

## **NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD**

### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD HELD ON THURSDAY 7 DECEMBER 2023 AT 9.30AM IN NIPB HQ, JAMES HOUSE BELFAST.**

#### **PRESENT:**

Ms Deirdre Toner (Chair)  
Mr Edgar Jardine (Vice-Chair)

- (1) Mr Mark Durkan MLA
- (2) Ms Joanne Bunting MLA
- (3) Mr Trevor Clarke MLA
- (4) Mr Mike Nesbitt MLA  
Mr Brendan Mullan  
Mr Gerry Kelly MLA
- (5) Mrs Linda Dillon MLA
- (6) Mr John Blair MLA
- (7) Ms Nuala McAllister MLA  
Mr Peter Osborne
- (8) Mr Frank McManus\*
- (9) Mr Maurice Bradley MLA  
Mr Mukesh Sharma
- (10) Dr Janet Gray  
Dr Kate Laverty

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

- (11) Mr Jon Boutcher, Chief Constable
- (11) Mr Chris Todd, T/Deputy Chief Constable
- (11) Ms Pamela McCreedy, Chief Operating Officer
- (11) Mr Bobby Singleton, Assistant Chief Constable
- (11) Mr Ryan Henderson, T/Assistant Chief Constable
- (11) Mr Mark McEwan, Assistant Chief Constable
- (11) Ms Clare Duffield, Assistant Chief Officer  
People & Organisational Development
- (11) 3 PSNI Officials

#### **NATIONAL CRIME AGENCY ATTENDANCE:**

- (12) Mr Graeme Biggar, National Crime Agency  
Director General

#### **NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD**

1 NCA official  
Mrs Sinead Simpson, Chief Executive  
Mr Sam Hagen, Senior Director of Resources

**OFFICIALS IN  
ATTENDANCE:**

Mr Adrian McNamee, Director of Performance  
Mrs Sarah Reid, T/Director of Partnership  
Ms Aislinn McGuckin, Director of Police  
Pensions & Injury Benefits

Four Board Officials

**OTHER OFFICIALS IN  
ATTENDANCE:**

Mr John Wadham, Human Rights Advisor

- (1) In from 9.45 and left after the public session
- (2) In from 9.40am
- (3) In from 9.40am
- (4) In from 10.10am and left after public session
- (5) Left after public session
- (6) Left at 3.35pm
- (7) Left at 3.35pm
- (8) Left after private NIPB meeting
- (9) In from 9.50am
- (10) Left at 3.55pm
- (11) Items 10 and 11 Only
- (12) Item 10 only

**1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Ms Liz Kimmins MLA and Mr Les Allamby.

**2. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

No conflicts of interest were declared.

**3. DRAFT MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETINGS HELD ON:**

**3.1 Thursday 13 September 2023**

It was **RESOLVED:-**

- That the minutes of the Board meeting held on Thursday 13 September 2023 be approved for publication.

### **3.2 Thursday 2 November 2023**

It was **RESOLVED**:-

- That the minutes of the Board meeting held on Thursday 2 November 2023 be approved for publication.

### **3.3 Monday 6 November 2023**

It was **RESOLVED**:-

- That the minutes of the Board meeting held on Monday 6 November 2023 be approved for publication.

### **3.4 Monday 4 September 2023**

It was **RESOLVED**:-

- That the minutes of the Board meeting held on Monday 4 September 2023 be approved for publication.

## **4. BOARD ACTION LOG**

Updates as detailed within the Action Log from the Board meetings held on 2 November, 5 October, 7 September, 6 July, 1 June and 6 April 2023 were noted in addition to the following verbal update provided by the Chief Executive:

In relation to Action Point 1 from the meeting on 2 November 2023 in respect of a meeting regarding a Criminal Justice Inspection NI (CJINI) report on file progression which pointed to the need for a joined up approach to tackling the issue across the Criminal Justice System, the Chief Executive advised this was

raised at a recent bilateral meeting with Department of Justice (DoJ) and Board officials were advised that the matter is being considered by the Criminal Justice Board therefore it is proposed this action point can be closed.

