

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD

MINUTES OF MEETING OF PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 20 FEBRUARY 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
- Mrs Marian Cree
- Mr Patrick Nelson
- (2) Mr Tommy O'Reilly

POLICE SERVICE OF NORTHERN IRELAND IN ATTENDANCE:

- (3) ACC Ryan Henderson
- (3) Chief Inspector Custody Policy
- (3) Project Manager, Digital
Citizens Service
- (3) Digital Citizens Service Representative
- (4) Dympna Thornton, Strategic Partnerships &
Prevention
- (4) T/Chief Superintendent McMillan
- (5) T/Director of Strategic Communications &
Engagement,
- (5) Head of Digital, Engage & Creative Relations,
- (5) Head of News & Media,

one PSNI official

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE:

- (1) From 9.40am
- (2) From 9.40am
- (3) Item 6.1 only
- (4) Item 6.2 only
- (5) Item 6.3 only

Ms Jenny Passmore, Director of Partnership
Seven Board Officials

1. APOLOGIES

No apologies were received for the meeting.

The Committee agreed the agenda for the meeting.

2. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

None.

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16 JANUARY 2025

The Committee considered the draft minutes of the Committee meeting held on 16 January 2025.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- The minutes of the Committee meeting held on 16 January 2025 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 the meeting has been scheduled for 12 March 2025 and all Board Members have been invited to attend.

Members **AGREED** that Action Points 2, 3 and 4 from the meeting on 16 January 2025, relating to writing to the PSNI to inform them of the Committee decisions regarding the closure of recommendations from the Local Policing and the South Armagh Reviews and to submit a written question to the Chief Constable respectively, could be closed.

4.1 Correspondence to A/ACC Stephen Murray re briefing on conclusion of trial on officer shift patterns

In relation to Action Point 1 from the meeting on 16 January 2025, the Director of Partnership noted the Committee wrote to A/ACC Murray regarding the timescales for providing a briefing to Members on the outcome of a recent trial on new shift patterns for officers and A/ACC Murray confirmed he would be in a position to brief the Committee from March 2025. The Director of Partnership noted as this issue falls under the remit of the PSNI Health and Wellbeing workstream, it will be considered further by Resources Committee .

Members **NOTED** the correspondence.

4.2 Correspondence from ACC Henderson re Custody Healthcare Transformation briefing

In relation to Action Point 2 from the meeting on 16 January 2025, the Director of Partnership noted the Committee wrote to A/ACC Murray confirming Members were content to close the remaining actions from the Local Policing Review and advising they would like to receive an update on the Transformed Custody Healthcare model at a later date.

The Director of Partnership noted ACC Henderson has responded and has advised that a briefing on the Transformed Custody Healthcare Model will be provided to the Committee alongside the next Committee update on Right

Care Right Person.

Members **NOTED** the correspondence.

4.3 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 was received on 14 February 2025 advising that a meeting should be set up with Department of Justice (DoJ) officials to explore the issue. The Director of Partnership noted Board officials are liaising with DoJ to arrange the meeting and will update Members in due course. **(AP1)**

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 January 2025 Committee meeting.

Members confirmed they were content with the responses. In relation to one of the responses, one Member expressed their disappointment with the

PSNI performance in comparison with other UK police forces in respect of response time.

6. ITEMS FOR COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Before PSNI joined the meeting Board officials provided Members with an overview of agenda items 6.1 – 6.3 (PSNI My Portal demonstration, Policing Plan Measures 3.1.1 and 3.1.2, and PSNI Strategic Communications Update respectively).

6.1 PSNI “My Portal” Demonstration

The Committee welcomed Assistant Chief Constable (ACC) Ryan Henderson, Chief Inspector Custody Policy and 2 representatives from the PSNI Digital Citizen Services team to the meeting and the Chair invited ACC Henderson to present the demonstration of the Portal to Members.

ACC Henderson advised that My PSNI Portal has been developed to improve how the public can contact police and access police services online without having to call the non-emergency number, and this self-serve portal will be accessed via the PSNI website. ACC Henderson noted the My PSNI Portal includes an innovative facility that offers more choice to victims of crime in how they can request and receive updates from the investigating officer. ACC Henderson explained victims of crime will be invited to create an account when they either make a report online or are contacted by the investigating officer. They can then use the self-serve online facility to request and receive updates on how the investigation is progressing and to advise the officer on their preferred contact method.

ACC Henderson noted the aim of the Digital Citizen Services team is to transform and improve how police communicate with communities and offer greater choice to the public in how they contact police and access services online. ACC Henderson advised services already delivered include online

reporting and an online payment facility for fixed penalty notices and it is hoped that by the roll out of this new bespoke online reporting platform and giving victims and citizens more choice in how they contact PSNI and receive updates, that PSNI will see a significant reduction in the number of telephone calls received by the contact management centres.

The Digital Citizen Services (DCS) Project Manager advised that this portal has been developed with local software providers and aims to build on the success of the online reporting system delivered in Phase 1. The DCS Project Manager noted that to date the team have been testing and providing demonstrations to the Victims Commissioner and local victims groups to assimilate any feedback on improvements that could be made to the system, ahead of the official launch in the Spring. The DCS Project Manager highlighted to Members the end to end digital journey through the portal for the victim, illustrating how to set up an account, security protocols, including multi factor authentication, how individuals can request and receive updates on their case, how this portal is interlinked with the PSNI's current operating system, and also explained the steps that take place in the background in relation to the investigative process. The DCS Project Manager also noted that the Portal will allow the public to update and pay for firearms licencing and request road traffic accident reports.

