



**FUNCTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF DISTRICT
POLICING PARTNERSHIPS AND BELFAST DISTRICT
POLICING PARTNERSHIP SUB-GROUPS**

CODE OF PRACTICE

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD

April 2008

CONTENTS		PAGE
1.	Introduction	3
2.	Role of DPPs	6
3.	Consultation with the Community and Identification of Local Policing Priorities	9
4.	Monitoring Police Performance	11
5.	Engaging the Community to Gain the Co-operation of the Public with the Police in Preventing Crime	12
6.	DPP Discussion Forums	14
7.	Administration of the DPP	16
8.	Availability of the Code	20
ANNEX A	Arrangements for DPP Meetings in Public	21
ANNEX B	Role of the Belfast District Policing Partnership and Sub-Groups	24

1. Introduction

1.1. This Code of Practice (hereafter referred to as the “Code”) details the arrangements District Policing Partnerships (DPPs) are required to make in fulfilling their statutory responsibilities. Arrangements for Belfast DPP and its sub-groups are outlined in **Annex B**.

1.2. In summary, the main responsibilities of a DPP are to:

- Provide views to the District Commander on any matter concerning the policing of the district;¹
- Monitor the performance of the police in carrying out the policing plan;
- Make arrangements for getting the views of the public on matters concerning the policing of the district and gaining their co-operation with the police in preventing crime; and
- Act as a general forum for discussion and consultation on matters affecting the policing of the district.

1.3. The Policing Board has developed “Financial Guidelines for District Policing Partnerships” and “Operational Guidelines for District Policing Partnerships” which complement this Code of Practice and provide detailed guidance to assist DPPs to carry out their statutory duties.²

1.4. The Code is issued under section 19 (1) of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000, (the Act) which states:

The Policing Board shall issue, and may from time to time revise, a Code of Practice containing guidance on the exercise by District Policing Partnerships (DPPs) of their functions.

¹Throughout this Code wherever reference is made to the District Commander the provision shall also apply to his or her deputy as appropriate.

² The Financial and Operational Guidelines are available from the Policing Board on request.

1.5. The Code **replaces** an earlier draft version, issued in January 2006. It takes account of the legislative changes made by the recent commencement of DPP related provisions in the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2003 which, in particular, affects arrangements for Belfast DPP and Belfast DPP sub-groups. This legislation was commenced on 4th September 2007.

1.6. As part of the consultation process copies of this Code were sent to:

- The Secretary of State
- District Councils and Chief Executives of District Councils
- The Chief Constable of PSNI, District and Area Commanders
- DPP Members and Managers
- The PSNI staff associations
- The Equality Commission

1.7. Under section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (the Act) the Board is required, in carrying out all of its functions, powers, policies and duties, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity on nine Section 75 categories and have due regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between people from three of the Section 75 categories. The Act requires the Board to produce an 'Equality Scheme' stating how it intends to fulfil its section 75 duties. Within the Scheme the Board must screen policies to identify if they are likely to have a significant impact on equality of opportunity.

1.8. The Code has been screened for adverse equality impacts and no adverse equality impacts have been determined. Following consultation and screening it has been determined that an Equality Impact Assessment is not required.

1.9. If you have queries about any of the issues covered in the Code or if you require further copies please contact:

Northern Ireland Policing Board
DPP Support Branch
Waterside Tower
31 Clarendon Road
BELFAST
BT1 3BG

Tel: 028 90408500

Fax: 028 90408540

Text phone: 028 90527668

Email: information@nipolicingboard.org.uk

1.10. The Code is also available on the Northern Ireland Policing Board's website – www.nipolicingboard.org.uk and the DPP website www.districtpolicing.com and in alternative formats on request.

2. Role of District Policing Partnerships

- 2.1. The DPP is a body established under section 14 (1) of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000 (as amended), by the local council. The equivalent provision for the Belfast sub-groups is Section 21 and Schedule 3A to that Act. The local council has overall responsibility for ensuring the effective operation of the DPP.
- 2.2. In practical terms the DPP is a partnership between the local council and the community. Its membership is made up of political members who are councillors nominated to the DPP by the council and independent members drawn from the local community and appointed by the Policing Board. The Board has a statutory responsibility to ensure that, when appointing independent members that, as far as practicable, members of the DPP (taken together) are representative of the district.
- 2.3. If a council fails to establish a DPP in line with the legislation, the Secretary of State may, after consulting the Policing Board, direct the council to do so, or to empower the Policing Board to take on the council's role in ensuring that a DPP is established.
- 2.4. The duties and responsibilities of a DPP are set out in section 16 of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000 (as amended), which states:
- 2.5. The functions of a DPP shall be:
- a) to provide views to the District Commander for any police district which is, or is included in, the district and to the Board on any matter concerning the policing of the district;
 - b) to monitor the performance of the police in carrying out:
 - i) the Northern Ireland policing plan in relation to the district;
 - and

- ii) the local policing plan applying to the district or any part of the district;
- c) to make arrangements for obtaining:
 - i) the views of the public about matters concerning the policing of the district; and
 - ii) the co-operation of the public with the police in preventing crime;
- d) to act as a general forum for discussion and consultation on matters affecting the policing of the district; and
- e) such other functions as are conferred on it by any other statutory provision.

