

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD HELD ON THURSDAY 3 OCTOBER 2024 AT 9AM IN NIPB HQ, JAMES HOUSE, BELFAST

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:	Mr Mukesh Sharma (Chair)
(1)	Mr Cathal Boylan MLA
(2)	Mr Peter McReynolds MLA
	Mr Gerry Kelly MLA
(3)	Mrs Linda Dillon MLA
(4)	Mrs Cheryl Brownlee MLA
(5)	Ms Nuala McAllister MLA
	Mr Peter Osborne
	Mr Les Allamby
	Dr Kate Lavery
	Mr Frank McManus
	Mr Tommy O'Reilly
(6)	Mr Patrick Nelson
(7)	Mr Alan Chambers MLA
(8)	Mr Keith Buchanan MLA
(9)	Mr Trevor Clarke MLA
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE IN ATTENDANCE:	(10) Ms Naomi Long MLA, Minister of Justice
	(10) Mr Hugh Widdis, Permanent Secretary
	(10) Three Officials
INFORMATION COMMISSIONERS OFFICE IN ATTENDANCE:	(11) Mr John Edwards, Information Commissioner
	(11) Three Officials
POLICE SERVICE OF NORTHERN IRELAND IN ATTENDANCE:	(12) Mr Jon Boutcher, Chief Constable
	(12) Mr Chris Todd, T/Deputy Chief Constable
	(12) Ms Pamela McCreedy, Chief Operating Officer
	(12) Mr Bobby Singleton, Assistant Chief Constable
	(12) Mr Mark McNaughten, Assistant Chief Officer Corporate Services
	(12) Ms Clare Duffield, Assistant Chief Officer People & Organisational Development

- (12) Ms Aldrina Magwood, Assistant Chief Officer Strategic Planning & Transformation
- (12) Ms Melanie Jones, T/Assistant Chief Constable
- (12) Mr Davy Beck, T/Assistant Chief Constable
- (12) Mr Ryan Henderson, T/Assistant Chief Constable
- (12) Four Officials

**1 CROWN OFFICE ROW
IN ATTENDANCE:**

- (13) Mr Angus McCullough KC

**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
Ms Jenny Passmore, Director of Partnership
Mrs Natalia McMahon, T/Director of Police Pensions & Injury Benefits
Three Officials

**OTHER OFFICIALS IN
ATTENDANCE:**

Mr John Wadham, Human Rights Advisor

- (1) Left after public session
- (2) From public session, left at 2.45pm
- (3) Left at 2.10pm
- (4) From 9.30am, left after public session
- (5) Left at 2pm
- (6) Left at 2.40pm
- (7) From 9.10am, left at 2.10pm
- (8) From 9.30am
- (9) From 9.15am
- (10) Item 8.1 only
- (11) Public session only
- (12) Items 8.2 and 10 only

(13) Item 8.2 only

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mr Brendan Mullan (Vice Chair), Ms Marian Cree, and Mr Mark H Durkan MLA.

2. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No conflicts of interest were declared and Members did not indicate any items they wished to raise under 'Any Other Business' at agenda item 13.

3. DRAFT MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETINGS HELD ON:

3.1 Thursday 5 September 2024

It was **RESOLVED** that: -

- Subject to Member amendments received the minutes of the Board meeting held on Thursday 5 September 2024 be approved for publication.

3.1.1 Confidential Annex

It was **RESOLVED** that: -

- The confidential annex of the minutes of the Board meeting held on Thursday 5 September 2024 be approved as a correct record and will not be published.

4. BOARD ACTION LOG

Members **NOTED** the action log and verbal update provided by the Chief Executive in respect of the Board meetings held on 5 September 2024 and 6 June 2024.

