Trade and Commerce groups, Traffic Wardens and Outreach Workers;
- the partnerships within PSNI involving Sector Police, Regional TSG, Roads Policing Unit, Community Safety, CID, CCTV and the use of the National Intelligence Model;
- how the PSNI planned to achieve the objectives in more detail, including 'Operation Habit' and 'Operation Viper', operations to combat illegal street trading, the 'Get Home Safe' campaign, crime prevention initiatives, liaison with traffic wardens regarding traffic flow, dealing with rough sleepers and dealing with anti-social behaviour.

A copy of the slides used during the presentation are attached at Annex 'A'.

In response to a question from Mr Dougherty, Inspector Blayney confirmed that the South Belfast Policing Plan was made available to other police districts, and there had been interest from other districts in various initiatives contained in the Plan.

Mr Wilson sought information about the value of goods seized by police from street traders, the number of persons prosecuted and the extent of paramilitary involvement in this activity. In response, Inspector Blayney advised that prosecutions were taken forward by the City Council and a partnership approach was adopted with police acting in support of officials, he had no figures available on the number of prosecutions to date. Since 2001, over 400 stalls had been seized and 40-50,000 tons of foodstuffs had been seized. A large number of counterfeit DVDs had also been seized.

Mr Gilligan asked the Chief Constable to comment on contingency plans for the policing any festivities in the Holyland area of Belfast. ACC McCausland gave details of a number of arrests, drug operations and persons spoken to

by police regarding unruly behaviour within the area. He confirmed that police were continuing to target resources to the area and were working in partnership with other agencies to try to resolve anti-social behaviour and other problems in the Holyland, recently highlighted in the media.

Mr Cobain asked the Chief Constable to report on his recent meeting with representatives of Sinn Fein. The Chief Constable described the meeting as constructive. He advised there were 2 key issues - the Sinn Fein representatives wished to discuss de-militarisation and that he, as Chief Constable, wished to discuss policing. He stated that it was his first meeting with Sinn Fein.

The Chief Constable outlined the main issues that he raised during the meeting, these included that the rhetoric of disengagement was out of date; the key progress that had been made under Patten to date; that the majority of the Patten report recommendations had been implemented within 3 years rather than the target date of 10 years; the commitment of PSNI to policing all communities across Northern Ireland; if a commitment was made to give police broader community support then police could move even more quickly to improve normalisation of policing eg army support, access to stations. The Chief Constable advised he remained mindful that the normal policing environment does not exist and until it does some areas of policing cannot progress as quickly as he and other officers would wish. The Chief Constable said that overall it was a useful meeting.

Mr Wilson, Mr Byrne, Mr Attwood, Lord Kilclooney and Mr Hay sought clarification on various aspects of the discussion. In response, the Chief Constable indicated that normalisation would progress as the security situation allowed and that army support would continue to be maintained as long as this was necessary, particularly if the threat from dissident republicans was maintained. The Chief Constable advised that to date there had been no declaration by the Prime Minister on normalisation and indicated that it was for parties other than police to progress the conditions for

this to happen. The Chief Constable declined to be specific about a date for declaring when completion of normalisation would take place, advising that it will take the time that it takes but emphasising that police would move quickly if this does pertain. The Chief Constable advised that the issue of decommissioning of illegal weapons was not a matter for the police.

Mr Foster asked for an update on the investigation into the Enniskillen bombing in November 1987. Chief Superintendent Wright, Crime Operations, advised that this incident was one of the first to be directed for review to the Serious Crime Review Team. He briefly outlined the nature of a meeting that had taken place in October with the families of the victims and indicated that without wishing to raise any false hopes there were a number of avenues that had been identified by the review that would be taken forward by police.

Mr Byrne asked the Chief Constable to provide an assessment of the activities of the UDA following the decision by the Secretary of State to de-specify the UDA under the relevant legislation. The Chief Constable responded that the UDA, along with a number of other paramilitary groups had to decide which route they wished to take - a political route or a criminal route. If the UDA was to take a political route then police would need a significant period of time to be convinced of this change and emphasised that if the organisation continued to be involved in crime then the police would continue to make arrests and seek to secure convictions through the courts.

