

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD

MINUTES OF MEETING OF RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 22 JUNE 2023 AT 9.30AM IN JAMES HOUSE AND VIA ZOOM

PRESENT:

- Mr Trevor Clarke MLA (Chair)
- Mr Frank McManus (Vice-Chair) *
- Mr John Blair MLA
- (1) Ms Nuala McAllister MLA
- (2) Mr Mike Nesbitt MLA
- Mr Brendan Mullan
- (3) Mr Gerry Kelly MLA
- (4) Mr Mukesh Sharma
- Dr Kate Lavery

EX OFFICIO MEMBER IN ATTENDANCE:

- (3) Ms Deirdre Toner

POLICE SERVICE OF NORTHERN IRELAND IN ATTENDANCE:

- (5) Ms Pamela McCreedy, Chief Operating Officer
- (6) Ms Clare Duffield, Assistant Chief Officer, People and Organisational Development
- (7) Mr Mark McNaughten, Assistant Chief Officer, Corporate Services
- (6) Head of External Recruitment
- (5) Two PSNI Staff

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mrs Sinead Simpson, Chief Executive
Mr Sam Hagen, Senior Director of Resources
Seven Board Officials

- (1) From 10.15am on
- (2) From 10.30am on
- (3) Left at 12.30pm
- (4) Left at 1pm
- (5) Items 6.1 to 6.6 only
- (6) Items 6.1 to 6.4 only
- (7) Items 6.5 and 6.6 only

*Attended meeting by video conference facility

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mrs Linda Dillon MLA.

The Committee agreed the agenda for the meeting and no one raised any items to be discuss under 'Any Other Business'.

2. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No conflicts of interest were declared.

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 MAY 2023

The Committee considered the draft minutes of the Committee meeting held on 25 May 2023.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- The minutes of the Committee meeting held on 25 May 2023 be approved.

4. UPDATE ON ACTION LOG

The Committee **NOTED** the updates and correspondence detailed within the Action Log and the related verbal overview provided by the Director of Resources.

In respect of Action Point 3 from the meeting in May 2023, the NIPB Resource Plan 2023-24 will be discussed later in the meeting at agenda item 6.7.

In respect of Action Points from the meeting in March 2023, discussions are ongoing with PSNI Senior Officer allowances regarding Action Point 4, and consideration is ongoing for Action Point 5 and the NIPB policy on Senior Officer recruitment.

The Director of Resources also provided an update on correspondence issued and received for agenda items 4.1 to 4.3.

4.1 Correspondence issued regarding vehicle repair costs

In respect of Action Point 1 from the meeting in May 2023, correspondence has been issued regarding the number of damaged PSNI vehicles and estimated repair costs and a response is awaited.

Members **NOTED** the correspondence.

4.2 Correspondence regarding absence management

In respect of Action Point 5 from the meeting in February 2023, a response has been received following a request for further information on attendance management in PSNI. Members raised concerns regarding the high level of sickness absence, mitigating factors, revised targets, and advised there will be an opportunity to discuss these matters with PSNI later in the meeting at agenda item 6.1.

Members **NOTED** the correspondence.

4.3 Correspondence issued regarding Above Delegated Authority Requests

In respect of Action Point 2 from the meeting in May 2023, correspondence has been issued following concerns raised by Members regarding two recent above delegated authority requests considered by the Committee, and a response is awaited.

Members **NOTED** the correspondence.

5. CHAIRPERSON'S BUSINESS

The Committee **NOTED** the updates and related verbal overview provided by the Director of Resources in respect of the following agenda items.

5.1 Update on Assisted Removals Case

Correspondence has been received from PSNI to provide an update on a complex and protracted above delegated authority request and extension to delegated limits. The Applicant's request for an extension to store furniture and personal possessions and reside in Police Leased Accommodation was considered and approved by the Committee on a number of occasions since September 2020.

The matter has now been brought to a satisfactory conclusion and the Officer involved is no longer residing in police leased accommodation having secured alternative accommodation.

5.2 College of Policing – Changing culture in policing

Correspondence has been received from the College of Policing to provide an update on work taking place to tackle sexism and misogyny in policing to regain public trust and ensure the delivery of an effective and professional service.