In relation to Action Point 3 from the meeting on 2 November regarding the medical rooms used in James House for Selected Medical Practitioner (SMP) assessments, the Chief Executive advised the Department of Finance (DoF) have confirmed the larger room used by the Board is Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant for wheelchair users, which accounts for 1% of applicants, and the Chief Executive noted that room is being used for such applicants where they have provided advance notice of such mobility issues. The Chief Executive added Board officials are taking steps to highlight the need for applicants to advise in advance of such issues. The Chief Executive confirmed both rooms are compliant for all other applicants but for those with other mobility issues [non-wheelchair users] officials will also use the larger room. The Chief Executive added that in terms of the furniture layout in the rooms this is dictated by the placement of the electrical boxes, however DoF are planning to make adjustments to those so the furniture can be moved in order to make the rooms more user friendly. The Chief Executive advised that in order to progress the backlog of assessments as expeditiously as possible, Board officials have been making maximum use of both rooms but going forward will utilise the larger room for those with mobility issues and the smaller room for those with non-mobility related conditions.

In relation to Action Point 7 from the meeting on 2 November 2023 relating to the inability to cover maternity leave for a political Member, the Chief Executive advised this issue was also raised at the bilateral meeting with DoJ, at which DoJ emphasised that arrangements regarding the substitution of members would address the issue and they continued to work with NIO in this regard. Members expressed concerns however, regarding the process and provision of maternity leave for Independent members and the Chief Executive agreed to seek clarity on that and advise Members. **(AP1)**

In relation to Action Point 1 from the meeting on 5 October 2023 regarding the Revised Environmental Allowance for police staff, the Chief Executive noted that the Board's letter to DoJ on the matter and their response is included in the Chair's report and therefore it is proposed to close this action and any remaining matters can be taken forward by the Resources Committee.

In relation to Action Point 2 from the meeting on 5 October 2023 regarding the PSNI legal advice relating to the balance of the Chief Constable's duties as Accounting Officer versus his responsibilities under the Section 32 of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000, the Chief Executive advised the Chief Constable plans to address this at the meeting today, after which if Members are content it would be proposed to close this action.

In relation to Action Point 4 from the meeting on 5 October 2023 regarding the outcome of the DoJ skills audit for Independent Board Members the Chief Executive noted that there is no further update as yet, however referred Members to correspondence included in the Chair's report from the Secretary of State to district councils seeking their views on the appointment process.

In relation to Action Point 8 from the meeting on 5 October 2023 which relates to ensuring every interaction with PSNI is a good one, the Chief Executive advised this will be progressed with the PSNI Service Executive Team (SET) at the next development day in January 2024 and as such proposed that this action may be closed.

In relation to Action Point 4 from the 7 September 2023 meeting the Chief Executive advised that the revised National Crime Agency (NCA) Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is currently with the NCA for review and feedback is awaited.

In relation to Action Point 9 from the 7 September 2023 meeting regarding the covert surveillance of journalists, it was noted that whilst a response had been

received from the Investigatory Powers Commissioners Office (IPCO) on the matter, the Report requested from PSNI had yet to be received, therefore this action will remain open.

With regard to Action Point 2 from the meeting on 1 June 2023 in respect of correspondence relating to the BBC Spotlight programme, the Chief Executive advised that a meeting took place last month with PSNI representatives and the Member who had outstanding queries and confirmed the outstanding matters had been resolved. A Member raised a query regarding the quantum of the costs relating to the Investigatory Powers Tribunal (IPT) case that are being disputed - Members raised concerns that the costs are continuing to increase whilst the dispute continues. The Chief Executive advised she would write to the Chief Operating Officer and request an update on the matter. **(AP2)**

In relation to Action Point 4 from the meeting on 6 April 2023 regarding an update on Operation Kenova, the Chief Executive advised that T/DCC Todd has provided a written update which is included in the correspondence within the Chair's report. The Chief Executive proposed that this item may be closed and any queries arising from the Chair's report can be taken forward as new actions later in the meeting.

Members **NOTED** the action log.

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

### **5.1 Chair's Report**

The Board noted a Report from the Chair which advised Members of:

- The Chair's engagements carried out during the period 6 November 2023 to 30 November 2023.

- A full list of correspondence issued and received by the Chair during the period 6 November 2023 to 5 December 2023.

The Chair also highlighted the following engagements:

- A meeting with Women in Policing Association, noting the Chief Executive will provide an update on the issues from that meeting to the Resources Committee later this month;
- A meeting with CJINI regarding their future work programme, and the Chair advised she highlighted the key issues for the Board, including the interface between policing and other agencies and how the reduction in resources will impact on the service policing can provide;
- The bi-lateral meeting with the DoJ Permanent Secretary, noting that items that were discussed included the Review of Board and the Review of the PSNI Service Executive Team (SET).

