

**Vice Chairman's Opening Speaking Note**  
**Reflections on District Policing Partnerships**  
**19 February 2007**

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I would also extend my welcome to all of you. A particular welcome goes to those of you who have travelled a good distance to be here. This is a unique event, it is an opportunity for District Policing Partnerships to tell their quite amazing story. You will hear shortly the story of DPPs so far; the aspirations, the fears, the challenges, the successes and the things that might now be done a little differently. But first of all to aid our discussion I want to provide some information on the context for District Policing Partnerships, what they do and give an indication of some of the challenges that lie ahead.

**SLIDE: Timeline**

The Belfast/ Good Friday Agreement in April 1998 provided the impetus for new policing arrangements in Northern Ireland. These were given effect to in September 1999 by the Independent Commission on Policing – the Patten Commission. A key part of the

recommendations of the Commission focussed on the need to ensure that the new policing arrangements had the voices of communities at their heart. These recommendations provided the platform for the establishment of the Northern Ireland Policing Board and the District Policing Partnerships.

The Policing Board was established in November 2001, at the same time as the Police Service of Northern Ireland. The Board was tasked with establishing the DPPs and worked in partnership with local government in making this happen in March 2003. Because the term of DPPs is linked with local government elections their first term was shorter than the envisaged four years and they were fully reconstituted in December 2005.

**SLIDE: What is a DPP?**

So what is a DPP? It is this, it a partnership between the local Council and the local community to monitor police performance and to provide a forum for discussion and consultation on policing issues for that area.

**SLIDE: Key Facts & Figures**

Some facts about DPPs:

There are 26 DPPs, one for each of our local government districts. The Districts range in size from a population of 277,000 in Belfast to around 16,000 in Moyle.

In total there are 454 Members of which 239 are Councillors and 215 are Independent Members chosen from local communities. Each DPP can have 15, 17 or 19 Members and the political members hold the majority by one seat. The Partnerships are chaired by a Councillor and the Vice chair is held by an Independent Member.

The total funding for the Partnerships is around £4million each year, 75% of which is paid by the Board the remaining 25% by the local Council.

Since their inception in 2003 there have been over 500 meetings in public and over 3,000 local people have attended these events.

Capacity building is a key element of the work of the DPPs and the Board has supported over 120 events with many more undertaken locally. These events include training in key skills such as media awareness and monitoring performance and provide Members with up to date information on the major police strategies.

In a piece of research last year the general public were asked about their awareness of DPPs, 71% said that they had heard of the Partnerships – a clear achievement in anyone's books.

**SLIDE: DPPs - What do they do?**

So what do DPPs do? These are the five main areas of work. I commend to you the 'Reflections on District Policing Partnerships' document [**HOLD UP DOCUMENT**] which contains a range of examples of this work.

They consult with the local community to assess the priorities for policing.

They prioritise the main issues from this consultation and discuss with the local police commander to ensure that the priorities are reflected in the local policing plan.

They monitor the police performance against that plan on a regular basis and many of these meetings are held in public with members of the local community in attendance. A traffic light system is used to easily identify the relative status of performance on each area of the plan.

One of the most important jobs that DPPs do is to engage with the local community to gain the cooperation of the public to work with

the police to prevent crime. There are many innovative examples of how DPPs have taken this work forward and as we move to another era in policing DPPs will continue to be at the centre of helping make communities safer.

One of the great successes of the DPPs have been when they act as a general forum for discussion between the public, the police and the DPP Members. These are typically themed meetings where a particular issue is the focus for discussion. Issues that have featured in these events include: domestic violence, anti-social behaviour, crime against businesses and crime against the elderly. Typically, all participants find these informative and productive and I know from feedback that the local police get a lot from such engagements.

**SLIDE: DPPs - Do they work?**

So do DPPs work?

The simple answer is yes, although it is early days for a thorough evaluation of their impact on local policing.

However, I want to share some of my observations on their contribution to the evolution of policing in Northern Ireland.

There is considerable evidence of the positive impact that the Partnerships have had on local policing priorities. Policing priorities

identified by a local community is difficult for any commander to set aside.

Increasingly the local priorities identified by DPPs are influencing the Northern Ireland wide debate on priorities and this is a good thing for policing and the community generally. It means that the Chief Constable will be held to account by the Policing Board on issues that matter most to communities.

Through their commitment Members of DPPs have contributed significantly to building public confidence in policing. That brings its own challenges, as the confidence and engagement in policing grows so does the expectation for delivery. DPPs will continue to be at the forefront of driving up police performance.

**SLIDE: DPPs – challenges ahead?**

There is no doubt that since 2003 DPPs have become an integrated and key part of the new policing architecture in Northern Ireland. But over the coming months and years there will be equally significant challenges.

There will be significant change across the public sector in Northern Ireland over the coming couple of years, policing is part of this and there will be an impact on DPPs. The move to a smaller number of

larger Councils will impact directly on what future partnerships should do.

Another significant challenge is the pressure placed on the public sector by a decrease in public funding; again DPPs will not be immune from this. In moving forward we will need to find ways of working smarter together if we are to continue to enhance policing.

They are a young organisation, but could well face a second re-constitution later this year; just two years after the last one. This will be unsettling but I'm convinced that DPP Members will rise to this challenge as they have all others that have gone before and continue to play their key role in policing. The Board, for our part, will continue to support the good work that they do.

I hope that this gives you enough information to stimulate discussion.

I would now hand over to David Bayley to introduce the rest of the panel and to begin the discussion.

Thank you, David.