

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD

MINUTES OF MEETING OF RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 16 DECEMBER 2021 AT 9.30AM AT WATERSIDE TOWER AND VIA ZOOM

PRESENT:

Mr Gerry Kelly MLA (Chair)
Dr Janet Gray (Vice-Chair)
Mr Trevor Clarke MLA
Mr Mike Nesbitt MLA
Mr Frank McManus*
Ms Deirdre Toner
Mr Jonathan Buckley MLA*
Mrs Linda Dillon MLA*

POLICE SERVICE OF NORTHERN IRELAND IN ATTENDANCE:

- (1)** Mrs Pamela McCreedy, Chief Operating Officer
- (2)** Mr Mark McNaughten, Assistant Chief Officer
Corporate Services
- (3)** Mr Marcus Belshaw, Head of Transport

OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE:

- Mrs Sinead Simpson, Chief Executive
- (4)** Ms Aislinn McGuckin, T/Director of Police
Administration
Seven Board Officials

- (1) Items 6.4 and 6.5 only**
- (2) Items 6.4 and 6.5 only**
- (3) Items 6.4 and 6.5 only**
- (4) Items 6.6 and 6.7 only**

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mr John Blair MLA, Mr Colm McKenna and Mrs Carmel McKinney.

The Committee agreed the Agenda for the meeting and the Chair advised he had one item of business he wanted to consider further under 'Any Other

Business' and this would be discussed later in the meeting.

2. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No conflicts of interest were declared.

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 NOVEMBER 2021

The Committee considered the draft minutes of the Committee meeting held on 25 November 2021. It was **RESOLVED** that:

The minutes of the Committee meeting held on 25 November 2021 be approved.

4. UPDATE ON ACTION LOG

The Committee noted the updates detailed within the Action Log and the related verbal overview provided by the Chief Executive.

In respect of Action Point 1 from the meeting on **25 November 2021** the Chief Executive advised that Board officials are currently collating all correspondence received from PSNI in respect of OHW issues to ascertain the gaps in information prior to corresponding further. It is intended that this will be brought to a future Committee meeting. **(AP1)**

In relation to Action Point 3 from the meeting on **25 November 2021** the Chief Executive advised this will be considered later in the meeting under agenda item 4.1.

In relation to Action Point 3 from the meeting on **28 October 2021** regarding the draft Estates Protocol the Chief Executive advised the updated draft with Members' comments has been received this week. The Chief Executive will

review it and discuss with the Temporary Assistant Chief Officer (T/ACO) of Corporate Services and will bring it back to the next Committee meeting in January 2022 for approval. **(AP2)**

4.1 Correspondence from PSNI re Station Disposals

The Chief Executive noted correspondence received from the Chief Operating Officer (COO) providing details on stations currently closed and likely timelines for their disposal. This information was requested by Members at a previous Committee meeting. The Chief Executive noted that Annex A of this correspondence outlines several stations that have been decommissioned and will require Board approval for sale either before the end of the current financial year or early in the 2022/23 financial year. The Chief Executive drew Members' attention to Donegall Pass, Ballyclare and Desertcreat PSNI stations and noted that the disposal of Ballyclare station is to be considered later in the meeting under Any Other Business.

4.2 Correspondence to PSNI re Above Delegated Authority Grant Requests

The Chief Executive noted correspondence dated 10 December 2021 from the Chair to the PSNI COO expressing Member's concerns regarding the handling of and communication around the Above Delegated Authority request for Grants payments for 3 organisations who provide a Hate Crime Advocacy Service.

Members **NOTED** the correspondence.

5. CHAIRPERSON'S BUSINESS

5.1 Desertcreat Background Paper

The Chair noted this paper has been provided by the PSNI following a request

made at the November 2021 Board meeting. As the next Board meeting is not scheduled to take place until February 2022, the Chair advised Members this was being made available now but would also be included with the February Board papers.

Members **NOTED** the report.

6. ITEMS FOR COMMITTEE BUSINESS

6.1 Request for Extension Above Delegated Limits - Accommodation & Storage of Personal Possessions

The Corporate Services Manager presented a paper which asked Members to consider a request under the Assisted Removal Scheme to extend a PSNI Officer's time in Police Leased Accommodation and storage of personal possessions and furniture. Members noted that the Board is responsible for the authorisation of any extension beyond 26 weeks where the applicant can demonstrate that the delay was beyond their control, and the approval process is delegated to the Resources Committee.