In relation to correspondence, the Chair highlighted the following items:

- Correspondence received from PSNI relating to a mutual aid request from An Garda Siochana (AGS);
- Correspondence issued to the Chief Constable and the DoJ Permanent Secretary in relation to the review of the SET, noting the Terms of Reference for the Review have been progressed and it is hoped that Headstogether will begin their work on this in the coming weeks;
- Correspondence issued to the DoJ Permanent Secretary relating to the review of the Board, noting clarity has been received regarding the role of the Department and they have been asked to commission an

independent body to progress it. Once costs have been determined the Board can consider the feasibility of the review.

- Recent correspondence between the Chief Constable and the DoJ Permanent Secretary on the Police Pay Remit.

Members raised the following items with the Chair:

- Concerns regarding the essential criteria for the recruitment competition for independent members as outlined in the Secretary of State's recent correspondence to district councils. The Chief Executive advised she has raised this with DoJ and noted that in conjunction with other feedback received, they intend to revise the Candidate Information Booklet for this recruitment competition. The Chief Executive confirmed the revised Candidate Information Booklet will be shared with Members upon receipt. **(AP3)**

The Chair referred to a recent memo issued from herself to all Board Members proposing the establishment of small group of members to consider personnel matters relating to senior officers. The Chair noted her intention is this would only be an ad-hoc group that would meet as and when required; the Board would be advised in advance of its meeting and would also receive a fulsome update afterwards and emphasised this group is not a decision-making body. The Chair advised she is proposing to keep the group small. The Chair outlined her reasons for keeping the group as small as possible, and therefore suggested the group should consist of five members with the balance being two independent and three political to reflect the Board as a whole. The Chair recognised Members had differing views on the proposal and asked for Member feedback.

Following the Chair's remarks a number of issues were discussed by Members, these included:



- Concerns that not all political parties were represented on the group;
- Potential overlap/duplication of responsibilities with the Chairs Advisory Group;
- Concerns regarding the balance of political members versus independent Members and the unintended consequence of a reduced influence of independent members;
- Whether the make up of the group should be skills based, rather than just independent or political. The Chief Executive advised she would check and confirm the guidance in relation to how this group could be constituted. **(AP4)**

Following this discussion, the Chair put forward the proposal for Members' consideration that the Board proceed to constitute a group of this nature as outlined above. Following a vote, all Members were in favour with the exception of Mr Mark Durkan MLA and Mr Mike Nesbitt MLA who did not support this approach.

The Chair noted that Members received a briefing from T/Commissioner Pete O'Doherty on the Independent Data Breach Report yesterday afternoon and had a robust discussion. The Chair acknowledged that given the limited amount of time that Members had to prepare for the briefing, Members had articulated a desire to have further time to read the report and to discuss it further with Mr O'Doherty, and perhaps PSNI. The Chair advised there were a number of elements of the Report that Members had factual accuracy concerns with and Mr O'Doherty had been asked to reflect on those sections of the Report and it was hoped to have an amended draft for Members' consideration later in the meeting.

Following the Chair's remarks she invited comments from Members and a number of issues were discussed, these included:

- Concerns regarding the sound quality for those on zoom during the briefing yesterday/difficulties seeing all attendees in the room/hearing the detail of the conversation;
- Concerns regarding the suitability of CJSM (the Board's secure email system for confidential/sensitive documents), noting the Board's SMT will consider potential alternatives; **(AP5)**
- Frustration around the lateness of receiving the report/not having adequate time to read it to inform a fulsome discussion, particularly as the report was jointly commissioned by the Board and PSNI;
- Concerns that the root cause of the breach was not clearly stated in the report.

Following the departure of the PSNI later in the meeting the Board returned to this item and the Chief Executive circulated to all Members present the sections of the Report that had been amended by T/Commissioner O'Doherty. Members considered each section in turn and **AGREED** the report was now factually accurate and confirmed they were content for a plan to be made for communication to PSNI staff and to the media. **(AP6)**

## 6. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

The Board **NOTED** a report from the Chief Executive which provided an update on various items of business. The Chief Executive highlighted the following items:

- An update on Quarter two of the Annual Business Plan;
- Correspondence relating to the recruitment competition for new Independent Board Members, noting the competition will launch in January 2024;