In relation to the open action points from the meeting on 5 September 2024, the Chief Executive provided the following updates:

- Action point 5 – work taking place to ensure oversight of the PSNI Data Breach recommendations (Op Sanukite) will be discussed later in the meeting as part of the Chief Executives report.
- Action point 7 – the matter relating to Membership of the Special Purposes Committee will be discussed later in the meeting at agenda item 8.4.
- Action point 11 – the action in relation to development of the new NIPB Corporate Plan 2025-30 will be brought back to the Board for further discussion at the meeting in November 2024.
- Action point 12 – a meeting has been scheduled between the Chair's/ Vice Chair's of the Board and Audit and Risk Assurance Committee in relation to the governance and accountability relationship between the Board and its Executive Team, and a substantive update will follow after this has taken place.

In relation to open action point 6 from the meeting on 6 June 2024, the Chief Executive advised this action will remain open as work continues on the Board Members' development session from earlier in the year.

5. CHAIRPERSON'S BUSINESS

5.1 Chair's Report

The Chair asked the Board to **NOTE** the Chair's report and associated addendum which advised Members of:

- The Chair's engagements carried out during the period 5 September 2024 to 26 September 2024.
- A full list of correspondence issued and received by the Chair during the period 3 September 2024 to 1 October 2024.

The Chair did not highlight any specific engagements and referred Members to Appendix 1A of the report providing details of engagements which may be of particular interest.

In relation to correspondence the Chair did not highlight any specific items.

The Chief Executive highlighted correspondence in relation to the review of the Board and thanked Members for engaging with the review process so far and asked all Members to consider making time to speak with the review team in the coming weeks.

Members **NOTED** the update provided.

6. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

The Board **NOTED** a report from the Chief Executive which provided an overview of governance and other organisational matters and to inform the Board of key items of correspondence relating to Board business.

The Chief Executive updated Members on the Corporate and Business plan performance report for Q2 (July 24 to Sept 24) which provided a summary of progress made against the Board's Annual Business plan 2024-25 actions for the four Business plan objectives, and noted that all objectives except one

(securing sufficient funding for policing) were on track for completion by year end.

Members were advised of a change to the scheduled date for the Board meeting in December 2025 to facilitate PSNI hosting the National Policing Conference, and that a full schedule for the Board and Standing Committees in 2025 will be provided in due course.

Members were advised of preparatory work taking place for an Assistant Chief Constable (ACC) recruitment competition following the completion of the Deputy Chief Constable (DCC) competition, which launched on 19 September 2024 and is expected to conclude in November 2024.

The Chief Executive outlined an indicative timeline for the ACC competition and plans to confirm a fifth Independent Member on the Panel alongside Political Members and the Board Chair.

Following discussion, it was agreed to follow up with the two Independent Members who expressed an interest in participating in the panel to review their availability to participate in the ACC recruitment process and to confirm the availability of a Political Member. **(AP1)**

Members were updated on plans for Board oversight of the PSNI Data Breach report (Op Sanukite) recommendations, the need to provide public assurance and confidence in work taking place, and to give further consideration to how this can be factored into the Resources Committee programme of work. **(AP2)**

The Chief Executive did not highlight any specific items of correspondence from the report.

Members were advised of the upcoming schedule for PSNI attestations of the open invitation to attend Policing and Community Safety Partnership (PCSP)

meetings and that the large grants scheme of the Police Property Fund has been delayed until the early part of next year due to resourcing pressures. Members were thanked for attending recent events including PCSP Member training and the Policing Plan consultation events..

Members **NOTED** the update provided.

7. COMMITTEE REPORTS

7.1 Performance Committee – 12 September 2024

The Board **NOTED** the Performance Committee Chair's report and draft minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2024.

The Committee Chair advised of one recommendation from the Committee in relation to a Business Interest Appeal, and it was subsequently **AGREED** by Members to:

- **APPROVE** the Committee's decision to uphold the decisions of the Business Interest Panel and the Chief Constable and reject the Business Interest Application.

7.2 Partnership Committee – 19 September 2024

The Board **NOTED** the Partnership Committee Chair's report and draft minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2024.

The Committee Vice Chair advised of one recommendation from the Committee in relation to the updated Terms of Reference for the Committee, and it was subsequently **AGREED** by Members to:

- **APPROVE** the updated Partnership Committee Terms of Reference.