2.6. In order to meet these legal requirements a DPP should:

- **consult** with the public to find out what issues in relation to policing and crime are of concern within the council district;
- **identify local policing priorities** arising from the consultation and recommend these to the District Commander so that they can be taken into account when the Local Policing Plan is being drawn up;
- **monitor** police performance against the objectives contained in the Local Policing Plan and the Northern Ireland Policing Plan as it relates to the district;
- **engage** with the community to gain the co-operation of the public with the police in preventing crime; and
- **act** as a general forum for discussion and consultation on all matters relating to the policing of the district.

- 2.7. DPPs have been designated as ‘public authorities’ under the Commissioner for Complaints (Northern Ireland) Order 1996 (as amended) by the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000 and are therefore subject to the statutory duties placed on them by Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. Policies emanating from the implementation of this Code must be developed in line with the DPP’s Equality Scheme.
- 2.8. In discharging their duties DPPs should ensure that they take account of the guidance published by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland entitled: “Guidance for Implementing Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998”. The Board provides Equality and Diversity awareness training for DPP members in implementing Section 75, Equality Schemes and Disability Action Plans. This training is mandatory for all DPP members.
- 2.9. DPPs are subject to the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 as amended by the provisions of section 78, paragraph 25 of Schedule 6 to the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000.
- 2.10. DPPs are also subject to the Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006 which extends the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and imposes a new duty on public authorities to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage their participation in public life. In discharging their duties DPPs should ensure that they take account of the guidance published by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland entitled: “Guidance on Promoting Positive Attitudes Towards Disabled People and Encouraging Participation of Disabled People in Public Life.”

3. Consultation with the Community and Identification of Local Policing Priorities

- 3.1. DPPs must consult with the community to find out what the issues of concern are in relation to policing and crime within the district and provide feedback on the outcome of the consultation process. In addition to the bi-ennial DPP Public Consultation Survey, other potential consultation mechanisms include community meetings, qualitative research, road shows, themed meetings and networking events. When organising events consideration should be given to location and timing to maximise accessibility by the community.
- 3.2. In planning their approach to consultation, DPPs should ensure they take into account the range of consultation mechanisms already in place within the district and through other partners,
- 3.3. DPPs have a statutory role to facilitate consultation by the police with any local community within the district. In doing this the DPP supports the development of local networks for consultation between the police and the community to address local policing issues. The Policing Board has developed 'Guidelines for Co-ordinating the work of DPPs with Local Consultative Groups on Policing Issues'.³
- 3.4. To provide feedback to the community on the outcome of the consultation - annual reports, local media, newsletters, information leaflets and the DPP website are all possible communication methods. The DPP must also ensure that consultation and feedback arrangements are inclusive of groups in the district who traditionally have not engaged with the police. Consideration should also be given to meetings with representative organisations on particular equality related issues and using representative organisations to extend engagement with individuals from hard to reach groups.

³ The Guidelines are available from the Policing Board on request.

3.5. A summary of the information obtained through the consultation process should be included in the DPP's annual Consultation Report. The DPP must also identify local policing priorities arising from its consultation and recommend these to the District Commander and the Policing Board so that they can be taken into account in the development of the Local Policing Plan and Northern Ireland Policing Plan respectively.

3.6. To ensure that the Local Policing Plan reflects the concerns and priorities of the local community the District Commander will discuss with the DPP targets for inclusion in the Local Policing Plan. The DPP must inform the community on the extent to which issues identified through consultation have been accepted.

3.7. The Board has developed "Guidelines for DPPs on Local Policing Plans" which provide further detail on consultation and identifying priorities.⁴

⁴ The Guidelines are available from the Policing Board on request.

4. Monitoring Police Performance

4.1. DPPs monitor how well the local police perform against the targets set within the Local Policing Plan. DPPs do this at meetings in public during which the District Commander reports performance and is questioned by the DPP. Members of the public should be encouraged to attend and participate. DPPs must hold a minimum of four quarterly monitoring meetings in public each year.

4.2. DPP meetings must be conducted in an open and transparent manner and arranged to maximise the opportunity for all sections of the community to attend and participate. It is the DPP Chair's responsibility to maintain a neutral, constructive and harmonious environment within the meeting. The Chair must ensure that those participating – DPP Members or PSNI staff are not subjected to unreasonable questioning or inappropriate challenge, or verbal abuse such as name calling or the challenging of an individual's integrity by disputing the truthfulness of the answer provided.

4.3. Arrangements for the management of DPP meetings in public are detailed at **ANNEX A**.

5. Engaging the Community to Gain the Co-operation of the Public with the Police in Preventing Crime

5.1. A key role of the DPP is to engage with the community to gain the co-operation of the public with the police in preventing crime. All the work of the DPP contributes to gaining the co-operation of the public with the police in preventing crime. For example through consultation, the DPP create dialogue between the police and local community; by establishing policing priorities they give the local community a say in policing and through their monitoring role they ensure local police accountability.