- The Board's management accounts for the period to the end of October 2023, noting a small overspend which SMT are not unduly concerned with at this stage;
- An update on the work of Internal Audit, noting the Final Report on the audit in relation to Complaints Handling had been received and this will be presented to the ARAC Committee at its meeting in December 2023;
- A request for the Board Chair, Vice chair and Chief Executive to provide evidence to the NI Affairs Committee (NIAC) on the PSNI Data Breach on 13 December 2023;
- An update on the PCSP Independent Member Recruitment competition, noting that 6 council areas received an extension of time for receipt of applications which closes on 15 December 2023, and the Temporary Director of Partnership confirmed that sufficient additional applications had been received for the majority of the council areas;
- The timetable for the Police Remuneration Review Body (PRRB) 2024/25 round, noting the Director of Resources will lead on that through Resources Committee and will liaise with Resources Committee Members in due course;
- An update on the work of the Policing Plan Review Working Group (PPRWG), noting the work of the PPRWG is reaching its final stages and early in new year nominations will be sought for a new group which will take the lead on establishment of the 2025-2030 Policing Plan;
- An update on FOIs and DPAs. The Chief Executive advised this remains an area that SMT keep under review and will consider elevation to the Board's Corporate Risk Register should the figures and timelines start to increase;

- An update on the work of Police Pensions & Injury Benefits (PPIB) branch, noting work continues to progress the McCloud reassessments in accordance with NPCC guidance. The Chief Executive advised PPIB staff are also endeavouring to keep focussed on Ill Health Retirements for serving officers and have secured all the doctor availability possible up until April 2024 to maximise the number of cases that are actioned;
- An update on the work of the Police Property Fund, noting that the third call for applications has now opened and will close on 24 January 2024;
- An update on Engagement & outreach activity, noting the first Independent Custody Visitors (ICV) rolling recruitment campaign has now concluded with an additional 4 candidates deemed appointable to the scheme and the Board's Annual Volunteer Conference which took place on 3 November 2023.

In relation to correspondence, the Chief Executive advised she had one item to highlight:

- Correspondence issued to Chief Police Officer Staff Association (CPOSA) endeavouring to resolve the matter regarding senior officer allowances. The Chief Executive noted the package of allowances has been changed for new staff but the package for existing officers cannot be changed without their consent and it is hoped this letter will conclude discussion on the issue.

Members raised the following issues with the Chief Executive:

- In relation to the Quarter 2 Annual Business Plan update a Member requested that this information be accompanied by a RAG style report showing progress against actions which could be tracked over time;
- In relation to the Criminal Justice Inspection NI (CJINI) report “An Inspection of Community Safety and Local Policing Arrangements in Northern Ireland”, a Member raised a query regarding several open recommendations from a previous similar inspection in 2019 and responsibility for monitoring the implementation of any recommendations arising from this inspection. The T/Director of Partnership confirmed that the two recommendations from the previous inspection which relate to the Board are closed and Partnership Committee will monitor the implementation of any recommendations arising from this inspection.

Members **NOTED** the report.

## **7. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **7.1 Performance Committee – 9 November 2023**

The Board noted the Performance Committee Chair’s Report and draft minutes of the meeting held on 9 November 2023. The Chair also provided a verbal update on matters considered at the meeting which included Policing Plan Measure 1.2.2 (Organised Crime Gangs), the Human Rights Advisor’s Update report for October 2023, the Governance arrangements for the Appropriate Adult Scheme and the Draft Policing Plan Community Survey 2023. The Committee Chair noted Members also considered a number of reports in relation to statistics from the Office of the Police Ombudsman for the year 2022/23 and the remit of the Belfast Harbour Police, on which the Committee had agreed a draft response to go to the DoJ, subject to approval from the full Board.

Members **NOTED** the report.

The Performance Committee Chair advised the Committee had one request which required approval from the Board. This was:

- To recommend to the Board the approval of the Committee's comments on this issue - "to include a request that additional text be added to the DoJ recommendation at paragraph 21 of its policy paper to include 'arising from a crime committed within its jurisdiction of the Harbour Estate'" and provide them as feedback to the Department of Justice.

Following his update the Performance Committee Chair handed back to the Board Chair to put the Committee's request to the Board.

It was subsequently **AGREED** by Members to:

- **APPROVE** the Committee's comments on this issue and provide them as feedback to the Department of Justice.