7.3 Resources Committee – 26 September 2024

The Board **NOTED** the Resources Committee Chair's report of the meeting held on 26 September 2024.

The Committee Chair advised of two recommendations from the Committee in relation to PSNI Above Delegated Authority (ADA) requests, specifically, a Tribunal decision relating to the PSNI Corporate Appearance and Protective Equipment Standard (CAPES) policy, and a compensation claim for injuries sustained in a Road Traffic Collision.

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

- **APPROVE** the two PSNI Above Delegated Authority requests outlined above.

The Committee Chair advised that Committee Members discussed a third PSNI ADA request in respect of claimed damages for misstatement, breach of warranty and negligence, and that following discussion the Committee did not recommend this ADA request to the Board for approval at this time and have requested further information from PSNI.

The Board was also provided with an update on PSNI Estates including site disposals and the Committee agreed it was content that the site of the former Warrenpoint PSNI Station will now be listed for sale on the open market as was unable to complete as part of the Internal market asset disposal process.

A Member asked about the PSNI review of the existing Police College facilities at Garnerville/ Steeple and the option being explored to relocate the facilities to Kinnegar (former Army Logistics Base).

The Committee Chair and Director of Resources updated Members and advised that PSNI have been asked to provide more information on the alternative options review for the Police College development proposal and that following consideration of additional information, it is anticipated that the Committee will be in a position to take a decision on the proposal outlined at its next meeting in November 2024.

7.4 Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) – 26 September 2024

The Board **NOTED** the ARAC Chair's Report of the meeting held on 26 September 2024.

8. BOARD BUSINESS

The Chair asked Members to note the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the McCullough review at agenda item 8.2 and correspondence from the Chief Constable on the TOR which has been included in the Chair's report at agenda item 5.1, to inform discussion with Mr Angus McCullough KC later in the meeting.

Members discussed the ongoing McCullough Review and ongoing Investigatory Powers Tribunal (IPT), and potential questions to be asked later in the meeting at the public session with Mr Angus McCullough KC and the Chief Constable.

8.1 Private Meeting with the Minister of Justice

The Chief Executive presented a paper to inform the Board's private meeting with the Minister of Justice (the Minister) which outlined the potential topics for discussion before the Minister joined the meeting.

The subject areas for discussion were agreed with Members and included the following topics – PSNI Resourcing; Injury on Duty (IOD) legislation; broader

operational issues including swift justice; the effectiveness of collaboration across Government departments; protests in NI over the summer period; and progress being made with the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) strategy.

The Chair welcomed the Minister and Department of Justice (DOJ) Permanent Secretary to the meeting noting that this was the first opportunity for the full Board to meet with the Minister since the NI Executive was restored, and acknowledged the keen interest, engagement and collaborative approach the Minister and Department have always shown in support of the work of the Board.

Members **NOTED** the Chair's opening remarks which covered a number of strategic issues of relevance to the Board, as follows:

- Significant work undertaken by the Board since the events in policing in the past year, and the primary need to stabilise the PSNI Senior Team with the appointment of the Chief Constable, the recent launch of a Deputy Chief Constable competition, and plans to launch a substantive Assistant Chief Constable competition before the end of this year.
- Work taking place with the Chief Constable and his Senior Team to provide a clear direction and focus for PSNI with the recent launch of the consultation process for the draft Policing Plan 2025-30.
- Ongoing work of the Board to assist PSNI in securing additional resources and the need for continued focus in this area to ensure the Service is adequately resourced to provide effective policing for all. This includes the case for increasing Police numbers and the Board's role to support PSNI as well as ensuring that operational efficiencies are maximised with existing headcount.

- Role of Board to oversee and scrutinise other key areas including attendance management, Occupational Health and Wellbeing, restricted duties, and other strategic work areas including Estates, Information Technology and Fleet management.
- Impact of PSNI Data Breach in August 2023 on public confidence in policing and the Board's role as scrutiny body to provide reassurance through effective monitoring of recommendations to ensure a breach of this type does not happen again.