Mr Hay referred to recent revelations that IRA members have been convicted of operating a spy ring on southern politicians in the South of Ireland and asked if the Chief Constable knew of any similar spy rings being operated by the IRA in Northern Ireland. Chief Superintendent Wright indicated that PSNI continued to investigate all illegal activities of all illegal organisations and indicated that it would not be appropriate to comment on any specific investigation that was ongoing. He highlighted a number of convictions in respect of persons obtaining information that was likely to be of use to terrorists and indicated that a number of other investigations were ongoing.

Mr Wilson referred to a Detective Superintendent and other detectives investigating the 12th of July parade in East Belfast and asked for an indication of the number of detective hours that have been used on the investigation so far and for an indication whether the investigation was prompted by the police or by a complaint by either the Parades Commission or by members of the public. He also referred to some DCU Commanders interviewing members of the Orange lodges in their local areas regarding parades over the summer period, suggesting that one local DCU Commander objected to the playing of 'The Sash' by bands involved in Orange parades. Mr Wilson asked if it was a police policy that they do not wish The Sash to be played by bands.

In response, ACC McCausland advised that the PSNI had no specific objections to the playing of The Sash. He said he was aware that a Detective Chief Inspector in East Belfast was currently investigating the alleged breach of a Parades Commission determination issued in respect of the 12 July parade in East Belfast. He advised it was not possible to extrapolate the number of hours spent on this investigation.

Mr Wilson referred to the September meeting of the Northern Ireland Policing Board, at which the Chief Constable had indicated that at least 250 people were involved in serious rioting at Ardoyne on the 12 July and that arrests were imminent. He asked for information on how many people had been arrested to date and what had they been charged with. ACC McCausland informed the meeting that 22 persons had been identified and had been charged or reported in respect of 71 separate offences. To date, 8 persons had appeared in court and pleaded guilty.

Mr Attwood asked the Chief Constable to provide a report on the review of plastic bullets announced at the October 2004 meeting and mindful of the fact that the police had not fired any plastic bullets in the last 2 years, to make a statement on the intention of the police with regard to the future use of plastic bullets.

The Chief Constable referred to the reduction in rioting and large scale public disorder over the last 2 years and said that this had consequently led to zero use of baton rounds during the period. In addition, other tactics were being used by police in public disorder situations such as the deployment of water cannon. The Chief Constable emphasised while it was the intention of police not to use baton rounds there was still a need for police in Northern Ireland to retain the right to hold and to deploy them where the situation demanded.

With regard to the review of baton rounds, the Chief Constable informed Members that the result of the review being conducted by Operations Department would be available shortly and would be shared with the Policing Board. The Chief Constable said that in broad terms it was likely that in the light of the current situation the number of baton rounds held by police would be reduced. It was also likely that the review would make recommendations about reducing the number of officers that needed to be trained in their use, the number of baton round guns that would need to be retained and the centralisation of storage. The Chief Constable reminded Members that the development and testing of a new safer version of the baton round was nearing completion and that when final testing was completed that the matter would be brought back to the Policing Board.

Mr Hay asked the Chief Constable to outline the current employment status of Traffic Wardens and indicate if, in advance of any discussion having taken place with the Board, their employment terms are being considered or reviewed by PSNI.

Mr Joe Stewart, Director of Human Resources, informed Members that PSNI was not conducting any review of terms and conditions for Traffic Wardens. However, Government had taken the decision a number of years ago to de-criminalise traffic offences and as a consequence, throughout the United Kingdom, arrangements were being made to transfer staff to the responsible agencies. Mr Stewart advised Member that in Northern Ireland the arrangements were now coming to fruition and the Traffic Wardens would be

transferred to the Department of Regional Development. The Department would then have to decide, in line with Government legislation and guidance, the employment terms and conditions for the Traffic Wardens. Mr Stewart confirmed that the Traffic Wardens would be transferred with their employment conditions intact.

Mr Hay referred to speculation that the Department of Regional Development planned to transfer responsibility for Traffic Wardens to a private company and the need for further discussion of this important issue concerning traffic management. The Board agreed that the Board's Human Resources Committee should seek further information about the issue.

The Chairman thanked the Chief Constable and other PSNI representatives for taking the questions and members of the public and media for attending the meeting.

(Meeting closed 1.10pm)

Secretariat

December 2004

Chairman