## **7.2 Partnership Committee – 16 November 2023**

The Board noted the Partnership Committee Chair's Report and draft minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2023. The Chair also provided a verbal update on matters considered at the meeting which included Policing Plan Measures – 1.3.1 (Feel Safe) & 1.3.2 (Repeat Places of Victimization), a PSNI briefing on the 2023 Pride decision and an update on the work of the Multi Agency Triage Team (MATT). The Committee Chair noted Members also considered the frequency of Independent Custody Visitor (ICV) reporting, the Annual Report of the Independent Reviewer of Justice and Security – recommendations for PCSPs and received updates on applications for the PCSP appointment process and Problem Solving in Partnership applications.

In response to a question from a Member, the Director of Performance advised Road Safety would be considered in due course for inclusion in the 2025 – 2030 Policing Plan.

Members **NOTED** the report.

### 7.3 Resources Committee – 23 November 2023

The Board noted the Resources Committee Chair's Report of the meeting held on 23 November 2023. The Chair also provided a verbal update on matters considered at the meeting which included PSNI briefings and presentations on the People Action Plan half yearly update, the results of the Cultural Audit and the monthly Finance report. Members also agreed the membership of a Sub-Group who will have responsibility for progressing the Board's Annual Submission to Police Remuneration Review Body (PRRB) and considered the Maternity and adoption leave provisions for police officers and the business case for the Revised Environmental Allowance (REA) for police staff.

Members **NOTED** the report.

The Resources Committee Chair advised the Committee had two requests which required approval from the Board. This was:

- To recommend to the Board the approval of the PSNI preferred option for the implementation of increased maternity and adoption leave for police officers; and
- To recommend to the Board the approval of the business case for the REA for police staff.

Following his update the Resources Committee Chair handed back to the Board Chair to put the Committee's requests to the Board.

It was subsequently **AGREED** by Members to:

- **APPROVE** the PSNI preferred option for the implementation of increased maternity and adoption leave for Police Officers; and

- **APPROVE** the business case for the REA for police staff.

#### **7.4 Discipline Committee**

The Board noted the Discipline Committee Chair's Report of the meetings held on 15 and 30 November 2023. The Chair also provided a verbal update on matters considered at the meetings which included the handling of complaints against the former Chief Constable and Deputy Chief Constable in respect of the Judicial Review decisions in relation to the Ormeau Road incident, Finding from Police National Database (PND) National Assurance Process, Previous Direction and Control cases and complaints against Senior Officers in relation to the PSNI Data Breach critical incident.

Members **NOTED** the update.

### **8. BOARD BUSINESS**

#### **8.1 NCA and PSNI Serious and Organised Crime – 6 Month Update Reports**

The Director of Performance presented a paper which provided Members with a summary report of the NCA's and the PSNI's performance and activity in Northern Ireland in respect of Serious and Organised Crime covering the Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 periods of April to September 2023. The paper highlighted the key issues that Members may wish to consider and discuss further with the NCA Director General Graeme Biggar and the PSNI Chief Constable later in the meeting.

Members **NOTED** the report.

#### **8.2 Draft Policing Plan Community Survey 2023**

The Director of Performance presented a paper which provided Members with the analysis of the Community Survey carried out earlier this year in relation to Measure 3.1.3 of the Policing Plan (The impact of partnership working with local communities). The Director of Performance noted PCSPs are interested in



using this data and Board officials wish to make the information available to a wider audience by publishing the findings.

The Director of Performance advised the Community Policing Survey 2023 ran from 3rd April – 30th June 2023 with the aim ‘to assist in informing the Policing Plan, with specific regard to delivery of Measure 3.1.3 (assess and evaluate the impact of partnership working with local communities).’ The survey covered detail including groups who responded, council areas, police areas and key issues. The Director of Performance noted 269 responses to the Survey were received and provided an overview of key issues and statistics resulting from the Survey.

The Director of Performance explained that the Survey has already been shared with Partnership Committee as part of their scrutiny of Measure 3.1.3 in September 2023 and also with Performance Committee at their meeting in November 2023. Board Officials now wish to publish the survey on the Board’s website and make the information available to PCSPs.

Following discussion, it was **AGREED**:

- To approve the Community Survey for publication on the Board’s website.

### **8.3 Board Member Development Days**

The Chief Executive presented a paper which provided Members with an overview of the tentative arrangements for the next Board Member development session which is scheduled for January 2024. The Chief Executive noted Members preferred dates for the session, potential venues and agenda items for consideration over the two days which were based on Member’s feedback from the previous session as well as lessons learned from recent events. The Chief Executive advised the focus of this session is on the Board and its effectiveness, however there may be time allocated on day two for engagement

with the Chief Constable and the Service Executive Team, in particular to consider the recently completed Cultural Audit in more detail.

