

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD

MINUTES OF MEETING OF PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 16 JANUARY 2025 AT 9.30AM IN JAMES HOUSE

PRESENT:

- Mr Peter McReynolds MLA (Chair)
- Dr Kate Lavery (Committee Vice Chair)
- Mrs Linda Dillon MLA*
- (1) Mrs Cheryl Brownlee MLA
- Mr Keith Buchanan MLA
- Mr Cathal Boylan MLA
- (2) Mrs Marian Cree
- Mr Patrick Nelson
- (3) Mr Tommy O'Reilly
- Mr Mark Durkan MLA*

POLICE SERVICE OF NORTHERN IRELAND IN ATTENDANCE:

- (3) ACC Ryan Henderson
- (3) Chief Superintendent Gary McDonald
- (4) ACC Melanie Jones
- (4) Chief Superintendent Sam Donaldson
- (4) Superintendent Wilson

one PSNI official

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE:

- Ms Jenny Passmore, Director of Partnership
- (5) Mrs Sinead Simpson*
- Four Board Officials

- (1) From 9.50am
- (2) From 9.45am
- (3) From 9.50am
- (4) Item 6.1 only
- (5) Item 6.2 only
- (5) From 10am

* Attended meeting by video conference facility

1. APOLOGIES

No apologies were received for the meeting.

The Committee agreed the agenda for the meeting.

2. **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

One Member raised a potential conflict in respect of agenda item 5.2 as they are the Chief Executive of an organisation who were a beneficiary of the grants awarded by Belfast PCSP in relation to hate crime.

3. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21 NOVEMBER 2024**

The Committee considered the draft minutes of the Committee meeting held on 21 November 2024.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- The minutes of the Committee meeting held on 21 November 2024 be approved.

4. **COMMITTEE ACTION LOG**

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

In relation to Action Point 1 from the meeting on 21 November 2024 regarding the meeting with Community Restorative Justice (CRJ) to discuss their recent survey on the PSNI South Armagh Review - Three Years On, the Director of Partnership noted that potential dates for the end of February 2025 are currently being considered and Members will shortly be advised of the date once it has been confirmed.

Members **AGREED** that Action Points 2 and 3 from the meeting on 21 November 2024 and Action Point 2 from the meeting on 19 September 2024, relating to engaging statisticians when deciding on how data should be captured in the next policing plan, publication of the Police Property Fund Report and PSNI legal advice in respect of Right Care Right Person call handlers respectively, could be closed.

4.1 Correspondence to Minister of Justice re legislative change in respect of Access to Custody Records

In relation to Action Point 4 from the meeting on 21 November 2024, regarding the ongoing issue in relation to Access to Custody Records, the Director of Partnership noted that correspondence had been issued to the Minister of Justice on 9 December 2024 seeking a legislative change and a response is currently awaited.

Members **NOTED** the correspondence.

5. CHAIRPERSON'S BUSINESS

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

5.1 PSNI written responses to follow up questions from November Committee meeting

Members **NOTED** the written responses provided by PSNI to follow up questions raised by three Members at the November 2024 Committee meeting.

Members confirmed they were content with the responses.

5.2 Update on Open Call from Belfast PCSP to tackle hate and support engagement

Members **NOTED** the update in relation to Belfast PCSP open call, where Joint Committee (DOJ and NIPB) agreed an additional £20K be provided to Belfast PCSP to tackle hate following the extreme hate incidents in Belfast in August 2024. Members noted there were 22 grants awarded, including community engagement events, active bystander training, resources to encourage reporting of hate crime, youth diversionary and education sessions, cultural awareness and celebration, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) to build confidence to integrate and report and story-telling and lived experience projects.

6. ITEMS FOR COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Before PSNI joined the meeting Board officials provided Members with an overview of agenda items 6.1 and 6.2 (Policing Plan Measure 2.1.3 999/101 Response Times and PSNI Road Safety Strategy respectively).

6.1 Policing Plan Measure 2.1.3 999/101 Response Times

The Committee welcomed Assistant Chief Constable (ACC) Ryan Henderson and Chief Superintendent Gary McDonald to the meeting.

ACC Henderson presented the PSNI report card in relation to Policing Plan Measure 2.1.3 999/101 Response Times and noted the report card provided illustrates 10 months of data from January 2024 – October 2024 and during this period, on average, the PSNI responded to:

- 82.3% of emergency (999) calls within the Service Level Agreement (SLA); and
- 71.9% of priority (101) calls within the SLA.

