

**NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD**

**MINUTES OF MEETING OF PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY  
19 OCTOBER 2023 AT 13.30PM IN STRAND ROAD POLICE STATION,  
DERRY/LONDONDERRY.**

**PRESENT:**

Mr John Blair MLA (Chair)  
Mr Mukesh Sharma (Vice Chair)  
Mr Les Allamby  
Mr Peter Osborne  
Dr Janet Gray  
Mr Gerry Kelly MLA  
Mrs Linda Dillon MLA  
Dr Kate Laverty  
Mrs Joanne Bunting MLA  
Mr Mark H Durkan MLA  
Mr Maurice Bradley MLA

**EX OFFICIO MEMBERS IN  
ATTENDANCE:**

Mr Edgar Jardine (Board Vice Chair)

**POLICE SERVICE  
OF NORTHERN IRELAND IN  
ATTENDANCE:**

- (1) Mr Bobby Singleton, Assistant Chief Constable  
Local Policing
- (1) Superintendent McGowan, District Commander  
Fermanagh & Omagh
- (1) Superintendent Kearney, District Commander Mid &  
East Antrim
- (1) Superintendent Beatty, Derry & Strabane
- (1) Superintendent Henry, Belfast
- (1) Inspector Mullen, Strategic Community  
Engagement Team
- (1) Judith Bailie, Strategic Community Engagement  
Team

**OFFICIALS IN  
ATTENDANCE:**

Mrs Sarah Reid, Partnership Manager  
Seven Board Officials

- (1) Item 6.1 & 6.2 only

The Partnership Committee Chair welcomed all Members to the Committee. The Chair also welcomed the Vice Chair of the Board, Edgar Jardine.

**1. APOLOGIES**

No apologies received.

The Committee agreed the agenda for the meeting.

**2. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

The Chairperson asked Members to declare any conflicts of interest arising from the agenda. No conflicts of interest were declared.

**3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 21 SEPTEMBER 2023**

The Committee considered the draft minutes of the Committee meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2023.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- The minutes of the Committee meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> September 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 Partnership Manager.

It was agreed that the following actions would close as they had been implemented:

- Action Point 2 from the meeting in June 2023 and
- Action Points 1, 2, 3 & 4 from the meeting in September 2023.

#### **4.1 Response to South Belfast PCSP re Ap1 Sept 23**

Members **NOTED** the correspondence issued.

#### **4.2 Response to DoJ re Ap4 Sept 23**

The Partnership Manager updated the Committee that a letter was issued to DOJ in relation to the Committee's views on recommendations for a Legislative Review around the PCSP Appointment Process on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2023. The Partnership Manager also noted that a new code of practice has still not been received.

Members **NOTED** the update provided.

### **5. CHAIRPERSON'S BUSINESS**

#### **5.1 Adjustments to Custody Estates in PSNI**

Members were asked to note that there has been a slight delay to the opening of Waterside Custody Suite until approximately Mid-November at which time Strand Road & Coleraine Custody Suites will close. Omagh Custody Suite will close on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2023 for a period of 12 months for renovations.

Members were concerned that overflow issues may occur due to the closure of the Omagh Custody Suite. The Partnership Manager confirmed that Strabane Custody Suite will be opening on 24<sup>th</sup> October 2023 to cover any shortfall.

Members **NOTED** the update provided.

## 6. ITEMS FOR COMMITTEE BUSINESS

### 6.1 Policing Plan Measures – 2.1.1 Confidence & 2.1.3 999/101 Response Times

A Board Official provided an analysis of the PSNI Measure Report Cards against the Performance Plan Measures of 2.1.1 and 2.1.3 specific to Confidence and 999/101 Response Times.

The paper included **Annex A** – PSNI Report Card Measure 2.1.1 - Confidence in Policing & 2.1.3 Report on the levels of 999 (emergency) and 101 (priority) call response.

Members were advised that the Policing Plan Survey, published in July 2023, shows that total confidence in the PSNI has fallen slightly from 66.8% in 2022 to 62.4% in 2023. The 4.4% drop shown in the Policing Plan Survey is consistent with the 4% drop from 86% to 82% in overall confidence in policing, noted in the 2021/22 Northern Ireland Safe Community Telephone Survey.

The PSNI report card recognises that several recent events will have had an impact on confidence, namely, data breaches and the resignation of the Chief Constable, future reports will provide further data and analysis which may reflect how much these events have affected public confidence in policing.

Members were asked to **note** that the NI Policing Plan Survey will not be repeated in 2024.

In relation to measure 2.1.3: 999/101 Response Times, PSNI appears to be performing favourably in comparison to other UK Police Services. Furthermore, 'The responsiveness of the police' is not significantly increasing or decreasing judging by the data provided.

However, it was highlighted that only two separate three-month periods of data have been provided in Annex A and Members were advised that they may wish to seek full annual data regarding emergency and priority response calls from PSNI in the future to allow more detailed analysis.

The Chair welcomed PSNI to the meeting.