5.3 Operation Rondeletto Costs

Correspondence from the Chief Constable to the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) in respect of recovering the substantial costs incurred from policing the recent US Presidential visit and 25th anniversary of the Belfast Good Friday agreement.

5.4 Potential development at Ballymena PSNI Station

Members were advised of a response to a recent media enquiry regarding a proposed development on the former St Patrick's Barracks site in Ballymena. PSNI are actively reviewing Police Station accommodation in the Ballymena area and have identified a potential opportunity for a replacement facility on this site, however this is at a very early concept stage and no definitive plans have been confirmed.

5.5 Membership of Ill Health Retirement (IHR)/ Injury On Duty (IOD) subgroup - verbal update

Members of the IHR/ IOD subgroup were confirmed and the group will meet in due course.

5.6 Draft response to Northern Ireland (NI) Affairs Committee

Members were advised of a draft response to the NI Affairs Committee following a request for the Board to make a submission to the Enquiry on the Funding and Delivering of Public Services in Northern Ireland.

5.7 Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB) Staff Turnover - verbal update

Chair of Audit and Risk Assurance Committee previously highlighted the high level of NIPB staff turnover for 2022-23 and to bring this matter to the attention of Committee.

The Chief Executive provided further insight and following discussion it was agreed to revisit this matter at a future Committee meeting. **(AP1)**

Following the overview provided by the Director of Resources, Members raised the following points:

- Update wording of draft submission to the NI Affairs Committee **(AP2)**,
- Rationale of continuing to incur PSNI Estate costs if there are plans to vacate buildings, and
- Lack of communication from PSNI in respect of potential redevelopment at the Ballymena site as some Members were

unaware of these plans as part of the PSNI Estate strategy.

6. ITEMS FOR COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Before PSNI joined the meeting Officials provided Members with an overview of items 6.1 to 6.4 including suggested discussion points.

6.1 PSNI Update on Sickness Absence Review Recommendations

The Committee welcomed the Chief Operating Officer (COO), Assistant Chief Officer (ACO) People and Organisational Development (OD), and Head of External Recruitment to the meeting to present Members with a six-monthly update on sickness absence review recommendations.

The ACO People and OD covered the following key areas in the presentation:

- **Absence Overview** – detailed breakdown of Average Working Days Lost (AWDL) for Officers and Staff against targets for 2022-23 and 2023-24 year to date.
PSNI sickness absence is at high level and continues to rise which is in line with external market trends, and the main reasons include respiratory conditions, mental health, and musculoskeletal injury.
- **Attendance Administration** – attendance management triggers were outlined, and these are currently under review with consideration given to reducing the number of days absent at which attendance management processes are triggered.
- **Attendance Management Group (AMG)** – this multi-disciplinary forum has been reformed and brings together representatives from across a wide range of areas to direct the organisation across priority

work streams which include a framework and action plan for duty and reasonable adjustments, development and implementation of revised Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and developing line manager capability.

- **Internal Audit** – to examine controls and governance of attendance management in PSNI and a number of recommendations were made. These were categorised in one of three risk priorities and a detailed action plan has been agreed.

Members raised the following points with the PSNI team:

- Impact of increasing sickness absence and reduction in Officer/ staff numbers on workload pressures and mental health,
- Concerns around increasing levels of sickness absence and effectiveness of current processes in place,
- Rationale of increasing AWDL targets for 2023-24 and reasons for the significant increase in actual AWDL since 2020-21.
- Clarity on absence triggers, whether these were aspirational and ensuring line manager interventions takes place at the right time.
- Provide further information on the number of absence disciplinary meetings carried out in the last year, breakdown of absence reasons to include respiratory/ musculoskeletal, how this compares with other public sector organisations, and percentage of long-term sickness relating to mitigating factors. **(AP3)**
- Level of support provided to line managers and prioritising people over productivity as well as the role of part time working to support attendance model.
- Number of Officers on duty adjustments and unable to perform normal policing duties, to include reasons and duration, and it was agreed to provide further information on this matter. **(AP3)**

Members **NOTED** the update provided.

6.2 PSNI briefing on Police Performance Plan Measure 2.3.1 – Representativeness

The Committee received a briefing from the ACO People and OD and the Head of External Recruitment on the Police Performance Plan measure specific to the Representativeness of the Police Service, noting that the measure has been broadened out in response to Member feedback to encompass aspects of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion.