5.2. In addition, the DPP has a role in building relationships with communities in a way that encourages the community to get involved with the police in planning how crime related problems could be resolved. In practice, this will often happen through front-line officers, such as Neighbourhood policing teams. However, there will be occasions when the DPP should also engage with communities or particular community groups directly, about particular issues.

5.3. Community engagement is about building a relationship, and therefore would not be the best way to describe one-off activities or events. Engagement can be used very much as part of problem-solving, and is therefore best suited to a particular problem or issue where it is important to draw upon the skills, knowledge and expertise of relevant agencies and organisations who would be best placed to understand their particular issues and provide advice and assistance on engaging in the most effective manner.

5.4. Potential mechanisms for engaging the community to gain their co-operation with the police in preventing crime may involve amongst other things, the formation of multi-agency partnerships in relation to policing issues that are within the remit of the DPP, problem solving

- 5.5. It is important that in developing this role, the DPP seek to establish joint mechanisms with other relevant agencies such as the local Community Safety Partnership; community and police liaison groups; community and voluntary organisations and other statutory agencies to prevent duplication of effort and cost.
- 5.6. DPPs should also explore the potential of involving a range of other local stakeholders to assist with engagement processes, for example, using youth outreach workers to facilitate focus groups with young people, housing officers to engage with residents, victims support to engage with victims of crime.
- 5.7. The Policing Board has developed operational guidance on gaining the co-operation of the public with the police in preventing crime.^{5 6}

⁵ A Ministerial review of relationships between DPPs and CSPs is on-going. The operational guidance will be revised as appropriate on completion of the Review.

⁶ Copies of the guidance are available from the Policing Board on request.

6. DPP Discussion Forums

- 6.1. The DPP must facilitate two general forums specifically dedicated to discussion of policing issues in the district each year. The purpose is to enable the community to engage with the police and with the DPP in discussing issues of concern in relation to policing in the district. It also enables the DPP to prepare information for the police planning process, to engage the public with the police, to link into consultation with other local partnerships and agencies and to identify and share good practice in terms of community crime prevention activities.
- 6.2. DPPs should, in consultation with the local community, organise forums for discussion in areas where the community may have difficulty in engaging with the police or in areas directly affected by the particular issue being addressed at the meeting. In advance of the meeting the DPP should publicise the general theme or issues to be discussed at the meeting. The theme for the meeting may be an issue of concern within the district at the time of the meeting, an issue of concern to specific equality groups which have not traditionally engaged with the police or it may be one of the key areas taken from the Local Policing Plan.
- 6.3. The discussion forum must be attended, by the District Commander and the DPP may also invite representatives from organisations known to have an interest in the subject.
- 6.4. The District Commander should be notified at least **15 working days** in advance of a themed meeting and asked to open the meeting by briefing the DPP and the public on the current situation in relation to the issue under consideration. Following the District Commander's briefing the DPP Chairperson should open the forum to the DPP

members and the public inviting them to raise issues through the DPP
Chair to the District Commander

7. Administration of the DPP

DPP Standing Orders

7.1. In order to fulfil its statutory requirements, the DPP must draw up standing orders setting out how their business shall be regulated.

7.2. Following the establishment of DPPs, the Chief Executive of each council must forward a copy of standing orders that apply to the DPP to the Policing Board and the District Commander. The same arrangements apply for any amendments to standing orders. .

Reports of Meetings in Public

7.3. The report from a DPP Meeting in Public must include the following:

- the agenda for the meeting
- the minutes of the meeting to include a record of all questions and answers given
- a copy of the police District Commander's report.

7.4. Before the report of a DPP meeting in public (in which the police have participated) is ratified, the District Commander should be asked to confirm within **10 working days**, the factual accuracy of any PSNI input. Not later than **7 working days** after the report of the meeting in public of a DPP has been formally ratified, the report must be available on the DPP website.

Report on the DPP's Assessment of Police Performance

7.5. On a six monthly basis, the DPP should produce an assessment of the police performance in the district

DPP Annual Report

7.6. DPPs have a statutory responsibility to submit to the district council a general report on the exercise of its functions during that year no later than **3 months** after the end of each financial year. DPPs must at the same time send a copy of the report to the Policing Board. It is the Council's responsibility to decide how the DPP Annual Report must be published.

7.7. In addition to reporting how the DPP carried out its statutory duties, the DPP Annual Report must include DPP Members attendance records and signed year end accounts as detailed in the DPP Financial Guidelines. The accounts must state whether they are audited or unaudited.⁷

7.8. Before issuing the Annual Report the DPP must consult with the District Commander. The report should record that this consultation has taken place and summarise the outcomes.

