

ITEM NO:

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD

**MINUTES OF THE 1ST PUBLIC MEETING OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND
POLICING BOARD HELD AT 12 NOON ON WEDNESDAY 7 NOVEMBER
2001 IN WATERSIDE TOWER, CLARENDON DOCK, BELFAST**

PRESENT:

MEMBERS:

Prof Desmond Rea (Chairman)
Mr Denis Bradley (Vice-Chairman)
Mr Alex Attwood
Viscount Brookeborough
Mr Joe Byrne
Mr Fred Cobain
Mr Ivan Davis
Mr Brian Dougherty
Mr Barry Gilligan
Mr William Hay
Mr Tom Kelly
Lord Kilclooney
Mr James Leslie
Mrs Pauline McCabe
Mr Eddie McGrady
Mrs Rosaleen Moore
Mr Ian Paisley Jnr
Mr Suneil Sharma
Mr Sammy Wilson

**POLICE SERVICE OF NORTHERN
IRELAND:**

Sir Ronnie Flanagan (Chief Constable)
Mr C Cramphorn (Deputy Chief
Constable)
Superintendent, Command Secretariat

OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr I Wilson (Interim Secretary and
Chief Executive)
Business Manager
Head of Audit Services
Head of Community Affairs
One Official, Secretariat

IN ATTENDANCE:

Representatives from the Police Staff
Associations

1. CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

The Chairman welcomed the PSNI representatives, Staff Associations and members of the public to the meeting.

The Chairman made the following opening statement:- *Statement on behalf of the Chairman of the Board, myself and my Vice Chairman.*

“Fellow members, Chief Constable, and representatives of the Police Staff Associations good afternoon and welcome to the first public meeting of the Northern Ireland Policing Board.

As I say this statement is on behalf of the two of us and we welcome in particular the members of the public, and the press who have joined us today to observe and report on our meeting. I thank you for coming along to find out about our work, and hope that you will have a continued interest as we get down to business in the coming weeks and months.

We will shortly receive a report from the Chief Constable of the Police Service for Northern Ireland, but we would first like to take a few minutes to reflect on our journey to this point in time. This has been a momentous week for policing in Northern Ireland, and for all those touched by policing. Already it has been marked by the achievement of a significant number of changes.

The formation of the Police Service of Northern Ireland. The first balanced intake of trainees to the new Police Service, they have been selected and their training commenced. The creation of the Northern Ireland Policing Board, this Board, and today's historic first public meeting with the Chief Constable giving his address to the Board and to the wider community in Northern Ireland.

To arrive at this new beginning has of course not been without its controversy, it has required considerable work over the past months and years by many. Without such commitment we would not have witnessed the

historic changes achieved in recent days and to which we have just referred. And we would not now be here ready to play our part in helping to define the future of policing within Northern Ireland.

*However, as we look forward to the challenges ahead, it would be remiss not to reflect on the significant contribution made by the RUC and by so many police officers down the years. It would be remiss not to remember all those officers who have lost their lives and their family circles. It would be remiss not to remember all those officers who have been injured and who continue to carry the scars. It would be remiss not to acknowledge the dedication and the commitment of those officers recently retired from their policing careers and those whose continued commitment is embedded in their willingness to move forward with the new police service. It would be remiss not to acknowledge the contribution of the wider policing family who have provided support to the police in difficult times. It is the contribution of all that we've referred to, which has enabled us to move with some confidence to **this new beginning**, and we thank them and all the others who have helped us to get here.*

Special thanks must also be extended to the Chairman and members of the former Police Authority for Northern Ireland for their help in recent weeks to ensure a seamless transition and for their words of encouragement to this Board as the future of police accountability in Northern Ireland. Perhaps the most significant fact about this new beginning is that it enables the police service to be embraced by the whole community. The essential goal of the police is to serve the whole community. The Northern Ireland Police Service and the Board will be seeking the whole hearted support of the whole community. The police must be free to police with all of our communities, and we will be judged by the ability of officers to live with the people they serve.

Policing with the community is at the heart of the new service, the importance of the community accepting their responsibility to support and work in partnership with the police service cannot be overstated. Community policing is about matching community expectation with day-to-day delivery of the

Police Service. Community policing is about consulting with the community, and working in partnership with them to solve local problems. Community policing is about the accountability of the police to their community.

Community policing is the bedrock of the district policing partnerships and as we begin to establish these forums, we hope that the community will fulfil their responsibility to be fully participative in the partnerships and to support their work. In the coming months we will also be consulting with the community to find out more about their policing needs. As a new body our role will evolve. We have an agenda to work to, within a fairly tight timetable.

As we commence our work we will have the ability to shape our future and the future of policing in Northern Ireland. We recognise and we accept our responsibilities. We are also realistic about the challenging and the sometimes difficult issues and decisions that we will consider and have to make. We will consider each issue carefully in a balanced way. Our decision making will benefit from the diversity of our members, who each have an enormous contribution to make to shaping the future of policing in Northern Ireland. We must self-consciously as a Board take ownership of the policing agenda. In so far as it is within our remit, and to try to remove the service from becoming a political football. A significant amount of work has already been achieved, the enormity of the change process ahead has been recognised and we must work together with all those involved to progress the policing agenda. A recent report suggested that the ideal would be a marriage, between the required political pace of change and what can be achieved managerially. We must recognise and match what must be done, with community expectation, and with what is organisationally achievable.