The Head of External Recruitment provided an overview of the revised Report Card and an overview of the 3 sections, covering the period October 2022 to March 2023:

- **External Recruitment** – breakdown by community background and gender from the 2020 recruitment campaign for Officers and staff, and an update on bespoke competitions for Custody Detention Officers and Call Handlers in the North West area.
- **Internal Representation** – encompassing promotion and selection, Learning and Development, Employee Voice (including the Stronger Together forum which supports the ambition of creating an inclusive and diverse workplace), and Culture & Engagement.
- **Retention** – overview of stability index (percentage of personnel who were employed over the reporting period) broken down by Officers/ Staff, gender, community background, average length of service, 10-year forecasts, and leavers analysis.

Members raised the following matters with the PSNI team:

- Broadening reporting categories for Representation in PSNI beyond

community background and gender.

- Impact of the recent internal promotion process on Representation and the need to look outside the organisation.
- Work taking place to build upon female representation at senior levels in PSNI, taking account of obstacles to progression such as family commitments and shift work.
- Representation breakdown of recruitment pool from 2020 Student Officer campaign.
- Under representation of females at Chief Officer level and historical reasons for leaving.
- Request for additional analysis of community background at Senior Officer level will be considered further by PSNI. **(AP3)**
- Extent to which some Officers are leaving the Service for security reasons.

Members **NOTED** the update provided.

6.3 PSNI Briefing on Equality Diversity and Inclusion

The ACO People and OD briefed Members on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) which included an update on the refreshed PSNI Equality Scheme 2023-28; plans to conduct an Audit of Inequalities to inform Equality and Disability Action Plans; the ongoing work of the Stronger Together forum with the ambition to create an inclusive and diverse workplace; ongoing work as part of developing a Race Action Plan; the recently launched two part interactive EDI E-Learning Module; role of Diversity Mark NI as an external partner providing accreditation, expert support and guidance; and recognition on the Stonewall index demonstrating PSNI's commitment to creating an inclusive workplace environment.

Following the briefing Members asked for additional information in respect of the breakdown by rank for the colleagues who have completed module one

of the EDI E-Learning Module (**AP3**), whether advice has been sought from the Equality Commission regarding an internal versus external recruitment strategy, the nature of the ongoing relationship with Stonewall and benefits derived from the Diversity Mark NI partnership.

Members **NOTED** the update provided.

6.4 PSNI Update on 2023-24 People Action Plan Objective Two – Culture

The ACO People and OD provided Members with an update in respect of the development of a Cultural Audit as part of the People Strategy commitment to build PSNI as a 'Great Place to work'.

Following the appointment of 'Inspiring Change' as a communications and culture consultant a three-phase approach was agreed to complete the Cultural Audit.

Research and preparatory work as part of Phase 1 have been completed and an online staff survey, focus groups and root cause analysis workshops were in the final stages of completion as part of Phase 2.

Phase 3 will consist of data analysis, and a full report is expected by mid-July, followed by a communication strategy to share results and develop an action plan for key priority areas.

The full report and next steps will be discussed with Board Chair and Vice-Chair in the coming months and the Committee will be provided with a comprehensive update as soon as possible.

Members highlighted resourcing challenges in the current financial climate to deliver organisational change, and that cultural change is a long-term piece of work to ensure values and ways of working are embedded.

Members also discussed the process regarding co-design of root cause analysis workshops, embedding existing values to drive cultural change, whether the staff survey response rate was satisfactory, clarity regarding the

survey response rate by Officer rank, and the extent to which senior leaders were involved in survey design and overall process of developing the Culture Audit.

Members **NOTED** the update provided and thanked the ACO People and Organisational Development and PSNI Head of External Recruitment for their contribution and they left the meeting.

The COO briefly left the meeting for Officials to provide an overview of items 6.5 and 6.6 and suggested discussion points.

6.5 PSNI Finance Report

The Chair welcomed the Assistant Chief Officer (ACO) Corporate Services to the meeting, and he presented an overview of the year-to-date financial position and projections for the year ahead.

A year to date non ring-fenced pressure of £5.4m was reported at the end of May, which includes a year to date pressure of £2m for Overtime and £2.7m for Additional Security Funding.

A projected pressure of £47.2m for the full year was reported and further details were provided as part of the PSNI Draft Resource Plan 23-24 at agenda item 6.6.