Strategic Plan and Operational Plan

7.9. Within **six months** from the date it was reconstituted, DPPs must produce a Strategic Plan for their term of office and annually develop an Operational Plan by the 30 November to coincide with the budget setting process each year which will identify how the DPP will achieve the objectives set out in the Strategic Plan.

7.10. DPPs must, in developing Strategic and Operational Plans, ensure that the priorities of the community and issues concerning policing within the district are recognised and have identified the opportunities for the public and the police to work together to address specific issues.

Consultation Report

⁷ Accounts can only be classified as audited after the Local Government Auditor audit certificate is received.

7.11. The DPP should produce an annual Consultation Report by **30 September** summarising the outcome of its public consultation exercise. The report should include the priorities for inclusion in the Northern Ireland and local Policing Plans.

Special Reports

7.12. As set out in the relevant legislation the Board may require a DPP to provide it with a report, within a **3 month** period from the date on which that requirement is made, on any matter that it may specify connected with the exercise of the DPP's functions. In the case of Belfast DPP, the Policing Board may also require the DPP to report to it on the functions of sub-groups. If the requirement relates wholly or in part to a sub-group the reporting period is **4 months**.

7.13. Belfast DPP has the power to require sub-groups to provide it with a report, within a **2 month** period from the date on which that requirement is made, on any matter that it may specify connected with the exercise of the sub-groups functions.

Availability of DPP Reports

7.14. Copies of all DPP Reports should be available to the Council, to the Policing Board and to the District Commander. The DPP must ensure that these documents are available to all interested groups and other partnerships within the district and on the DPP website at **www.districtpolicing.com**.

7.15. Copies of all DPP publications should be available on request in accessible formats. The DPP should also consider how to reach a wide and diverse audience with these documents.

Financial Arrangements

7.16.Paragraph 11 of Schedule 3 to the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000 (as amended) states:

“The Board shall for each financial year make to the council a grant equal to three-quarters of the expenses reasonably incurred by the council in that year in connection with the establishment of, or the exercise of functions by a DPP”.

7.17.Full details of the conditions attached to the financial grant, which the Policing Board makes to councils in relation to the reasonable costs of DPPs are contained in a separate document complementing this Code of Practice and entitled Financial Guidelines for DPPs. ⁸

⁸ DPP Financial Guidelines are available from the Policing Board on request.

8. Availability of the Code

- 8.1. The Code is available on the Northern Ireland Policing Board's website – www.nipolicingboard.org.uk and the DPP website www.districtpolicing.com and in alternative formats on request.
- 8.2. The Code should be readily available at all council offices for reference by any interested individual.
- 8.3. If you have queries about any of the issues covered in this code or if you require further copies please contact:

Northern Ireland Policing Board
DPP Support Branch
Waterside Tower
31 Clarendon Road
Clarendon Dock
BELFAST
BT1 3BG

Tel: 028 90408500
Fax: 028 90408540
Text phone: 028 90527668
Email: information@nipolicingboard.org.uk

Arrangements for DPP Meetings in Public

At least **21 working days** before a meeting in public, the District Commander must be informed in writing of the date, place, time and nature of the meeting. The DPP should request a copy of the District Commander's Report to be sent to the DPP **15 working days** in advance of the meeting.

The District Commander's Report should include the following information:

- A summary of recorded crime and detection rates within the District;
- Progress against each of the targets in the local policing plan; and,
- An update on specific issues relative to policing the district that may have aroused public interest or concern.

When reporting police performance over the six and twelve month period ending 30th September and 31st March respectively, the District Commander should also be asked to report:

- Progress towards developing 'policing with the community' as the core function of all police within the district;
- The contribution that the police are making to any community safety projects within the district;
- Achievement of targets relative to crime prevention in the district;
- PSNI district training that has taken place that may be of interest to the DPP such as, police training on Human Rights, the PSNI Code of ethics or community engagement.

In addition to reports presented to meetings in public, the DPP may ask the District Commander for a briefing on other policing issues relating to the district.

The DPP must advertise meetings in public at least **12 working days** in advance of the meeting. All advertisements should outline the purpose of the meeting, the date, place and time and that the public may ask questions of the

police through the Chairperson of the DPP or submit a written question for the DPP to be put to the District Commander on their behalf.

Questions at Meetings in Public

In advance of its first meeting in public the DPP must agree a process for dealing with written and oral questions from the public. Such a process should allow engagement from the public but be consistent with the constructive and orderly conduct of meetings.

The DPP should agree with the District Commander a process for dealing with anonymous written questions submitted to the DPP. The DPP should state these arrangements in the DPP Standing Orders

The District Commander should be informed **8 working days** before the meeting in public of written questions submitted by the public and questions that DPP Members will raise in response to the Commander's Report.

In responding to a question, the presumption is that information should be provided unless there are legal reasons for withholding the information or if it is in the public interest to hold it back. At the start of a meeting in public of the DPP, the public should be informed of the circumstances in which information cannot be provided, for example if:

- it is in the interests of national security
- it would endanger the security of one or more individuals
- it relates to an individual and is of a sensitive personal nature
- it involves information that the police are holding in confidence from another agency
- it would, or would likely to, prejudice proceedings which have been commenced in a court of law
- it would, or would likely to, prejudice the prevention or detection of crime or the apprehension or prosecution of offenders.