ACC Singleton provided Members with his analysis of item 6.1 which included:

- In terms of 999/101 response times, PSNI have consistently performed well despite depleting numbers. The ability to maintain this service is met through pulling resource from other areas, not from being well resourced.
- The fall of 4.4% in confidence levels reflects a period where significant high-profile events had taken place, such as the John Caldwell incident and the increase in the overall threat level in Northern Ireland.
- There are three main areas that have the biggest impact on confidence levels in policing from the public's perspective, they are,
  - High profile/critical incidents (negative impact)
  - Neighbourhood Policing (positive impact)
  - Problem-solving work (positive impact)
- Extractions from NPT Teams will continue to impact confidence levels further, if situations continue, the 4.4% drop in confidence will continue to rise.

Following the presentation by PSNI, Members discussed:

- That NPT Teams are the key to confidence levels across the entire PSNI, extraction is a big issue in an already depleted police service.
- The strategic planning of the mundane and day to day activities is vital to maintaining ongoing confidence levels.
- The possibility of receiving further data and outcomes to the 'Is anyone better off' Problem Solving data provided in Annex A.

- The disparity between members of the public who have had contact with PSNI and those who have not. Initial contact and follow-up seem to be the main issue, where the public feels the service declines.
- There is a significant fall of confidence in young people, particularly females between the age of 12-16 which is often linked to increasing use of social media platforms. Important to note that a similar decline in confidence occurred in the same demographic in the 1970's when social media did not exist and therefore there could be other underlying issues.
- The ability to see more in-depth statistics, including geographical, gender, age, and community background differences in confidence levels.
- The disconnect between local policing teams and the perception of PSNI as whole, NPTs are generally very well supported. How does this perception get changed?
- As good news stories are often buried in the negative, it is important that the narrative is changed.
- The large amount of the public who do not identify as either unionist or nationalist, it is common for ethnic minorities to feel marginalised.
- If the newly introduced interactive voice response system has helped improve response times?
- The concerns around call waiting times through the 101 service – the possibility of receiving call abandonment statistics in relation to age.
- That the Resources Committee and the Board itself have a part to play in discussions around the ongoing resourcing issues and their knock-on effects.

PSNI addressed Members issues outlining the following:

- The creation of the strategic team has helped in creating a more proactive approach and understanding that capital is built through the day-to-day activities. The Policing Plan Survey highlighted positives in areas such as visibility, accessibility and engagement but understands that this needs to be on a continuous basis.

- The extractions from NPT Teams are one issue but the base level itself is also part of the problem.
- The large amounts of extractions in the Mid & East Antrim area, for example, are making the job more difficult and a very targeted approach needs to be used when it comes to covering the day-to-day activities. Consistent engagement is what has made it possible to get through incidents.
- That NPT Teams are vital when tragic high profile incidents occur as they have the established relationships with the community and work closely with the PCSP to give the community more confidence but there is still a long way to go.
- Small interactions done correctly have a very small overall positive impact but when not done correctly it shows a disproportionate negative impact. Work is ongoing with the Victims Charter to achieve a 'get it right first-time approach'.
- Officers are being given the tools to look at problem-solving issues, but they do not have enough time or space to investigate and complete them.
- That officers are still attending calls, but the issue remains that fewer numbers mean less ability to deal with the follow-up process which gives an asymmetrical effect on perception.
- That page 19 of the Policing Plan Survey shows that there isn't a big difference between genders when it comes to confidence levels. In general, there is a slightly higher confidence level from the Unionist Community when compared to the Nationalist Community.
- The perception of local policing teams in comparison to the leadership team is where the disparity lies and that goes back to the handling of high-profile events.
- Ultimately, engagement work needs to continue and the negative narrative around PSNI needs to change to move forward. Potential for a fly on the wall documentary to show and tell the real story of policing.

- The relationship with the media needs to be revisited and a more professional one established for good stories and actions to be highlighted and recognised in the public domain.
- Agreed to look at whether they could provide a breakdown of call abandonment by age.
- The recent Bravery Awards could be used as an example to get good news stories out there, highlighting actions taken by officers with their names anonymised.

**It was Agreed:**

- The Partnership Manager will write to the PSNI to request an age breakdown for 101 call abandonment. **(AP1)**

Chair thanked PSNI for the presentation.

## **6.2 PSNI Update on Independent Advisor Group Approach**

Chair invited ACC Singleton to discuss.

ACC Singleton provided Members with his analysis of item 6.2 which included:

- The IAG was set up due to a lapse in police engagement, some of which could be put down to Covid but lots of effort has been made to ensure PSNI has a relationship with all members of communities and not just regular offenders.
- The REaL events have been successful and have established a good model to be used moving forward to allow PSNI to establish and maintain relationships on an ongoing basis.
- The other resources being used by PSNI include 'Let's Talk' briefings, 1-page documents to provide information to officers on issues such as the tensions in the Middle East which impact some ethnic minority communities.



Following the presentation by PSNI, Members discussed:

- The potential pitfalls around ensuring consistency within the REaL events - events being held in small specific areas of NI are not capturing the wider issues.
- The need to build greater relationships with the Christian Palestinian population in Northern Ireland.
- If there have been any issues around inappropriate symbolism being used in communities about the ongoing issues in the Middle East.
- That members have previously voiced concerns about having no political representation on the South Armagh IAG and how long the IAG is going to continue.