ACC Henderson stated that the responsiveness of the PSNI shows a small improvement of 0.2% and 2.8% for attendance times within the SLA for emergency and priority calls respectively when compared to the same period in 2023 and commended PSNI officers and staff for continuing to maintain performance levels, particularly against the backdrop of the record low officer numbers and the significant budgetary and resourcing challenges currently experienced by PSNI. ACC Henderson noted that in the period January – October 2024 PSNI received 427,000 calls (which represents a 12.7% decrease in demand within the Call Management Centres when compared to the same period in 2023), and approximately 60% of these calls can be dealt with over the telephone without the need for officer deployment.

ACC Henderson noted that a large volume of calls received were deemed to be priority calls and advised prioritisation of the calls is key. ACC Henderson advised training is a focus for staff in the contact management centres to ensure priority calls are managed appropriately, to assess risk and manage demand because “if everything is a priority then nothing is a priority”. ACC Henderson advised that in addition to “emergency” and “priority” call grading categories in which emergencies should be responded to within 15 minutes and priority calls within 60 minutes, in December 2024 PSNI introduced a new “Routine” call category, whereby calls should be responded to within 4 hours. ACC Henderson advised that since the go live date, 25% of calls have been assigned to this category which has helped manage demand and expectation.

ACC Henderson advised that PSNI are striving to improve efficiency through the use of digital and technological advancements such as online reporting, which has been active for approximately 1 year and receives between 2500 – 3000 reports each month. ACC Henderson added in August 2024 PSNI launched the use of digital statements whereby PSNI officers can record statements remotely on mobile devices, and it is the intention to introduce

video facilities for Courts to allow officers to give evidence remotely also, therefore freeing up officer time for deployment.

Following the briefing Members raised the following with PSNI:

- Results of the pilot of a new shift pattern across Local Policing Teams which sought to realign resources to current demand; noting that evaluation of the pilot is currently ongoing and PSNI will revert in writing to confirm the timeline for completion of the evaluation. Members also requested that the Chief Superintendent of Local Policing attend a future meeting of the Committee to brief Members on the outcome of the review. **(AP1)**
- Comparative data from other UK Police forces in respect of the new “Routine” call grading measure, noting that nationally, the collation of this data is not consistent and therefore difficult to measure against;
- Any learning derived from issues encountered with Interactive Voice Response during Storm Isha in January 2024 and improvements implemented in advance of the recent Storm Daragh;
- PSNI internal targets for improvements to call handling times;
- Performance metrics on efficiency and effectiveness of contact management centres and comparative data in terms of 999 response data which is published nationally; noting that PSNI have a suite of indicators that they use on a weekly basis and will share this data with Members;
- Clarity on the internal process followed by PSNI on receipt of a call and the role of the Telephone Resolution Unit (TRU);
- How far beyond the target time are the percentage of calls that are not answered within the SLA time and plans for improvement in this area;
- Integration and potential benefits of Artificial Intelligence (AI); noting that it is hoped AI would greatly improve the customer experience as well as reduce demand that requires deployment which will free up

officers time. ACC Henderson advised service users of the PSNI Digital Portal can expect to receive texts and email updates and bespoke advice on how not to become a victim of specific crimes and updates as and when their case progresses through the criminal justice system;

- The anticipated impact on the figures of emergency and priority call response times if these digital/AI improvements are implemented within the next 12 months;
- Plans to incorporate a social media reporting process (an outstanding recommendation from the Local Policing Review at agenda item 6.3) into the overall Digital Citizen Services project; noting that at present the focus is on the launch of the portal. ACC Henderson advised PSNI are partnering with a local company to develop options in this regard, however this will be a later stage of the project; and
- Planned communication to the public over next 12-18 months to raise awareness of the new digital/online processes.

The Chair thanked ACC Henderson and Chief Superintendent McDonald for their briefing and they left the meeting.

Members **NOTED** the update provided.

6.2 PSNI Roads Safety Update

The Chair welcomed ACC Melanie Jones, Chief Superintendent Sam Donaldson and Superintendent Wilson to the meeting and invited them to present PSNI's latest Roads Safety Strategy.

ACC Jones advised Road Safety is a key Strategic Priority for PSNI, particularly in light of the rise in the number of road traffic accidents in recent years. ACC Jones noted however, this rise is not exclusive to NI but An Garda Siochana (AGS) and other UK jurisdictions have also experienced a

rise in serious and fatal road traffic collisions. ACC Jones advised that despite monitoring the causes of the collisions and looking for any emerging trend or patterns, PSNI have been unable to identify any one single cause but noted there have been multiple contributing factors, such as speed, being under the influence of alcohol or drugs, awareness of the road and split-second decision making. ACC Jones stated PSNI are in the early stages of discussion with the Department for Infrastructure (DFI) regarding making legislative amendments to reduce the limit for drink driving, however the additional demand this will undoubtedly put on the criminal justice and other partners system is recognised.