Additionally, the Chair outlined the Board's support for the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) findings that necessary changes have been made to PSNI policies, procedures, and training which has resulted in no enforcement notice being issued by the ICO in relation to the Data Breach.

- The Board's ongoing and serious concerns regarding the alleged illegal surveillance of journalists, lawyers and others in the past, and that the Board will receive a briefing later in the meeting from Mr Angus McCullough KC as part of his Review of the PSNI arrangements for such surveillance.
- Recent and serious concerns expressed by the Board about the PSNI handling of murder investigations, and particularly those relating to the most vulnerable females in society. This links to the ongoing work by PSNI to rebuild public confidence in how PSNI tackle VAWG, noting the Board's appreciation of recent correspondence from the Minister outlining the work taking place at Department level to address VAWG in our society.
- The Board's role to advocate on behalf of PSNI on issues requiring a holistic cross-Government approach, for example, to address the underlying causes of hate in our society and deal with mental health issues in society.

- Acknowledgement of the DOJ commissioned review of the Board with Members looking forward to engaging with the process.

The Minister thanked the Board for the invitation to attend today's private meeting and emphasised her continuing support for the work of the Board to hold the PSNI to account and to enable the delivery of an effective Police Service for all.

Members **NOTED** the briefing from the Minister which covered the following matters:

- Rebuilding public confidence in Policing after the significant incidents of the past year. The recently commenced review of the Board, which is in its early stages, has a tight focus, is expected to conclude by the end of this year and which the Minister hopes that all Members will engage with. The Minister also noted that on receipt of the final report consideration will be given to the findings and recommendations, and a timeframe for publication will be confirmed.
- The Police budget which remains very difficult and challenging, similar to the wider Justice budget with good ongoing work between PSNI and DoJ to build a case for additional funding to address current attrition rates.
- Need to restore confidence in Police investigations which involve very vulnerable women and address wider systemic issues; the benefits of the Domestic Homicide review process; and the successful implementation of the VAWG strategy.
- Managing the ongoing impact of the PSNI Data Breach in August 2023 and its lasting effect on morale; disappointment in respect of the quantum of the ICO fine given the severe financial challenges and correspondence has been issued to the ICO on this matter.

Members discussion with the Minister covered the following issues:

- the ongoing impact of resource and financial challenges which are the result of years of under-investment, and which coupled with other significant financial challenges relating to Police pay, ICO fine, and group claims relating to holiday pay and the Data Breach have led to an impossible budget situation for 24/25. In this context it was noted that, the Board's Resources Committee has been unable to recommend to the Board the PSNI Resource Plan for 2024-25 [which currently is showing a deficit] and hence the Board's inability fully discharge its scrutiny role.

The Minister noted the significant operational challenges due to a sustained fall in the number of Police Officers in recent years, the need for a re-evaluation of the Fiscal Floor calculation to reflect the increasing demands on DOJ, and ongoing concerns of the increasing demands on PSNI dealing with a broad range of societal issues which PSNI is not best equipped for.

In relation to the PSNI Resource Plan it is hoped that additional funding will be made available to DOJ as part of the October 2024 Monitoring Round, but the Minister acknowledged the need for sustainable long term investment alongside the continued implementation of operational efficiencies.

- Concerns regarding delays in 'swift justice' for the perpetrators of crime, as well as delays in the Courts system and how NI compared to other parts of the UK, bearing in mind the differences in the judicial processes in both places. In discussion some of the inter-dependencies in the criminal justice system were noted.

Cross departmental efforts to address VAWG and wider concerns around offenders not engaging with rehabilitation and mental health services (e.g. as evidenced in the Cawderly case), the degree of

complexity in many cases which required a joined up approach between the Health Trusts and Prison Service, lenient sentencing and low number of cases where maximum prison sentence used but noting the independence of the Judiciary , and concerns in respect of the bail process. The Minister also highlighted the benefits of the Domestic Homicide Review process, increased transparency in relation to sentencing remarks, previous offending and admissibility, the rationale of remand, redefining early pleas, and that a Sentencing Bill is on the current NI Assembly mandate for next year.