Members **NOTED** the update provided.

6.6 PSNI Draft Resource Plan 2023-24

The ACO Corporate Services briefed Members on the PSNI Draft Resource Plan 2023-24 and noted that **the initial estimated funding gap for 23-24 was £107m.**

Following the identification and implementation of cost saving measures, including a significant reduction in headcount, the funding gap was reduced

to £57m at the beginning of the financial year prior to the final budget allocation.

Following the budget allocation and identification of further cost saving measures to produce a revised resource requirement, **the estimated funding gap for 2023-24 is now £38m**. This is mainly due to a largely fixed cost base which includes unavoidable pay pressures, an anticipated pay award, and staff costs as part of managed service contracts will be reviewed to potentially reduce demand for these services.

Other pressures highlighted included the overtime budget (10% less than last year), the impact of Officer and Staff headcount reductions, and a partial recruitment freeze.

Other decisions taken impacting on service delivery and overall effectiveness include a reduction in non-pay areas including fleet costs with the planned removal of 400 operational vehicles, ongoing air fleet review to reduce costs, and reduced spending in Estate services and Telecoms/ IT.

Members raised the following matters with the COO and ACO Corporate Services:

- Ongoing process to recover costs from policing the recent US Presidential visit (Operation Rondeletto) and clarity in respect of the agreed principles and approaches.
- Role of the Board in supporting a more favourable budget allocation and addressing the estimated funding gap of £38m which is likely to increase if other unbudgeted pressures are realised in 2023-24.
- Potential review of the £30m Capital allocation for new Police College and concerns regarding communication to the Board in respect of potential development at the Ballymena site.

Members **NOTED** the update provided and thanked the Chief Operating

Officer and ACO Corporate Services for their contribution and they left the meeting.

Members discussed next steps following confirmation that PSNI is unable to balance the budget for 2023-24, the communication strategy to highlight concerns and wider role of the Board, approaching other key stakeholders, and following discussion it was **AGREED** to:

- **NOT RECOMMEND** the draft PSNI Resource Plan 2023-24 to the Board for approval at this time,
- Consider the matter further and decide upon next steps at the July Board meeting (**AP4**), and
- Engage with the Department of Justice (DoJ) to highlight the funding gap and detail the severe cuts required to reduce the budget gap, stating that the PSNI budget for 2023-24 cannot be balanced at present.

6.7 Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB) Resource Plan 2023-24

The Head of Finance presented Members with a proposal for the NIPB Resource Plan 2023-24. This was previously considered by the Committee in May 2023, and it was agreed to bring this item back to Committee following Member feedback.

Members were advised that 62% of NIPB costs are fixed and 38% were classified as (semi) variable, and a significant amount of variable costs relate to Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs), with the NIPB leadership team recognising the importance of maintaining this funding.

Overall, there is £571k in unfunded pressures and a contingency of £229k has been identified to offset some of these pressures following the

implementation of a number of cost saving measures.

To manage the remaining unfunded pressures the leadership team will carry out regular budget reviews to monitor expenditure and highlight pressures throughout the year to DoJ, bidding for funds as appropriate.

Members discussed providing more detailed financial information to facilitate performance monitoring against budget, breakdown of figures provided in the Branch Summary table, further analysis of agency costs and application process, and recruitment options available through collaboration with the wider Civil Service.

Following discussion Members **AGREED**:

- To make a recommendation to the Board to **APPROVE** the draft NIPB Resource Plan 2023-24.

6.8 NIPB Management Accounts

The Committee **NOTED** a paper providing an update on the NIPB budget position and Management Accounts to the end of May 2023.

Following discussion and to facilitate performance monitoring it was agreed that full Management Accounts will be provided to Members when this item is next on the Committee agenda. **(AP5)**

6.9 PSNI Above Delegated Authority Requests

6.9.1 PSNI Above Delegated Authority Request - Compensation case

The Director of Resources presented a paper asking Members to consider the request from PSNI to approve compensation and legal costs in relation to injuries sustained by a Police Officer in the course of their duty.

Members were provided with an overview of the case and advised that PSNI has indicated that following settlement negotiations value for money has been achieved with the proposed settlement, in advance of scheduled Court proceedings.