Chief Superintendent McDonald then presented the PSNI Road Safety report card and provided Members with an overview of the key headlines contained within it including:

- In terms of Road Safety, NI is the 3rd safest place in Europe to live, behind Norway and Sweden;
- In 2024 there were 3 less fatalities when compared to 2023, however there were 31 more accidents where people have been killed or seriously injured (KSIs);
- On average over 5 people die on NI roads each month and on the island of Ireland 5 people are dying every week;
- Current and future road safety initiatives such as Roadsafes roadshows continuing throughout 2025, partnership with Crimestoppers, the launch of Operation Lifesaver in March 2025;
- Continued engagement with NI Strategic Road Safety Forum and NI Road Safety Partnership;
- Resourcing levels of the Road Policing Unit and a breakdown of roles and responsibilities within it;
- Plans to amend legislation to reduce the drink driving limit and also plans to increase the amount of Fixed Penalty Notices for speeding to £100;

- The draft NI Road Safety Strategy to 2030 launched in September 2024; and
- Road Safety is one of four key operational priorities in 2025-2028 cross-border strategy.

During discussion Members raised the following with PSNI:

- If consideration has been given to more regular testing of the general population's driving licences; noting that discussions have taken place with Department for Infrastructure (DFI) and DVLA, however it is accepted that there are capacity issues with this proposal;
- The possibility of fast-tracking dangerous offenders through the criminal justice system in order to remove them from the roads at the earliest opportunity;
- Potential engagement opportunities the NI Strategic Road Safety Forum could avail of with organisations of influence eg sporting organisations to target communities to educate people and change their mindset;
- What work is taking place on a cross-border basis with An Garda Síochána (AGS) to address Road Safety; noting that there is daily engagement, a Cross Border Strategy has recently been signed, and a meeting is due to take place in early February 2025 regarding the 3 year strategy;
- The decision-making rationale for deciding the location of speed cameras and other road safety measures; noting that PSNI refer to a handbook to inform their decisions and will share this with Members;
- International best practice and responsibility for determining when elderly people should be deemed unfit to drive; noting the current laws on this issue are vague, however discussions with partners have commenced;
- Clarification of the staffing and resourcing levels within the PSNI Road Safety team;

- The evidence base for reducing the drink driving limit, and the rationale for proposing to increase the levy for speeding fines;
- If being under the influence of drugs is becoming a more prominent issue in road safety incidents; noting that in 13.6% of people killed or seriously injured (KSIs) drugs or alcohol was a factor;
- The impact of the closure of the Risk Awareness & Danger Avoidance Responsibility (RADAR) facility in 2019;
- The timescales for testing and breathalysing individuals once they have been suspected of drink driving;
- How income generated by the NI Road Safety Partnership is used;
- How resources within the Roads Policing Unit are prioritised;
- Any learning gained from the NI Strategic Road Safety Forum; noting the forum has recently been set up and there have only been three meetings held to date, however PSNI have engaged with Ulster University to carry out research on international best practice; and
- The anticipated benefits/impact on reducing the current drink driving limit.

The Chair thanked ACC Jones, Chief Superintendent Donaldson and Superintendent Wilson for their briefing and they left the meeting.

Members **NOTED** the update provided.

6.3 Local Policing Review Update

The Director of Partnership presented a paper which provided Members with an update on progress towards implementation of the remaining open actions within the Local Policing Review (LPR) Implementation Plan.

The Director of Partnership explained the Local Policing Review was carried out in 2018 and following which 45 delivery actions were agreed. The Director of Partnership noted that initially the Committee monitored the

delivery of the LPR Actions through a specific Measure in the Annual Performance Plan. The last update through that Performance Plan measure was in February 2023 when it was agreed that of the final eight outstanding actions, five were deemed to be implemented. The Director of Partnership advised in February 2024 Members received an update on the three outstanding actions and, given the complexity of the actions it was agreed that an annual update would continue to be provided.

The Director of Partnership noted the outstanding actions and provided Members with an overview of the work done in relation to each one.

Headline Action 3– Vulnerability and Mental Health

Action 3.1 Conduct an analysis to quantify the demand on policing linked to vulnerable people and in particular those suffering from mental health issues.

Action 3.5 Continue to roll out a transformed custody healthcare model which places equality of care at the centre of delivery.

Headline Action 4 – Call Handling

Action 4.4 Develop a social media reporting process.

The Director of Partnership advised that PSNI have indicated that these three actions could be closed as they are currently being progressed as part of broader pieces of work. The Director of Partnership advised actions 3.1 and 3.5 will be progressed and included under the Right Care Right Person initiative and action 4.4 will be captured as part of the new Policing Plan indicator 2.2 on people feeling safe in their community – this indicator will assess the responsiveness of the police by monitoring levels of 999 and 101 calls.