PSNI addressed Members issues outlining the following:

- The REaL events will evolve as local district events that will capture unheard voices. There is background work taking place on an ongoing basis to identify gaps and maintain relationships.
- PSNI is working with the local Islamic centre to help alleviate concerns around events in Palestine. Recognition that it is a very small community in Northern Ireland but one that is highly vulnerable.
- Relationships with the local Islamic Community have been in place for the last 2 years with a significant relationship built up between the local District Commander in Belfast and the Rabbi.
- There is currently no direct link to the Christian Palestinian population, but that PSNI welcomes feedback and links for that community or any community who feels they do not have a current relationship with PSNI.
- There have been some potential tensions around Islamic/Palestinian flags being used within communities.
- PSNI are currently working with University of Ulster in relation to a review of policing in North & West Belfast.

- PSNI wants to improve the standard of policing for all areas of the community.
- PSNI do need to be politically aware as part of their role, however, it is also important to remember that the police are independent from politics.

Following the PSNI responses, Members discussed:

- It is important that the proposed University of Ulster review is inclusive of Belfast as a whole rather than specific areas. East Belfast has significant paramilitary issues, and this should not be ignored.

Chair thanked PSNI for their attendance.

### **6.3 Independent Custody Visitors Annual Report 2022-23**

The Engagement Manager provided Members with an overview of the Independent Custody Visiting Annual Report and highlighted two key points:

- The report was conducted by Board Officials & the Board Statistician which gave a higher level of scrutiny in comparison to previous years' reports.
- Previous reports included a satisfactory/unsatisfactory category for assessing a visit's success. This has been removed from the report due to a lack of clarity around the definition and/or parameters in assigning this classification.

Following the update Members discussed:

- It would be beneficial to keep the satisfactory/unsatisfactory categories for internal use even if it is not included in the report.
- The fact that some visits did not take place due to a custody suite being busy – suggested that this would be an appropriate time to conduct visits.

In addressing Members comments Board Officials noted:

- The satisfactory/unsatisfactory categories need further investigation to establish consistency in their definitions.
- The satisfactory/unsatisfactory category is still being used for internal analysis.

It was **Agreed**:

- The Independent Custody Visitor Report for 2022/23 will be brought to the November Board for approval to publish. **(AP2)**

#### **6.4 Feedback from Public Consultation on the Board's Draft Engagement Strategy (2023-2025)**

The Engagement Manager provided Members with an update on the following:

- The Public Consultation period closed on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2023, by which date ten responses had been received.
- That DoJ advised that they were intending to submit a late response, but subsequently advised that they would not be making a submission.
- The feedback from the ten responses is included in Annex B, it is recommended that the responses received do not require any fundamental changes to be made to the Engagement Strategy.
- The feedback from PCSPs focused on a lack of general knowledge about the Board's role and remit and the need for more engagement between the Board and PCSP Members.

Following the update Members discussed:

- The feedback received from the Probation Board suggested removing the word 'support' from the third aim "Support Building Trust and Confidence in Policing."

In addressing Members comments Board Officials noted:

- That it is recommended that 'support' is not removed as the Board is not solely responsible for building trust and confidence in policing but delivers actions and initiatives to help support this aim.

It was **Agreed**:

- The Board's Engagement Strategy (2023-25) will be brought to the November Board for approval to publish. **(AP3)**

## **6.5 Police Property Fund – Update on Small Grant Scheme 3<sup>rd</sup> Call**

The Partnership Manager provided Members with an update on:

- The slight delay (1 month) on the opening of the Police Property Fund Small Grant Scheme 3<sup>rd</sup> Call due to the Chief Constable appointment documents being prioritised with the design company.
- No fundamental changes had been made to the documents – only dates and more user-friendly cosmetic changes have been actioned.
- The Partnership team has a healthy register of interest who will be contacted in advance of the call launch.
- The call will close in January 2024 at which time the Partnership Manager will seek volunteers from the committee to sit on the relevant assessment panels.

Members **NOTED** the update.

## 6.6 Verbal Update on Youth Forum

The Engagement Manager provided Members with an update in relation to the Youth Forum event:

- The PSNI Youth Forum event was due to take place on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2023 but has been postponed until 2024.
- In the meantime, work will continue between PONI, the Board & PSNI to set up and formally establish the forum, with the event in 2024 being used to showcase the work that has been done.

Members **NOTED** the update.

## 7. QUESTIONS FOR THE CHIEF CONSTABLE

No questions were raised.

## 8. COMMUNICATIONS ISSUES / OPPORTUNITIES

There were no communication issues or opportunities for update.

## 9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

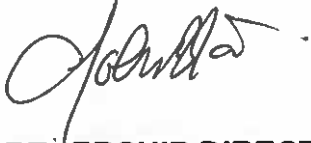
No AOB noted.

## 10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for **Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> November 2023 in James House.**

The meeting ended at 16.00pm

**CHAIR**



**PARTNERSHIP DIRECTORATE**

**October 2023**