Members **NOTED** the update provided.

**9. KEY ISSUES OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

The Board noted a paper which detailed recent issues of public interest which were relevant to the Board's areas of work.

**10. PRIVATE SESSION WITH THE NATIONAL CRIME AGENCY DIRECTOR GENERAL AND THE CHIEF CONSTABLE**

The Chair welcomed Mr Graeme Biggar, Director General of the National Crime Agency (NCA) to the meeting.

The Director General acknowledged the positive visit that several Board Members and officials had to the NCA Headquarters in London in October 2023 to view the work undertaken there and advised he is content to host another visit in the future if other Members would like to avail of it.

The Director General noted the change in the reporting cycle since he last met with Board Members in June 2023 and the move to 6 monthly reporting instead of quarterly updates and welcomed any feedback on the report.

The Director General advised that the NCA's current five year strategy has seen a shift in the Agency's efforts to tackle Serious and Organised Crime and the focus of the organisation has moved more upstream, overseas and online in a bid to dismantle the highest end of high-harm organised crime groups and networks affecting the UK and Northern Ireland. The Director General advised that an example of how this has impacted positively on Northern Ireland was a high value drugs seizure in September 2023 in the Republic of Ireland which, as a result of NCA intelligence prevented several tonnes of cocaine from making its way onto the streets of Northern Ireland. The Director General noted within

the past 6 months there had been increases in the number of major and moderate disruptions to organised crime, in particular with regard to money laundering, drugs and gun crime. Again, specific to Northern Ireland, the Director General advised there had been a reduction in the instances of Child Sexual Exploitation, modern slavery and human trafficking cases and noted that as a result of intelligence disseminated from the NCA to PSNI, 39 arrests had been made and 90 children safeguarded.

In relation to work specific to Northern Ireland, the Director General advised that following discussion with the previous Chief Constable it was agreed that the NCA focus in NI would be on the following 3 priorities:

- Identify and pursue high value targets
- Maximise asset recovery
- Pursue fugitives overseas

The Director General added that in due course he will meet with the current Chief Constable to review these priorities and decide if they wish to add focus to any additional areas.

The Director General highlighted that a risk the NCA have become aware of in the UK as a result of drug sampling they have carried out is a significant increase in the number of drug deaths relating to the use of synthetic opioids. The Director General noted the NCA have seen spikes in various areas of the UK but to date there have been no deaths recorded in Northern Ireland. The Director General advised the Home Office are aware of the issue and there is a Ministerial Taskforce in place which has responsibility for managing/controlling it. The Director General advised the aim of the taskforce, and indeed of the NCA is to "spot it and stop it" and emphasised the need to raise awareness and educate people of the increased dangers of this type of drug abuse. This includes ensuring the correct testing regimes are in place and that coroners and medical staff in hospital settings are carrying out the relevant toxicology tests to

ensure any deaths relating to this type of drug abuse are captured and aren't overlooked.

In addition to the above the NCA Director General addressed a range of matters from Members concerning:

- Printing of 3D firearms;
- The impact of Artificial Intelligence;
- Rates of Kidnapping and Extortion in NI; and
- Waste Water testing for drugs.

The Chair thanked the Director General for his private briefing to the Board and he left the meeting.

#### **11. CHIEF CONSTABLE'S ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT**

The Chair welcomed the Chief Constable, T/Deputy Chief Constable Chris Todd, Chief Operating Officer, Assistant Chief Constable Bobby Singleton, Assistant Chief Constable Mark McEwan, T/Assistant Chief Constable Ryan Henderson, Assistant Chief Officer People & Organisational Development Clare Duffield, Director of Strategic Communications and Engagement Leanne Barnett and Chief Superintendent Christian Bradley, Executive Support Team, to the meeting.

In his first Board meeting since being appointed as the substantive Chief Constable, the Chief Constable made opening remarks and highlighted some recent policing successes and reflected on key positive operations over the course of the year including the policing of the commemoration of the Good Friday Agreement and the visit from the President of the United States of America. The Chief Constable commented that in his experience of the service to date the quality of the values driven approach from officers and staff on the front line has been exceptional. The Chief Constable noted however, that this work is done against the backdrop of a precarious financial situation and

increased threat level, where reducing officer numbers is impacting on operational resilience and as a result, difficult decisions will inevitably need to be made in the months ahead.