Members discussed specific details of the case, expressed concerns in respect of the substantial legal costs for this long running case, and the late notice of request coming to Committee within days of scheduled Court proceedings.

Following discussion Members **AGREED**:

- To recommend the Board **APPROVE** the Above Delegated Authority request from PSNI to pay compensation and legal costs up to the amount of £336,408.12 and to write to PSNI outlining Members concerns. **(AP6)**

6.9.2 Above Delegated Authority Request - Special Severance payment

The Director of Resources asked Members to consider the PSNI request to make an Above Delegated Authority special severance payment for the purposes of exiting a pilot from the organisation, and while the proposed settlement sum is below the usual delegated authority threshold, this case may potentially be considered novel or contentious.

Members were provided with details of the request and an overview of the bespoke pay and conditions of the role including licencing and medical certification requirements, and that pilot contracts are currently under review.

Members raised several concerns including the need to have amended pilot contracts in the past to avoid the current situation, status of other pilots and potential future implications for PSNI, the number of pilots likely to be in a

similar situation in the future, and for PSNI to confirm that employment contracts will be reviewed to address this matter.

Following discussion Members **AGREED**:

- To recommend the Board **APPROVE** the request from PSNI to make an Above Delegated Authority payment in the sum of £36,000 and to write to PSNI to address the concerns raised by Members. **(AP6)**

6.10 Police Pensions and Injury Benefits

6.10.1 Amended Board response to the Department of Justice (DoJ) McCloud consultation on the draft Police Pension (Remediable Service) Regulations (Northern Ireland)

Members **NOTED** the initial approved Board response in relation to the McCloud Consultation, and the changes highlighted following updates received by Officials from Board appointed Pension Advisors.

6.10.2 Proposed response to correspondence received from MP to all Board Members

The Chief Executive presented a paper asking Members to consider and review the proposed Board's response to a letter received from a Member of Parliament (MP) and addressed to all Board Members, following the receipt of further correspondence from the MP in May 2023.

As background, initial correspondence was received in April in respect of the Northern Ireland Policing Board's decision making process for retrospective Injury On Duty Awards, and a collective response letter was previously agreed at the May Committee and issued to the MP from the Board Chair at the end of May.

Following discussion Members **AGREED**:

- To **APPROVE** the draft response from the Chair of the Board to the Member of Parliament.

6.10.3 Proposed response to Former Officers complaint about the Ill Health Retirement (IHR), Injury On Duty (IOD) processes

The Chief Executive asked Members to consider and agree a response, in respect of a letter of complaint addressed to the Board Chair in June 2023, expressing discontent from both Senior Officers and Former Officers regarding their treatment as a result of pausing all other IHR and IOD assessments while the extremely time sensitive McCloud Reassessment Project is completed.

Following discussion it was **AGREED**:

- To **APPROVE** the draft letter and proposed Board's response to the complaint letter received by former Officers.

6.10.4 Request to review Injury on Duty (IOD) claim

The Chief Executive provided Members with an update on the case regarding a request from Former Officer C in relation to the ongoing suspension of his IOD Award.

This included background of the case and the current situation following a recent Judicial Review (JR) in respect of decisions taken under the PSNI and PSNI Reserve (Injury Benefits) Regulations 2006 by Selected Medical Practitioners (SMPs) and Independent Medical Referees (IMRs).

Counsel's requisite advice has also been received and the JR determination has specific implications for the case of Former Officer C.

Following consideration by Members it was **AGREED**:

- To **APPROVE** based on the information provided by Counsel that Former Officer C's Injury on Duty Award should be put into payment and any monies owed should be paid to him.

6.10.5 Police Pensions and Injury Benefits (PIIB) – Operational Casework Presentation

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation which provided an overview of the operational casework section of PIIB and due to time constraints Members were advised that a full briefing on this matter will be scheduled over the summer for Members to attend. **(AP7)**

Members asked about prioritising PIIB operational casework and Officials will consider exploring this option with PSNI. **(AP7)**

7. QUESTIONS FOR THE CHIEF CONSTABLE

No questions were raised.

8. COMMUNICATIONS ISSUES / OPPORTUNITIES

No other communication issues were raised.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was conducted.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for **Thursday 28 September 2023** at James

House.

The meeting ended at 1.50pm

CHAIR

RESOURCES DIRECTORATE

JUNE 2023