This Board, Chief Constable is very conscious that the past week has not been easy for you or for your colleagues. We commend you and all your Officers for your management of the situation, and for your willingness to embrace the changes demanded of you. I have much pleasure on behalf of the Board in inviting you to address the Board and the people of Northern Ireland, Chief Constable”

and invited the Chief Constable to give his monthly report to the meeting.

2. CHIEF CONSTABLE'S MONTHLY REPORT

Before commencing his report, the Chief Constable made the following short opening statement:-

"Thank you very much indeed, Mr Chairman, Vice Chairman and all members of the Board, can I on behalf of all my colleagues, thank you for the welcome here this afternoon, and can I particularly thank you for the comments you have made.

I'm delighted that particular mention was made of those colleagues who down through the years had their lives taken in the service of all the people of Northern Ireland and indeed of those many, many colleagues who suffered and continue to suffer to the affects of serious injury. It is only their commitment, it is only the platform the foundation that they built, that has allowed us to follow in their tradition and embrace the changes that have been recommended and are to be adopted for the benefit of all the people of Northern Ireland".

Major Incidents

The Chief Constable outlined the circumstances of 8 murders which had occurred since 13 October 2001.

Police Successes

The Chief Constable listed significant finds of firearms and drugs made by police during October.

Road Traffic Accidents

The Chief Constable reported on current trends and statistics in the area of roads policing.

Change Management Programme

The Chief Constable presented the Chairman with a copy of a draft Code of Ethics for the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

Human Rights Programme

The Chief Constable updated Members concerning progress towards the development of a Human Rights Programme. He advised that an aide memoire had been produced and distributed to all serving officers. The Chief Constable reported on a major conference which had been held in Belfast on the subject of Human Rights.

Training, Education and Development

The Chief Constable advised that the new training programme for trainees to the new Police Service of Northern Ireland had commenced on 4 November 2001. He presented a source document on training to the Chairman.

Uniform

The Chief Constable presented a paper to the Chairman concerning the range of uniforms to be provided to the new Service.

Recording of use of Emergency Powers

The Chief Constable informed Members about new procedures for recording the use of emergency powers by police. He advised that a statistical return would be forwarded to the Board on a quarterly basis.

Tenure Policy

The Chief Constable advised that a tenure policy would be considered by the PSNI Policy Group. He further advised that details of the tenure policy proposals would be forwarded to the Board for consideration at their next meeting.

Child Care Facilities

The Chief Constable advised that the Service was examining best practice in a number of Forces including the Canadian Police and would bring recommendations about child care facilities to the Board in the near future.

Analysis Centre

The Chief Constable presented a resume of the work of the Analysis Centre to the Chairman.

Information Systems Strategy

The Chief Constable presented to the Chairman an Information Systems Strategy Progress Report. An update would be presented to the Board early in the New Year.

Police Training College

The Chief Constable advised that he would be seeking the support of the Board in taking forward the project for the development of a new Police Training College.

3. QUESTIONS TO THE CHIEF CONSTABLE

3.1.1. Police Uniform/Commemorative Wreaths

A Member asked the Chief Constable to comment on the role of the Board in developing a new police uniform and on rumours concerning the prohibition of the laying of wreaths on Remembrance Day which contained the badge of the RUC.

With regard to the new uniform, the Chief Constable confirmed that the design of a range of uniforms had already been decided, on the basis of comparisons with other Forces and surveys amongst serving members. The No 1 tunic (for use on ceremonial occasions) had not yet been decided. The Board's views on this tunic would be sought.

The Chief Constable referred to the need for the Board to consider the badge/crest of the Police Service of Northern Ireland which would be required for the new uniforms.

With regard to the laying of wreaths, the Chief Constable said that there appeared to be misunderstanding and misrepresentation of the position. He advised that official wreaths laid on behalf of the Police Service of Northern Ireland would not contain any crest as this had not yet been designed. The Chief Constable said that wreaths containing the RUC crest could be laid on Remembrance Sunday by persons representing the RUC widows, Benevolent Fund groups etc.

The Chief Constable also confirmed that there was no question of any RUC memorials being removed from stations.

3.1.2 Crime Detection Rates

A Member asked the Chief Constable to comment on the possible factors impacting on recorded crime and detection rates which were down compared with previous years and to comment on remedial action. The Member queried whether detection rates had been affected by low morale and an exodus from the Service.

The Chief Constable advised Members of his previous practice with the Authority to discuss crime trends on a quarterly basis. He informed Members about a recent change in recording systems and the adoption of a new system of automatic recording of crimes. The Chief Constable advised that the experience in England and Wales when a similar automatic recording system had been introduced was of an average of 17% increase in reported crime. The Chief Constable considered that the figures in respect of Northern Ireland were being effected by the new recording system and that the figure of 59,500 crimes reported to date was down in comparison to the same period during the previous year. However, all crime clearances had not yet been included in the new system and he anticipated that this would improve the detection figures.

