

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD

NOTE OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD HOT DEBRIEF IN RELATION TO THE PSNI DATA BREACH HELD ON THURSDAY 14 SEPTEMBER 2023 AT 3PM IN JAMES HOUSE, BELFAST

PRESENT:

Ms Deirdre Toner (Chair)
Mr Edgar Jardine (Vice-Chair)
Mr Gerry Kelly MLA
Mr John Blair MLA
Mr Trevor Clarke MLA*
Mr Mike Nesbitt MLA*
Mr Mark H Durkan MLA
Mr Les Allamby
Mrs Linda Dillon MLA*
Dr Janet Gray
Mr Maurice Bradley MLA*
Ms Joanne Bunting MLA*
Mr Mukesh Sharma
Mr Frank McManus*
Mr Peter Osborne
Ms Nuala McAllister MLA

INDEPENDENT REVIEW TEAM LEADS

(3) Assistant Commissioner Pete O'Doherty, Review Team Lead
Mrs Claire Vickers-Pearson, Deputy Review Team Lead

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mrs Sinead Simpson, Chief Executive
Mr Sam Hagen, Senior Director of Resources
Mr Adrian McNamee, Director of Performance

Two Board Officials

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mr Brendan Mullan and Dr Kate Laverty.

2. UPDATE FROM REVIEW TEAM LEADS

Assistant Commissioner O'Doherty, the Independent Review Team lead, and Mrs Vickers-Pearson, Deputy lead, provided an overview of the initial, interim findings from the review work undertaken so far, and what work remains outstanding at this stage.

Assistant Commissioner O'Doherty reported that the review had included a wide range of specialist's from across policing, the public and private sectors including specialist Information Security auditors. Assistant Commissioner O'Doherty noted over a two week period, a hybrid approach of 'on-site' and remote support had been used. Over fifty officers and staff had been spoken to, and over 200 documents have been reviewed to date. Assistant Commissioner O'Doherty advised that these volumes are higher than had been anticipated and noted further research remains outstanding.

Assistant Commissioner O'Doherty and Mrs Vickers-Pearson updated Members on the interim findings in relation to Processes and Protocols, Policy and Systems, and People including culture and behaviours. This included both good practice and potential areas for improvement.

These included:

- Discussion of data handling within the organisation;
- Extent of documentation of policies and procedures;
- Relative culture and practices relating to physical, technical and information security; and
- Training and awareness.

Assistant Commissioner O'Doherty noted that any recommendations made as a result of the review are likely to relate to both PSNI and the wider policing community.

In addition to the above the Assistant Commissioner and the Deputy review team lead addressed a range of matters from Members concerning:

- Inspections by other bodies including the ICO;
- Relevant skill sets and capacity of individuals handling FOI requests;
- The robustness of the current assurance framework;
- The reliance on internal HR systems to generate FOI information;
- Levels of engagement with the PSNI's Staffing Associations;
- Use of best practice examples in DPA;
- Issues of promotion and generalised skill sets;
- Customs and practices;
- The large number of FOI requests coming from Police Officers;
- The role of PSNI's Audit Committee and oversight of Cyber Risk;
- NPCC previous guidance on the use of spreadsheets;
- The current operational culture after the incident and its impact on neighbourhood teams.

The Chair thanked Assistant Commissioner O'Doherty and Mrs Vickers-Pearson for their private briefing to the Board and they left the meeting.

The private meeting closed at 16.45.

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR REVIEW OF BOARD

Following the conclusion of the above meeting and following on from the special Board meeting on 13 September to discuss, amongst other things the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the proposed Review of the Board, this item was further discussed following the debrief regarding the PSNI data breach.

Following further discussion Members were unanimously agreed on the importance of the Review being undertaken by an organisation or person

independent of the organisations within the tripartite policing structure. With regard to the scope of the review Members agreed a number of suggested inclusions to the draft Terms of Reference for this proposed independent review and that these should be shared with the DoJ by way of correspondence from the Board Chair.

It was noted Members would welcome ongoing dialogue with the Department of Justice (DoJ) on the scope of the Review and how it will be taken forward as matters progress.

Strategic Planning & Governance

Date: September 2023

Chair