Following discussion, the Minister agreed to provide a written response in relation to the Cawdery case and DOJ's role in implementing some of the recommendations. **(AP3)**

- The areas of concerns which lead to IHR applications which include work related stress, long working hours, unsustainable amounts of overtime, high levels of sickness absence, noting there was a need for a long term stabilisation plan to improve health and wellbeing within PSNI.
- Injury On Duty (IOD) process and plans for regulatory change with Minister highlighting that any further changes to the Board's role and responsibilities which, in her view were clearly defined in legislation following the Patten Review, would require amendment to primary legislation, and noted the opportunity for a wider conversation in collaboration with other Government departments following receipt and consideration of recommendations from an NI Audit Office report.

A Member followed up and asked about the status of these recommendations from the 2020 IOD Audit Office report and whether Assurance Checks are carried out by DOJ on the work of their Independent Medical Referees (IMR), and it was agreed to provide a written response on these matters. **(AP4)**

Members also discussed the ongoing challenges in securing the services of IMRs and recent discussions around costings and need for parity across IMRs and SMPs.

- Extent of the collaboration and joined up approach needed to ensure roll out of the PSNI 'Right Care Right Person' initiative; the success of a recent scheme using Youth Workers to support vulnerable persons attending Emergency Departments, ongoing dialogue with the Health Minister as part of cross departmental collaboration, and noted the increasing challenges faced by PSNI Officers in dealing with mental health emergencies without the necessary training and experience.
- In relation to the removal of offensive material in public spaces the Minister noted the continued lack of political consensus to address this issue and the need to foster a more collaborative approach, noting it is unfortunate that PSNI remain at the forefront of this response because other Departments have concerns in respect of threats and intimidation.

The Chair thanked the Minister of Justice for meeting with the Board and answering Member's questions, and the Minister left the meeting.

8.2 Private Briefing from Angus McCullough KC and the Chief Constable on 'The McCullough Review'

The Chair welcomed the Chief Constable and Mr Angus McCullough KC to the meeting and invited them to provide an update on the McCullough Review into PSNI's use of covert surveillance.

Mr McCullough KC opened by explaining that the key role of the review is to investigate surveillance by PSNI of individuals or groups of journalists, lawyers and non-governmental organisations, the Police Ombudsman for Northern

Ireland and the Northern Ireland Policing Board. He said he hopes to maximise what can be disclosed in the report while still protecting legitimate security concerns.

Mr McCullough KC then discussed the details of the Terms of Reference for his review and emphasised that whilst they had been drafted in consultation with the advisory group and were then presented to the Chief Constable who accepted them without changes, the terms remain flexible and open to revision based on the evidence as it emerges.

Mr McCullough KC said that he has received full cooperation from the PSNI and been given the necessary access to the materials he needs, and he is satisfied with the support and transparency he has received from PSNI.

He also noted the valuable assistance from the advisory group, including contributions from the Policing Board's Human Rights Advisor.

Following the presentation, discussion focused on the following areas:

- Procedural Issues and the application process for the cases that will be included in the review.

A press notice had been issued inviting individuals to contact the review team. The initial step for those wishing to contribute is the completion of a questionnaire, which is available on the Review's independent website.

- Access to closed sessions whilst the IPT hearings are in progress.

Mr McCullough KC said that the current hearing falls outside of his scope but he will shortly have access to all the submissions and documents from both the closed and open sessions.

Whilst the final report may not be published for some months it may be useful for an interim report to be provided.

- Protection against the disclosure of officers' names following their submission of any material to the Review.

Officers are being encouraged to engage with the review in confidence, however, if there is any evidence of wrongdoing, anonymity cannot automatically be granted. Applicants have been informed of this restriction when applying through the website.

- Surveillance of NGOs and cooperation from former PSNI employees.