This information should be provided on an information sheet and given out at the start of the meeting.

If information cannot be provided, the Chair should encourage the questioner to rephrase and/or generalise the question in order to create an opportunity for information to be provided.

Not all questions have to be dealt with at the meeting in public and some questions may receive a written response. In addition, not every question must be answered on an individual basis. If multiple questions are received on the same issue it is appropriate to provide a composite answer.

Questions submitted and answers provided form part of the official records of the DPP and as such should be kept appropriately.

ANNEX B

Role of the Belfast District Policing Partnership and Sub-Groups

This Annex deals with the arrangements within Belfast for Belfast DPP and its sub-groups. Belfast DPP is established under section 14 (1) of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000 (as amended). The equivalent provision for the Belfast sub-groups is Section 21 and Schedule 3A to that Act. This legislation requires Belfast City Council to establish a DPP and a sub-group of its DPP for each of the police districts within Belfast. Currently there are four Police Districts and, accordingly, four sub-groups must be established together with the Belfast DPP.

If Belfast City Council fails to establish a DPP or sub-group in line with the legislation, the Secretary of State may, after consulting the Policing Board, direct the council to do so, or to empower the Policing Board to take on the council's role in ensuring that a DPP or sub-group is established.

Belfast DPP has been designated as 'public authorities' under the Commissioner for Complaints (Northern Ireland) Order 1996 (as amended) by the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000 and is therefore subject to the statutory duties placed on them by Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. Policies emanating from the implementation of this Code must be developed in line with the DPP's Equality Scheme.

In discharging their duties Belfast DPP should ensure that they take account of the guidance published by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland entitled: "Guidance for Implementing Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998". The Board provides Equality and Diversity awareness training for DPP and sub-group members in implementing Section 75, Equality Schemes and Disability Action Plans. This training is mandatory for all DPP and sub-group members.

Belfast DPP is subject to the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 as amended by the provisions of section 78, paragraph 25 of Schedule 6 to the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000.

Belfast DPP is also subject to the Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006 which extends the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and imposes a new duty on public authorities to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage their participation in public life. In discharging their duties Belfast DPP should ensure that they take account of the guidance published by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland entitled: "Guidance on Promoting Positive Attitudes Towards Disabled People and Encouraging Participation of Disabled People in Public Life."

Overview of Belfast DPP

The functions and powers of the Belfast DPP remain broadly in line with those that apply to other DPPs. However, Belfast DPP is also responsible for overseeing the work of its sub-groups. To avoid unnecessary duplication between the Belfast DPP and its sub-groups the DPP retains the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that functions are adequately fulfilled in any or all the police districts within Belfast by the sub-groups. But, if Belfast DPP is satisfied that a sub-group is fulfilling its functions, the legislation provides that there is no need for the Belfast DPP to duplicate the sub-group's work.

Belfast DPP can require a sub-group to produce a report on any matter concerned with the exercise of its functions. The Chairs of the Belfast DPP sub-groups are required to report quarterly to the Belfast DPP on the work of the sub-groups.

Belfast DPP therefore provides a strategic overview of the work of the sub-groups and of policing within the city as a whole. Primarily the Belfast DPP supports the work of the sub-groups and monitors their effectiveness in performing their statutory functions.

Functions of Belfast Sub-Groups

The Police (NI) Act 2003 extends to the Belfast sub-groups the majority of functions of DPPs, but not quite all. The sub-groups are accountable to the Belfast DPP and not to the Policing Board or Belfast City Council.

Accountability to the Policing Board and City Council remains the role of the Belfast DPP itself.

The functions of sub-groups mirror those of other DPPs, and are:

- To provide views to the police District Commander of their respective district and to the DPP on any matter concerning the policing of their district.
- To monitor the performance of the police in carrying out:
 - I. the Northern Ireland policing plan in relation to their district; and
 - II. the local policing plan applying to their district;
- To make arrangements for obtaining:
 - I. the views of the public about matters concerning the policing of their district; and
 - II. the co-operation of the public with the police in preventing crime;
- To act as a general forum for discussion and consultation on matters affecting the policing of their district.

The arrangements for the exercise of these functions should follow the procedures set out in this Annex together with the accompanying operational and financial guidelines. In addition, Belfast DPP has the power to give directions to a sub-group about the regulation of its procedure.

The arrangements for constituting committees of Belfast sub-groups are similar to the arrangements that apply to the DPPs. A sub-group may recommend to the Belfast DPP that a committee be established, or may be required to do so by the Belfast DPP. Belfast DPP is responsible for

approving the establishment of that committee, including its membership and delegated functions.

Membership of Belfast Sub-Groups

Each sub-group must have 11 members – 6 political members and 5 independent members. The political members of each sub-group will comprise as far as is practicable at least one member from each of the four main political parties comprising Belfast City Council. This is to enable the rotation of the position of Chair between parties. The Chair will be nominated from the political members and the vice-chair will be elected by the independent members.