The Corporate Services Manager provided a summary of the case noting it has been considered on several previous occasions and that this is the fifth time it has come before the Committee. Members were advised that the applicant was required to leave his home in November 2019 and under the Assisted Removals (SPED) policy, for an initial period of 26 weeks, provision was made for use of police leased accommodation and expenses were also met for the storage of the applicant's furniture and personal effects.

Over the course of the Committee's consideration of this case, Members have approved further extensions taking account of mitigating factors. At both the March and June meetings this year, Members noted a number of new and extenuating circumstances relating to the property which were beyond the applicant's control and which have resulted in significant difficulties regarding

the saleability of the property.

In respect of the current position, Members considered correspondence from PSNI dated 2 December 2021, in which the PSNI provide an update as requested following the June Resources Committee and a request for a further extension from the applicant. Members also noted the further costs should Members agree an extension, accommodation costs up to 31 March 2022 will be an additional £2,100 and storage costs will be a further £945.

Members were asked to consider the information provided and the available options regarding next steps and advise if they are content to approve, as recommended, a further extension until March 31 2022.

While Members expressed sympathy with the applicant's circumstances, they were concerned about how protracted this case has become and whether the SPED scheme is delivering for this applicant in the way that it should.

Following discussion it was **AGREED:**

- To write to PSNI advising that a further extension has been granted until 31 March 2022. It was further agreed that this correspondence should outline Members' concerns around the application of the SPED policy, the protracted nature of the case, and also seek clarification on why, under the terms of the SPED policy, the officer remains involved in this process. **(AP3)**

6.2 NIPB Management Accounts – November 2021

The Committee noted a paper providing an update on NIPB Management Accounts and Financial Information to 30 November 2021. A Board Official provided an overview of the Board's expenditure against its 2021-22 budget and outlined the current underspend position of £143k. It was noted that this

figure would change once the outcome of the January monitoring exercise was known.

6.3 James House Costs

The Finance Manager presented a paper updating Members in respect of the Board's costs and anticipated savings following the Board's move to new premises at James House. This update was requested by Members at the Board meeting on 2 September 2021.

The Committee noted that in March 2020 the James House project team shared costs and savings from their business case with Board officials to enable the NIPB to progress the new short term lease at Waterside Tower, from 1 September 2020 to 28 February 2022 by which time it was anticipated the move would be complete. At this time the anticipated savings as a result of the relocation were £5M over a 10 year period. In September 2021 following the request from Members for an update on the financial position, the Finance Manager advised that based upon the costs as they are currently known (highlighted at Appendix B of this paper) the anticipated savings over the same 10 year period have been revised down to £2.7M.

The Finance Manager drew Members' attention to the fact that DoF is proposing to leave available to themselves the option to charge a full commercial rent from year 6 onward following the end of the initial 5 year licence period. Members noted that DoF officials advised NIPB this charge would be approximately £165k in today's market and therefore based upon 2.5% inflation the cost, this increases to £191k in year 6. Other additional costs such as security, cleaning, offsite storage, parking, electric and Police Appeal Tribunal costs are still to be determined and remain unknown at this stage.

Board officials will continue to liaise with DoF and monitor the NIPB financial position.

Members **NOTED** the report and no questions were raised.

6.4 PSNI Finance Report – November 2021

The Committee noted the PSNI's monthly Finance Report and Board officials provided a summary of the PSNI's financial position as at 30 November 2021.

The Chair welcomed PSNI Chief Operating Officer (COO) Mrs Pamela McCreedy, PSNI Assistant Chief Officer (ACO) Corporate Services Mr Mark McNaughten and Head of Transport Mr Marcus Belshaw to the meeting.

The Chair invited the ACO Corporate Services to present the report.

The ACO Corporate Services presented an overview of the monthly Finance Report including a summary of the PSNI's financial position to 30 November 2021 including:

- The position at this stage of the financial year is that the PSNI are reporting an underspend of £6.5m and a projected full year pressure of £13.1m.
- There is a year to date Capital underspend of £4.6m. This is mainly due to delays in Estates projects, however the PSNI are confident that the remaining capital budgets will be spent in year. Department of Justice (DoJ) have asked for an update to the previously submitted 10-Year Capital Plan. This is due to be submitted in early January 2022.
- January monitoring bid has been submitted to Department of Justice and includes £3.4m for EU exit funding, £3.2m for Depreciation and £7.8m for Compensation payments.