On this point, the Chief Constable said that whilst NGO's and PSNI employees are not specifically referred to in the Terms of Reference they are welcome to contribute and are encouraged to provide information to the review.

In relation to former officers, contact has been established with the Retired Police Officers Association.

- Surveillance Conducted Outside RIPA and how the review will handle surveillance that hasn't followed RIPA guidelines.

In response Mr McCullough KC said the review is not limited to surveillance conducted under formal procedures set out in RIPA.

The Chair thanked Angus McCullough KC for his presentation, and he left the meeting.

8.3 Board Response to Consultation on the NI Executive Draft Programme for Government

The Chief Executive presented a paper to inform Member's discussion on the Board's response to the public consultation on the Executive's draft Programme for Government 2024-2027, 'Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most'.

The Board was advised the paper included the proposed key messages for a written response and Members were asked for views on any other issues that should be included. Members were thanked for the feedback received to date.

Members **NOTED** the update provided and that the final draft of the Board's written response will be brought back to the next Board meeting in November 2024 for approval.

8.4 Membership of Special Purposes Committee

The Chief Executive presented a paper to seek Member's views on the process to select a seventh Member for the Board's Special Purposes Committee.

As background, Members were advised that the Committee has yet to meet as it is will only do so in relation to s59 and s60 matters. Following a review of Standing Orders by Board Officials, it was noted that under the current legislation it is necessary to increase the number of Members on the Committee from six to seven. The current Membership is made up of the Board Chair and Vice Chair as well as the Chairs of the Board's four Standing Committees.

The Chief Executive outlined options available to increase the membership with the recommendation being to nominate an Independent Board Member to the Committee as this would enable better representation.

A Member asked about the option to rotate Committee membership.

It was noted that a number of Members had to leave the meeting for other NI Assembly commitments.

Members **NOTED** the update provided and it was **AGREED** to bring this matter back to the Board at the next meeting in November 2024.

9. KEY ISSUES OF PUBLIC INTEREST

The Board **NOTED** a paper from the Communications branch which detailed recent issues of public interest relevant to the Board's areas of work.

10. PRIVATE SESSION WITH THE CHIEF CONSTABLE INCLUDING THE CHIEF CONSTABLE'S ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT TO THE BOARD

The Chair welcomed the Chief Constable Jon Boutcher, T/Deputy Chief Constable Chris Todd, Chief Operating Officer (COO) Pamela McCreedy, Assistant Chief Constable (ACC) Bobby Singleton, T/ACC Melanie Jones, T/ACC Ryan Henderson, T/ACC Davy Beck, Assistant Chief Officer (ACO) People & Organisational Development Clare Duffield, Assistant Chief Officer (ACO) Strategic Planning & Transformation Aldrina Magwood and ACO Corporate Services Mark McNaughten to the meeting.

The Chief Constable presented Members with an overview of the Chief Constable's Accountability Report for September 2024 and highlighted the following areas:

- **Draft Programme for Government** - prioritising ending violence against women and safer communities. The Chief Constable expressed disappointment that policing isn't given more focus and emphasised the need for proper resources to address crime and public safety challenges.
- **Violence Against Women Action Plan:** including an update on the progress of this action plan, highlighting its importance and the need for continued commitment despite the pressures faced by the PSNI.

- **Policing Numbers:** emphasising PSNI is experiencing critically low officer numbers, which are insufficient to manage the current crime levels. PSNI continue to advocate for increasing officer numbers to 7,500 in line with the "New Decade, New Approach" strategy and stress the need for a formal commitment to maintain at least 7,000 officers over the next three years.
- **Consultations:** The Chief Constable emphasised the importance of public engagement in consultations regarding the draft Programme for Government and the PSNI's future and highlighted the need for a ring-fenced funding and a robust recovery plan.
- **Victims of Crime Survey:** The Chief Constable acknowledged the disappointing results from a recent survey on victim satisfaction which contrasted with the Policing Board survey in 2023.
- **Race Crime and Offensive Materials:** The PSNI has been working on addressing racial hate crime and offensive material and called for better collaboration between public sectors to address these issues effectively.
- **Policing Ceremonies:** The Chief Constable referenced recent events such as the attestation of new constables, the Team PSNI event, a commendation ceremony celebrating officers' bravery, and the National Police Memorial Day, emphasising the importance of recognising the dedication and heroism of police officers.