Belfast DPP Sub-Groups - Consultation with the Community and Identification of Local Policing Priorities

Belfast DPP sub-groups must consult with the community in their respective districts to find out what the issues of concern are in relation to policing and crime and provide feedback to the community and Belfast DPP on the outcome of the consultation process. In addition to the bi-ennial DPP Public Consultation Survey, other potential consultation mechanisms include community meetings, qualitative research, road shows, themed meetings and networking events. When organising events consideration should be given to location and timing to maximise accessibility by the community.

In planning their approach to consultation, Belfast DPP sub-groups should ensure they take into account the range of consultation mechanisms already in place within the City and the district and through other partners.

Belfast DPP sub-groups have a statutory role to facilitate consultation by the police with any local community within the district. In doing this the sub-group supports the development of local networks for consultation between the police and the community to address local policing issues. The Policing Board has developed 'Guidelines for Co-ordinating the work of DPPs and sub-groups with Local Consultative Groups on Policing Issues'.⁹

To provide feedback to the community on the outcome of the consultation - inserts to Belfast DPP annual reports, local media, newsletters, information leaflets and the DPP website are all possible communication methods. The sub-groups must also ensure that consultation and feedback arrangements are inclusive of groups in the district who traditionally have not engaged with the police. Consideration should also be given to meetings with representative organisations on particular equality related issues and using representative organisations to extend engagement with individuals from hard to reach groups.

⁹ The Guidelines are available from the Policing Board on request.

A summary of the information obtained through the consultation process should be included in the Belfast DPP's annual Consultation Report. Sub-groups must also identify local policing priorities arising from its consultation and recommend these to the District Commander

To ensure that the Local Policing Plan reflects the concerns and priorities of the local community the District Commander will discuss with the Belfast sub-groups targets for inclusion in the Local Policing Plan. The sub-group must inform the community on the extent to which issues identified through consultation have been accepted

The Board has developed "Guidelines for DPPs on Local Policing Plans" which provide further detail on consultation and identifying priorities.¹⁰

Belfast DPP – Consultation Responsibilities

To receive and agree the consultation reports from the sub-groups and forward these to the Policing Board so that they can be taken into account in the development of the Northern Ireland Policing Plan.

¹⁰ The Guidelines are available from the Policing Board on request.

Belfast DPP Sub-Groups - Monitoring Police Performance

Belfast DPP sub-groups monitor how well the local police perform against the targets set within the Local Policing Plan. Sub-groups do this at meetings in public during which the District Commander reports performance and is questioned by the members of the sub-group. Members of the public should be encouraged to attend and participate. Each Belfast sub-group must hold a minimum of four quarterly monitoring meetings in public each year.

Sub-group meetings must be conducted in an open and transparent manner and arranged to maximise the opportunity for all sections of the community to attend and participate. It is the Chair's responsibility to maintain a neutral, constructive and harmonious environment within the meeting. The Chair must ensure that those participating, sub-group Members or PSNI staff are not subjected to unreasonable questioning or inappropriate challenge, or verbal abuse such as name calling or the challenging of an individual's integrity by disputing the truthfulness of the answer provided.

Arrangements for Sub-Group Meetings in Public

At least **21 working days** before a meeting in public, the District Commander must be informed in writing of the date, place, time and nature of the meeting. The sub-group should request a copy of the District Commander's Report to be sent to the sub-group **15 working days** in advance of the meeting.

The District Commander's Report should include the following information:

- A summary of recorded crime and detection rates within the District;
- Progress against each of the targets in the local policing plan; and,
- An update on specific issues relative to policing the district that may have aroused public interest or concern.

When reporting police performance over the six and twelve month period ending 30th September and 31st March respectively, the District Commander should also be asked to report:

- Progress towards developing 'policing with the community' as the core function of all police within the district;
- The contribution that the police are making to any community safety projects within the district;
- Achievement of targets relative to crime prevention in the district;
- PSNI district training that has taken place that may be of interest to the DPP such as, police training on Human Rights, the PSNI Code of ethics or community engagement.

In addition to reports presented to meetings in public, the sub-group may ask the District Commander for a briefing on other policing issues relating to Belfast.

The sub-group must advertise meetings in public at least **12 working days** in advance of the meeting. All advertisements should outline the purpose of the meeting, the date, place and time and that the public may ask questions of the police through the Chairperson of the sub-group or submit a written question for the sub-group to be put to the District Commander on their behalf.

Questions at Meetings in Public

In advance of its first meeting in public the sub-group must agree a process for dealing with written and oral questions from the public. Such a process should allow engagement from the public but be consistent with the constructive and orderly conduct of meetings.

The sub-group should agree with the District Commander a process for dealing with anonymous written questions submitted to the sub-group. The sub-group should state these arrangements in the Belfast DPP Standing Orders

The District Commander should be informed **8 working days** before the meeting in public of written questions submitted by the public and questions that sub-group Members will raise in response to the Commander's Report.