Following discussion, it was **AGREED** to close the actions and continue to monitor them via updates to the Committee as part of the proposed alternative workstreams. Letter to be issued to PSNI to advise of the Committee decision and that Members will be expecting updates on these issues when PSNI next brief the Committee. **(AP2)**

6.4 Update on the Independent Community Observer Scheme

The Engagement Officer presented a paper which provided Members with an update on the work of the Independent Community Observer (ICO) Scheme.

The Engagement Officer provided background to the scheme, noting that Independent Community Observers are impartial volunteers from the community who help monitor key aspects of the PSNI recruitment process and report on it to the Board. The Engagement Officer noted ICOs focus on observing that the same procedures are applied to all candidates and that the facilities and arrangements are adequate to ensure the recruitment process is independent, transparent and fair.

The Engagement Officer noted that the previous ICO recruitment campaign took place in March 2021, in preparation for a PSNI recruitment process which took place throughout 2022. However, as a PSNI recruitment campaign for Constables is expected to launch next week, the Engagement Officer advised the ICO Scheme will be required to re-mobilise so that the Board can carry out this statutory function which is integral in providing independent oversight of the recruitment process. The Engagement Officer advised the Board currently has 8 active ICOs and in order to effectively implement the ICO scheme and incorporate a reserve list of volunteers, it is the intention to recruit several additional ICOs.

The Engagement Officer advised that in February 2023, the Committee

agreed to amend the Independent Custody Visitors (ICV) recruitment from campaigns to a rolling recruitment and in order to ensure consistency across both of the volunteering schemes, Board Officials are proposing to adopt a similar rolling recruitment process for the ICO Scheme. The Engagement Officer noted this format would allow potential candidates to apply for this volunteering role throughout the year and it is also anticipated that a rolling recruitment would create more volunteers for the reserve list.

The Engagement Officer added that ICOs normally visit Assessment Centres in pairs however due to Covid-19 guidelines in place during the previous PSNI recruitment campaign it was agreed that they would visit individually to limit the number of persons at the Assessment Centres. As the Covid-19 restrictions that were in place in 2022 are no longer in place, the Engagement Officer advised that Board Officials are proposing to adopt the previous procedures for the ICO scheme namely: ICOs will visit in pairs. The Engagement Officer noted this will provide additional oversight and monitoring of the PSNI recruitment process and additional accountability for each ICO completing a visit.

Following discussion, Members **AGREED** to approve the initiation of a rolling recruitment process for the ICO scheme and confirmed they were content for ICOs to revert back to carrying out visits in pairs following the end of Covid-19 restrictions.

6.5 Update on the South Armagh Report Recommendations

The Director of Partnership presented a paper which provided Members with an update on the one remaining outstanding recommendation from the 2019 South Armagh Review which is monitored by Partnership Committee.

The Director of Partnership advised that the final recommendation (Recommendation 40) is in respect of Vulnerability and is in relation to ensuring an enhanced focus is in place on those areas that may be

underreported because of low levels of trust and confidence in police – for example domestic violence and hate crime. The Director of Partnership advised that in the update provided by PSNI they have outlined the service wide focus on training officers to recognise signs of domestic abuse and coercive control and how best to support victims and they also reference the work being done with the introduction of the Violence against Women and Girls strategy. The Director of Partnership noted the update also outlines the work done locally in South Armagh and the provision of statistics to highlight the effectiveness of the action plan. The Director of Partnership added that as most of the work is now deemed to be part of normal business, PSNI have indicated that the recommendation has now been implemented.

Following discussion, Members **AGREED** to discharge the recommendation and write to the Chief Constable to ask if PSNI have given consideration to carrying out interviews in more welcoming community settings/facilities instead of Police Stations for vulnerable people in the South Armagh area, in order to encourage them to come forward and report incidents of crime. Letter to be issued to PSNI to advise of the Committee decision. **(AP3)**

7. QUESTIONS FOR THE CHIEF CONSTABLE

The Committee agreed to write to the Chief Constable to ask if consideration has been given to providing more welcoming community facilities, as an alternative to a PSNI station, in which to conduct interviews with vulnerable individuals. **(AP4)**

8. COMMUNICATIONS ISSUES / OPPORTUNITIES

None.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Director of Partnership reminded Members that the Problem Solving Awards are taking place on 19 February 2025 and encouraged Members to attend. Official invitations will be issued to Members week commencing 20 January 2025.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for **Thursday 20 February 2024** at 9.30am in James House.

The meeting ended at 12.50pm

CHAIR

**PARTNERSHIP DIRECTORATE
JANUARY 2025**