The Chief Constable discussed the morale of the Service and considered that, given all the pressures and changing circumstances which had recently been experienced by officers, that morale was good and that this was not a factor in the lower detection rate.

The Chief Constable recognised the numbers deficit which was currently affecting the service and informed Members that the deficit was being addressed through the use of additional overtime, the support of the Army and by improving the management of sickness absence. The Chief Constable detailed the number of new trainees expected to be admitted to the Service during the current and next financial years.

In a follow-up discussion, the following points were raised:

- the Service would be setting local crime targets;
- advice was being taken from the Equality Commission on a neutral working environment;
- military memorabilia which was removed from stations was being catalogued and will be given a place of dignity;
- the government will consult the Board on the issue of flags;
- Board officials had been given a copy of policy proposals concerning measures to deal with the personnel numbers deficit;
- changing policing priorities and police responses would be shared with the public and subjected to negotiation within local areas;
- the expansion of and recruitment to a part-time reserve was currently being hampered by legal difficulties but progress was being made;
- the sign containing the RUC crest at the front of Police Headquarters, Brooklyn had been removed on 31 October to avoid intrusive media coverage.

3.1.3 RUC GC Foundation

In response to a question from the Vice-Chairman, the Chief Constable informed Members about the background to the establishment of the RUC GC Foundation. He described the discussions which had taken place with the Widows' Association and others and the proposals for the establishment of a museum, garden and the award of bursaries for officers of the Police Service of Northern Ireland. The Chief Constable indicated that a service to mark the sacrifice of the RUC would be held in St Anne's Cathedral in December.

3.1.4 Code of Ethics

In response to a question from a Member, the Chief Constable confirmed that the draft Code of Ethics had drawn upon the European Convention, the United Nations Convention and other international instruments. In addition, he confirmed that all officers would be given training about the application of the Code of Ethics and that their adherence to the Code would be included in their annual assessment.

3.1.5 Moira/Police Reserve/Fitness Tests

A Member asked the Chief Constable to comment further about an incident which occurred on 19 October at Moira roundabout and asked for further details of police intelligence as to when those who had been arrested had become "dissidents". In addition, the Member asked the Chief Constable to comment on the rundown in membership of the full-time and part-time Reserve. The Member also asked the Chief Constable to comment on an article that applicants to the Police Service of Northern Ireland would no longer be required to pass a fitness test.

In response the Chief Constable made the following points:

- as a number of arrests had been made in connection with the incident on the 19 October at Moira and as there was an ongoing investigation it was not appropriate for the Chief Constable to comment on the detail of the circumstances, however, the

Chief Constable confirmed that intelligence indicated that those involved in the incident had been members of a dissident group for some considerable time;

- the full-time Reserve continued to remain an essential element within the Service;
- the numbers of full and part-time Reserve had been reduced by the ceasing of recruitment and natural wastage;
- the maintenance of a Reserve depended upon security and organisational needs;
- the issue of pensions payments for officers in the Reserve was a matter for government;
- fitness testing of trainees had not been ceased;
- job related fitness tests had been completed by all new trainees;
- health and safety issues required the Service to ensure that trainees met the fitness requirement to carry out the tasks allocated to the Service.

3.1.6 Police Trainees

A Member asked the Chief Constable for his comments about Protestant applicants to the PSNI who had failed to become trainees due to the 50/50 recruitment system, although they had received higher marks than their Catholic counterparts.

The Chief Constable reminded Members that recruitment requirements were governed by the law and that an independent, civilian, agency had been responsible for the recruitment process. He advised that there had been 154 successful candidates from the Catholic community and that 154 Non-Catholic candidates had been appointed. Legal advice had been taken about the decision to appoint in this way.

Legal advice also indicated that each competition needed to be discreet and that candidates who had failed to gain access to the first intake would need to reapply for the second intake.

A Member asked the Chief Constable to comment further on the resource deficit and the impact that this was having on the effectiveness of the police service provided to the public.

In response, the Chief Constable made the following points:

- in comparison with Police Forces in the rest of the UK the strength of the PSNI would be approximately 4,000 officers;
- the revised assessment was that there should be 7,500 PSNI officers plus a part-time reserve of 2,500;
- reduction in the size of the Service to these numbers was dependent upon the security/public order situation and at present an easing of these factors was not being achieved quickly enough;
- the Board had an important role in securing sufficient financial resources for the Service.

3.1.7 Human Rights

In response to a question from a Member, the Chief Constable confirmed that a Human Rights lawyer had been appointed and was currently in post, giving advice on operational matters and documentation.

3.1.8 Racially motivated incidents

In response to a further question from a Member, the Chief Constable indicated that there had been a fall in the number of racially motivated incidents and suggested that part of the reduction was due to a settling of statistics following a re-definement of a racial incident in 1998. The Chief Constable confirmed that police liaison officers were continuing to work with diverse communities to improve consultation and victim support.

4. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

A Member asked that future public meetings be minuted on a verbatim basis.
The Chairman advised that this would be considered.

(Meeting closed 1 30 pm).

SECRETARIAT
November 2001

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