In responding to a question, the presumption is that information should be provided unless there are legal reasons for withholding the information or if it is in the public interest to hold it back. At the start of a meeting in public of the sub-group, the public should be informed of the circumstances in which information cannot be provided, for example if:

- it is in the interests of national security
- it would endanger the security of one or more individuals
- it relates to an individual and is of a sensitive personal nature
- it involves information that the police are holding in confidence from another agency
- it would, or would likely to, prejudice proceedings which have been commenced in a court of law
- it would, or would likely to, prejudice the prevention or detection of crime or the apprehension or prosecution of offenders.

This information should be provided on an information sheet and given out at the start of the meeting.

If information cannot be provided, the Chair should encourage the questioner to rephrase and/or generalise the question in order to create an opportunity for information to be provided.

Not all questions have to be dealt with at the meeting in public and some questions may receive a written response. In addition, not every question must be answered on an individual basis. If multiple questions are received on the same issue it is appropriate to provide a composite answer.

Questions submitted and answers provided form part of the official records of the sub-group and as such should be kept appropriately.

Belfast DPP Sub-Groups - Engaging the Community to Gain the Co-operation of the Public with the Police in Preventing Crime

A key role of the Belfast DPP sub-groups is to engage with the community to gain the co-operation of the public with the police in preventing crime. All the work of the sub-groups contributes to gaining the co-operation of the public with the police in preventing crime. For example through consultation, the sub-groups create dialogue between the police and local community; by establishing policing priorities they give the local community a say in policing and through their monitoring role they ensure local accountability.

In addition, the sub-groups have a role in building relationships with communities in a way that encourages the community to get involved with the police in planning how crime related problems could be resolved. In practice, this will often happen through front-line officers, such as Neighbourhood policing teams. However, there will be occasions when the sub-groups should also engage with communities or particular community groups directly in relation to specific localities, about particular issues.

Community engagement is about building a relationship, and therefore would not be the best way to describe one-off activities or events. Engagement can be used very much as part of problem-solving, and is therefore best suited to a particular problem or issue where it is important to draw upon the skills, knowledge and expertise of relevant agencies and organisations who would be best placed to understand their particular issues and provide advice and assistance on engaging in the most effective manner.

Potential mechanisms for engaging the community to gain their co-operation with the police in preventing crime may involve amongst other things, the formation of multi-agency partnerships in relation to policing issues that are within the remit of the sub-groups, problem solving with the community and

the promotion of partnership working between the police and public, such as through Neighbourhood Watch schemes.

It is important that in developing this role the sub-groups seek to establish joint mechanisms with other relevant agencies such as the Belfast Community Safety Partnership; community and police liaison groups; community and voluntary organisations and other statutory agencies to prevent duplication of effort and cost.

The sub-groups should also explore the potential of involving a range of other local stakeholders to assist with engagement processes, for example, using youth outreach workers to facilitate focus groups with young people, housing officers to engage with residents, victims support to engage with victims of crime.

The Policing Board has developed operational guidance on gaining the co-operation of the public with the police in preventing crime.^{11 12}

¹¹ A Ministerial review of relationships between DPPs and CSPs is on-going. The operational guidance will be revised as appropriate on completion of the Review.

¹² Copies of the guidance are available from the Policing Board on request.

Sub-Group Discussion Forums

The sub-groups must each facilitate two general forums specifically dedicated to discussion of policing issues each year. The purpose is to enable the community to engage with the police and the sub-group in discussing issues of concern in relation to policing issues. It also enables the sub-group to prepare information for the police planning process, to engage the public with the police, to link into consultation with other local partnerships and agencies and to identify and share good practice in terms of community crime prevention activities.

The Belfast sub-groups should in consultation with the local community organise forums for discussion in areas where the community may have difficulty in engaging with the police or in areas directly affected by the particular issue being addressed at the meeting. The sub-group should publicise in advance the general theme or issues that will be discussed at the meeting. The theme for the meeting may be an issue of concern within the district at the time of the meeting, an issue of concern to specific equality groups which have not traditionally engaged with the police or it may be one of the key areas taken from the Local Policing Plan.

The discussion forum must be attended by the District Commander. The sub-group may also invite representatives from organisations known to have an interest in the subject.

The District Commander should be notified at least **15 working days** in advance of a themed meeting and asked to open the meeting by briefing the sub-group and the public on the current situation in relation to the issue under consideration. Following the District Commander's briefing the sub-group Chair should open the forum to sub-group members and the public inviting them to raise issues through the Chair to the District Commander or in the case of the public to the sub-group also.

Belfast DPP – Discussion Forums

Belfast DPP must hold a minimum of four general forums for discussion specifically dedicated to discussion of policing issues of general concern across the city.

The discussion forum must be attended by the District Commanders. The DPP may also invite representatives from organisations known to have an interest in the subject.

The DPP should publicise in advance the general theme or issues that will be discussed at the meeting.