During the briefing Members raised a number of questions with both the COO and ACO Corporate Services including:

PSNI Overtime – The ACO Corporate Services advised currently the PSNI are underspent against their profiled overtime costs and they are currently within budget on this, however these costs are likely to increase in future months. The ACO Corporate Services highlighted Page 6 of the report which outlined a breakdown of the overtime costs per district per month as requested by Members at the previous Committee meeting on 25 November 2021. The ACO Corporate Services advised that certain districts cover bigger geographical areas, and/or higher demand, and as such incur larger costs.

Draft Budget allocation – The COO advised that the draft budget allocation for the next 3 year period as issued by the Executive this month is extremely challenging. The COO noted that although the draft budget proposals include a ring fenced allocation of £14.8m for staffing costs, they also reflect a 2% cut of £14.6m, largely offsetting this new funding. As a result, the draft budget baseline falls short of what is required to achieve or maintain officers numbers at the 7,100 target envisaged by March 2022. Rather than increasing headcount towards 7,500 as set out in NDNA, the likely implication of the draft budget is that officer numbers will need to be reduced further to control costs.

The COO reported that in addition to the 2% cut in the 2022/23 financial year, with the anticipated cuts over the following 2 financial years, this budgetary settlement currently projects an operating shortfall of £180m over the next 3 year period. She highlighted the very significant challenges this would present and that it would undoubtedly have implications on the services the PSNI would be able to deliver. The COO reported that PSNI staff operating costs represent around 79% of the PSNI's current budgetary provision, Members were advised that the potential for achieving savings of this level presents serious challenge and would regrettably mean a reduction in headcount. The COO explained the PSNI lose approximately 325 staff per year through natural attrition and the only mechanism open to them to reduce costs would be to not replace officers and staff leaving through retirement/resignation.

The COO noted the case for increased investment in policing remains unchanged. This was reflected in the NDNA commitment to increase officer headcount to 7,500 however is at odds with the current proposed budget allocation. The COO advised the Committee that the PSNI would welcome Members' support and advocacy where possible as regards the ongoing budget negotiations.

Committee Members expressed deep concern at the potential scenario of a reduction in officer levels of 900 over the next 3 years to meet the shortfall.

The Committee thanked the COO and ACO Corporate Services for the update provided.

6.5 PSNI Fleet Strategy

The Chair invited the Head of Transport, Mr Marcus Belshaw to present the PSNI Fleet Strategy.

Mr Belshaw directed Members to the presentation which he would take them through following which he welcomed any questions Members would have on the PSNI Fleet Strategy.

Mr Belshaw explained that Horizon 2025 sets out the overall service modernisation plan over the next 5 years, and from this vision, subsequent strategies have been developed that will progress the necessary next steps to aid the transformation. Horizon 2025 identified the development and delivery of a Fleet Strategy as one of the Business Support area priorities. The Head of Transport noted that the intention of the Fleet Strategy is to create a modernised, technologically advanced and green operating model that provides colleagues with a safe mobile working environment to meet future policing demands.

The Head of Transport presented the PSNI's Fleet Strategy and gave an overview of the paper including:

- The Existing Fleet;
- Drivers for Change;
- Horizon 2025 Strategic Objectives;
- Operational Requirements;
- Future Fleet, and,
- Fleet Funding and Finance.

During the briefing Members raised a number of questions with both the COO and Head of Transport including:

- With such a huge fleet has consideration been given to outsourcing the maintenance work?
- Stock levels currently held in workshops;
- Sustainability and increased use of battery powered bicycles/E-bikes/electric/hybrid vehicles;
- Fuel Costs;
- Upgrade of the air fleet;
- Level of telematics already installed in vehicles and those which require conversion;
- Stock levels of new vehicles and time spent at Seapark before they are allocated out to the districts;
- Vehicle warranties, and,
- Engagement with end users regarding vehicle specifications.

The Chair thanked the Head of Transport for the comprehensive presentation and detailed briefing following which the PSNI representatives left the meeting.