Following this the Board Chair invited Members questions to the Chief Constable and the following matters were discussed with the PSNI Leadership team:

- Reports of past allegations involving Jonathan Creswell and ensuring that the NICHE system is effective and robust enough to prevent similar incidents from occurring in other cases.

In response, the PSNI indicated they would provide a written update to address the question.

- Journalists in Fermanagh & Omagh writing an open letter, stating they are being excluded when making requests to the local command.

On this point PSNI responded by saying there is no bias against local journalists and that the issue may be due to newer officers having a different working relationship with the media compared to the previous command.

- Sextortion cases and concerns that have been raised about the messaging to encourage victims of sextortion to share their worries with someone they trust, when they can often be hesitant to do so, and whether there is a PSNI contact or an anonymous number for those seeking help and guidance.

On this point the PSNI discussed their ongoing safeguarding efforts and the available resources for victims of blackmail of an intimate or sexual nature, including online, commonly known as sextortion. They also expressed a willingness to address any gaps in the support system and improve the services offered.

- Hate Crime and whether there is potential for other government departments to collaborate more closely with the PSNI on hate crime initiatives and if so, how will this be taken forward.

In response the Chief Constable emphasised that further work and support from other government departments was necessary to strengthen the response to hate crime and send a stronger message.

- Drugs/Paramilitaries and how the PSNI is addressing the root causes of paramilitarism, particularly its links to drug activity near the Royal Victoria Hospital.

On this point the Chief Constable outlined key challenges in addressing paramilitarism, including providing pathways out of the lifestyle, sentencing options, housing issues, and the lack of funding for treatment centres and the necessary infrastructure.

- Road Partnership and whether there had been an underspend in the Road Partnership program.

In response PSNI explained that the underspend was due to rules governing the use of revenue from camera vans, which limited spending on other road safety areas. It was further highlighted that PSNI are working to relax these rules to allow the funds to be used more broadly.

- Roadside use of DrugWipes and whether the evidence gathered through this can be legally used for prosecution.

On this point PSNI clarified that DrugWipes are used as a screening tool at the roadside to justify an arrest. Following this, evidential blood and urine samples are collected in custody and used for potential prosecution.

The Chair thanked the Chief Constable Jon Boutcher, T/Deputy Chief Constable Chris Todd, Chief Operating Officer (COO) Pamela McCreedy, Assistant Chief Constable (ACC) Bobby Singleton, T/ACC Melanie Jones, T/ACC Ryan Henderson, T/ACC Davy Beck, Assistant Chief Officer (ACO) People & Organisational Development Clare Duffield, Assistant Chief Officer (ACO) Strategic Planning & Transformation Aldrina Magwood and ACO Corporate Services Mark McNaughten and they left the meeting.

11. QUESTIONS FOR THE CHIEF CONSTABLE

11.1 Issues Arising from Committees

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

11.2 Committee Written Questions and Responses

No responses to Committee questions were received during the previous period to be brought to the Board's attention.

11.3 Individual Members' Written Questions and Responses

Members **NOTED** the PSNI responses to written questions and follow up responses to oral questions from the Board meeting in September 2024.

13. COMMUNICATION ISSUES

The Communications manager advised that a media statement will be released in relation to the recently announced ICO Data Breach fine.

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

A Member asked for further Board discussion in relation to the McCullough Review and status of a s59 Report/ s60 Inquiry, and matters referred to by both the Justice Minister and Chief Constable, and Officials agreed to explore options to facilitate. **(AP5)**

15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next full Board Meeting is scheduled for Thursday 7 November 2024 at 9.30am in James House.

The meeting closed at 3.10pm.

RESOURCES DIRECTORATE

Date: October 2024

Chair