Administration of Belfast DPP and Sub-Groups

DPP Standing Orders

In order to fulfil its statutory requirements, Belfast DPP must draw up standing orders setting out how its business shall be regulated and regulate the procedures for the sub-groups.

Following the establishment of Belfast DPP and sub-groups, the Chief Executive of Belfast city Council must forward a copy of standing orders that apply to the Belfast DPP and sub-groups to the Policing Board and the four District Commanders. The same arrangements apply for any amendments to standing orders.

Reports of Sub-Group Meetings in Public

The report from a sub-group Meeting in Public must include the following:

- the agenda for the meeting
- the minutes of the meeting to include a record of all questions and answers given
- a copy of the police District Commander's report.

Before the report of a sub-group meeting in public (in which the police have participated) is ratified, the District Commander should be asked to confirm within **10 working days**, the factual accuracy of any PSNI input. Not later than **7 working days** after the report of the meeting in public of a sub-group has been formally ratified, the report must be available on the Belfast DPP website.

Report on the DPP's Assessment of Police Performance

On a six monthly basis, each sub-group should produce an assessment of the police performance in the district. The Chair of each sub-group as part of the overall responsibility to the Belfast must report the sub-group's assessment of police performance to the Belfast DPP.

Belfast Sub-Groups' Annual Reports

Each sub-group is required no later than **2 months** after the financial year to submit to Belfast DPP a general report of how it exercised its functions during that year. In addition to reporting how the sub-group carried out its statutory duties, the sub-group general report must include sub-group Members' attendance records

Before issuing the report the sub-group must consult with the District Commander for the area. The report should record that this consultation has taken place and summarise the outcomes.

Belfast DPP Annual Report

Belfast DPP has a statutory responsibility to submit to the City Council and copy to the Policing Board a general report on the exercise of its functions and the functions of the sub-groups during that year no later than **4 months** after the end of each financial year. In addition to reporting how the DPP and sub-groups carried out their statutory duties, Belfast DPP Annual Report must include Belfast DPP and sub-groups' members attendance records and signed year end accounts as detailed in the DPP Financial Guidelines. The accounts must state whether they are audited or unaudited.¹³

¹³ Accounts can only be classified as audited after the Local Government Auditor audit certificate is received.

It is the City Council's responsibility to decide how the DPP Annual Report must be published. The Council may also arrange for a sub-group report to be published if:

- a) the council considers publication of the report appropriate, or
- b) Belfast DPP has requested publication of the sub-group report.

Before issuing the Annual Report Belfast DPP must consult the District Commander of each of the Belfast police districts. The report should record that this consultation has taken place and summarise the outcomes.

Strategic Plan and Operational Plan

Within **six months** from the date it was reconstituted, Belfast DPP in partnership with the sub-groups must produce a Strategic Plan for their term of office and annually develop an Operational Plan to coincide with the budget setting process each year which will identify how the DPP and sub-groups will achieve the objectives set out in the Strategic Plan.

Belfast DPP must, in developing Strategic and Operational Plans, ensure that the priorities of the community and issues concerning policing within each of the Belfast police districts are recognised and have identified the opportunities for the public and the police to work together to address specific issues.

Each sub-group must produce an Action Plan detailing how the annual operational plan will be given effect for its police district and each sub-group Chair to report quarterly progress against actions to the Belfast DPP.

Belfast DPP Consultation Report

Belfast DPP should in partnership with the sub-groups produce an annual Consultation Report by **30 September** summarising the outcome of each

of the sub-groups' public consultation exercises. The report should include the priorities agreed by each of the sub-groups for inclusion in the Northern Ireland and local Policing Plans.

Special Reports

As set out in the relevant legislation, the Board may require Belfast DPP to provide it with a report, within a **3 month** period from the date on which that requirement is made, on any matter that it may specify connected with the exercise of the DPP's functions. The Board may also require the DPP to report to it on the functions of sub-groups. If the requirement relates wholly or in part to a sub-group the reporting period is **4 months**.

Belfast DPP has the power to require sub-groups to provide it with a report, within a **2 month** period from the date on which that requirement is made, on any matter that it may specify connected with the exercise of the sub-groups functions.

Availability of DPP Reports

Belfast DPP must ensure that these documents are available to all interested groups and other partnerships within the City and on the DPP website at **www.districtpolicing.com**.

Copies of all Belfast DPP publications should be available on request in accessible formats. The DPP should also consider how to reach a wide and diverse audience with these documents.

Financial Arrangements

Paragraph 11 of Schedule 3 to the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000 (as amended) states:

“The Board shall for each financial year make to the council a grant equal to three-quarters of the expenses reasonably incurred by the council in that year in connection with the establishment of, or the exercise of functions by, a DPP”.

Full details of the conditions attached to the financial grant, which the Policing Board makes to councils in relation to the reasonable costs of DPPs and Belfast sub-groups, are contained in a separate document complementing this Code of Practice and entitled Financial Guidelines for DPPs.¹⁴

¹⁴ DPP Financial Guidelines are available from the Policing Board on request.