6.6 Update on Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) Injury on Duty

Recommendations

The T/Director of Police Administration presented a paper providing a progress update to Members on the recommendations included in the NIAO report “Injury on duty schemes for officers in the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Prison Service”. Members noted that as liabilities for the PSNI scheme (and the Northern Ireland Prison Service scheme) had increased rapidly over a number of years, the NIAO undertook a review of both schemes and produced a report in early 2020 to consider the key issues facing the schemes and to explore what action is being taken to mitigate them.

The T/Director of Police Administration noted that the NIAO report had produced 4 recommendations and she provided a verbal update of the work undertaken so far by key stakeholders to progress each one. It was noted work remains ongoing in relation to all 4 recommendations and Members were advised that it is anticipated a consultation document, to address the issues identified by the NIAO, is currently being finalised and a consultation due to launch in the coming months.

Members noted that the next key piece of work will be a response from the Board, as the Scheme Manager, to the consultation. Board Officials will keep the Committee apprised in this respect with a view to seeking Members’ views on the consultation in due course.

Members **NOTED** the progress update provided by the T/Director of Police Administration.

6.7 Police Administration Cases for Committee Decision

The Committee considered a paper requesting Members review and make decisions on the eligibility of awards under Injury on Duty and Police Pensions Regulations further to assessments undertaken by Selected Medical

Practitioners (SMPs) and Independent Medical Referees (IMRs).

Board officials advised Members that between 13 November 2021 and 8 December 2021, SMPs had considered 16 cases referred to them under the relevant regulations.

Board officials advised Members that between 13 November 2021 and 8 December 2021, IMR's had considered 3 cases referred to them under the relevant regulations.

Members also considered 2 submissions where applicants have requested their case be reconsidered by the IMR.

The T/Director of Police Administration further updated Members on the standard process undertaken by Board Officials when SMP and IMR reports are completed. This process includes a standard quality assurance check on all reports and certificates prior to the results being considered by the Committee. Following this procedure, Board Officials noted inconsistencies in respect of 8 cases which had recently been considered by an IMR. On noting same, and as Board Officials are not medically qualified, a further suitable quality assurance exercise was completed. To inform their decision making, Members considered all information provided to them following the quality assurance process which had been fully anonymised by Board Officials and shared with Members in advance of the Committee meeting.

The T/Director of Police Administration asked Members to consider the information provided and reach a final decision on each of these 8 IMR cases as well as the aforementioned 16 SMP cases, 3 further IMR and 2 reconsideration requests.

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED** that:

- The medical recommendations of the Selected Medical Practitioners in 16 cases assessed between 13 November 2021 and 8 December 2021 be approved.
- The medical recommendations of the Independent Medical Referees in 3 cases assessed between 13 November 2021 and 8 December 2021 be approved.
- The two anonymised cases (RECON IMR 15–21/22 and RECON IMR 16–21/22), progress to reconsideration by an IMR.
- In respect of the 8 IMR cases which were subject to a further quality assurance review, to advise applicants that on the basis of all information provided the Committee had not approved the outcome in these cases and make arrangements for these applicants to be offered another appeal with an alternate IMR. **(AP4)**

7. QUESTIONS FOR THE CHIEF CONSTABLE

A Member asked the following question to be submitted to the Chief Constable:

- Given numbers recently released following an FOI request regarding higher number of arrests within the Roman Catholic community than the Protestant community, can PSNI advise if this will be addressed as part of the 2023-2028 Equality, Diversity and Good Relations Strategy? **(AP5)**

8. COMMUNICATIONS ISSUES

After discussion it was **AGREED** to issue a statement expressing Members'

concerns in respect of the likely impact of the draft PSNI budget on policing and in particular, police numbers. **(AP6)**.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair drew Members' attention to a paper from PSNI in respect of the disposal of Ballyclare Police Station which had been received the previous day. The Chair advised that the PSNI would be seeking approval from the Board in the New Year to dispose of Ballyclare PSNI station and Members **NOTED** that the paper would be considered further at the next Committee meeting in January 2022.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will take place on Thursday 27 January 2022 at 2pm in Waterside Tower.

The meeting ended at 11.40am

CHAIR

RESOURCES DIRECTORATE
December 2021