The Chair asked for Member questions and the following matters were discussed with PSNI Leadership team:

**Budget** – The Chief Constable noted as at the end of November 2023, the projected deficit for the year is estimated at £50m. The Chief Constable advised this reflects operational pressures in the first half of the year, additional pay pressures and rising depreciation costs. The Chief Constable added that funding for the additional policing costs of £2.5m incurred with supporting the commemoration of the Belfast Good Friday Agreement, remains to be resolved. The Chief Constable advised the critical incident/data breach of 8 August 2023 which the Service has had to respond to, has incurred costs of £2.6m to date and a bid for additional funding has been submitted through the Department of Justice and Department of Finance to the Treasury as a claim on the Treasury Reserve.

**Police Officer numbers** – As outlined above the Chief Constable noted the financial situation is stark and police officer numbers are already at their lowest since the formation of the PSNI. The Chief Constable advised if the rate of attrition continues as projected, without the means to recruit, police officer numbers will fall to below 6000 by March 2025. The Chief Constable stated this is an untenable position and financial intervention is urgently required. The Chief Constable advised work has commenced to establish what service delivery will look like with these numbers and cautioned that communities across NI will regrettably experience an impact. The Chief Constable noted that it is his intention to commence a form of recruitment in April 2024 and advised he will continue to advocate for an adequate budgetary settlement for policing and expressed his commitment to being able to progress a 7% pay award for police officers.

In addition to the above the PSNI Leadership team addressed a range of matters from Members concerning:

- An update on the Op Myologic investigation;
- Rape Myths Training
- Further detail on a pilot programme introduced to reduce delay in the broader prosecution system;
- Work being undertaken to build relationships with other Police Forces in the UK/ Ireland
- Work being progressed with Police Scotland to tackle human trafficking.

The Chair thanked the Chief Constable, T/Deputy Chief Constable, Chief Operating Officer, Assistant Chief Constable Bobby Singleton, Assistant Chief Constable Mark McEwan, T/Assistant Chief Constable Ryan Henderson, Assistant Chief Officer People & Organisational Development Clare Duffield, Director of Strategic Communications and Engagement Leanne Barnett and Chief Superintendent Christian Bradley, Executive Support Team, for their private briefing to the Board.

## **12. QUESTIONS FOR THE CHIEF CONSTABLE**

### **12.1 Issues Arising from Committees**

There were no issues arising from recent Committee meetings for the Board's attention.

### **12.2 Committee Written Questions and Responses**

Members noted the PSNI responses received to Performance and Resources Committee questions within this period.

### **12.3 Individual Members' Written Questions and Responses**

Members noted the PSNI responses received with regard to follow up responses following Members questions at the Board meeting on 2 November 2023.

**13. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS JANUARY – JUNE 2024**

The Chief Executive presented the proposed revised schedule of Board and Committee meetings for January – June 2024. The Chief Executive highlighted that following Member’s feedback at the previous Board meeting in November 2023 that in order to avoid “doubling up” scenarios with two Committees running on the one day, there will be no meeting of Partnership Committee in December 2023 and in January 2024 there will be no meeting of the Performance Committee.

The Chief Executive explained however, that holding both Resources and ARAC Committees on the one day in March is unavoidable unless one of the meetings is moved to another day, although should the Assembly become operational again this would pose difficulties for the political members, therefore the proposal is to keep the schedule as is for now.

Members confirmed they were content with this approach.

**14. COMMUNICATION ISSUES**

It was agreed the Communications Manager would prepare a draft statement for issue in relation to the publication of the data breach report and will circulate to Members for review. **(AP7)**

**15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

A discussion was held regarding a recent Freedom of Information request in relation to accommodation for the Chief Constable. The Chief Executive noted

the current arrangements are in accordance with the PSNI Chief Officer and Senior Civilian Staff Equivalents Removal and Relocation Policy. Members discussed the provision of accommodation for previous Chief Constables and asked that officials explore with DoJ the options open to NIPB going forward to ensure the most efficient use of public funds.

**15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next Board Meeting is scheduled for Thursday 1 February 2024 at 9.30am in the conference room, James House.

The private meeting closed at 16.25pm.

**Strategic Planning & Governance**

**Date:** December 2023

**Chair**