Following the demonstration Members raised the following with PSNI:

- Responsibility for monitoring the victim update requests and ensuring updates are provided in a timely manner; noting these are managed and monitored by the team supervisor to ensure responses are provided within the deadline;
- The response times for providing updates to victims; noting this will adhere to deadlines stipulated in the Victims Charter and also dependent on the type of investigation for each incident of crime;
- Simplifying the language used and ensuring it is less technical so that the layperson can clearly understand it;

- Confirmation that the telephone reporting system is still available for those who prefer to use this method; noting it is, this system will merely broaden the user's choice of how to report crime;
- Accessibility arrangements for the visually impaired; noting that when the system goes live a Website Accessibility Audit will be carried out to assess this feature;
- The evaluation period following the official launch of the system; noting this is a continuous improvement process and will be done as the project progresses;
- The limit on the number of occasions a request for an update can be submitted from the same individual;
- If consideration has been given to reducing the minimum age requirement to set up an account on the portal; noting that currently this is 16 years of age;
- The need to manage expectations in relation to time required to respond to requests for updates and to clearly highlight the timescales;
- The cost of the annual maintenance of the system;
- If there will be a media campaign to raise awareness of the availability of the Portal and to encourage user participation;
- Any risks or concerns in relation to information security/possibility of one person receiving information about another individual in error;
- The difference between this service and the hard copy forms used by call handlers in the contact management centres, noting the online form used is based on the hard copy form call handlers currently use;
- If the portal will have the functionality to capture data in relation to who the victims are, for example, their age, gender, community background or ethnicity; noting there is a dashboard facility that will capture and compile information on the different categories of victim and types of crime; and
- The potential of undertaking a joint venture with other UK Police

Forces to promote this system and encourage other services to use it.

The Chair thanked ACC Henderson, Chief Inspector Custody Policy and the Digital Citizen Services representatives for their presentation and they left the meeting.

Members **NOTED** the update provided.

6.2 Policing Plan Measures

3.1.1 Hallmarks

3.1.2 Neighbourhood Policing

The Committee welcomed T/Chief Superintendent McMillan and a representative from the PSNI's Strategic Partnerships and Prevention team to the meeting.

The representative from the PSNI's Strategic Partnerships and Prevention team presented the PSNI report card in relation to Policing Plan Measures 3.1.1. Hallmarks and 3.1.2 Neighbourhood Policing and noted the report card provided highlighted the results of a self-assessment survey completed by Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPTs) which was developed to encourage and promote continuous improvement within teams and to help identify and develop best practice in neighbourhood policing in PSNI. The representative from the PSNI's Strategic Partnerships and Prevention team noted this survey has been carried out four times to date (2021- 2024) and comprises six main sections as follows:

- Engaging Communities and Partners;
- Key Local Issues;
- Problem Solving;
- Targeted Activity Against Local Issues and Community Concerns;
- Guidelines on Delivering Neighbourhood Policing and
- Examples of Good Practice.

The representative from the PSNI's Strategic Partnerships and Prevention team added it is important to note that in light of the record low officer numbers and the subsequent reconfigurations of NPTs across all Districts, the overall number of teams completing the survey has reduced significantly. In the previous three years of the survey, there were in excess of 70 teams responding to it each year, however the fall in the number of NPTs means that this year's survey only contained responses from 44 teams. As a result, the representative from the PSNI's Strategic Partnerships and Prevention team noted that percentages may refer to small numbers, particularly for the most recent year, therefore it is difficult to draw fair comparison to results of previous years.

The representative from the PSNI's Strategic Partnerships and Prevention team highlighted key results and figures from each of the six areas and noted that abstractions continue to have implications and be an important issue across all six areas. The representative from the PSNI's Strategic Partnerships and Prevention team advised the three key issues highlighted by NPTs in this year's survey were anti-social behaviour, drug misuse and road safety, and noted that hate crime and burglary had increased in 2024 which aligns with the key issues highlighted in the Board's recently published Community Policing Survey 2024.

Following the briefing Members raised the following with PSNI:

- To what extent are the PSNI Service Executive Team (SET) taking on board the results indicated in this survey;
- An update on Hallmarks 1 and 2; noting PSNI will revert to the Member in writing;
- Why there has been a reduction in the NPT engagement with community groups; noting that unfortunately due to the record low number of officers, NPT's don't have the resources to commit to

attending the same number of community events/meetings as they previously would have done;

- Any data to explain the 24% drop in community engagement this year; noting PSNI will revert to the Member in writing;
- Any learning that could be derived from unsuccessful ventures;
- The need to prioritise engagement with the most difficult and at risk groups and to maintain relationships with other partners so that they can continue to engage with the easier to reach groups on occasions where PSNI are not available.

The Chair thanked the representative from the PSNI's Strategic Partnerships and Prevention team and T/Chief Superintendent McMillan for their briefing and they left the meeting.

Members **NOTED** the update provided.

6.3 PSNI Strategic Communications Update

The Chair welcomed the T/Director Strategic Communications & Engagement Team (SCET), the Head of Digital, Engage & Creative Relations, the Head of News & Media and a representative from the Public Affairs & Engagement Team to the meeting and invited them to present an update on the work of the PSNI Strategic Communications branch.

The T/Director of SCET noted this team is a small team that carries out a vital range of duties across the organisation and has many seen and unseen functions. The T/Director of SCET provided an overview of the work of each branch, explaining staff roles and responsibilities and highlighted some key statistics, examples of media campaigns, marketing materials and digital developments the team have been involved in throughout 2024.

During discussion Members raised the following with PSNI:

- PSNI social media users engagement with their audience – how to better use social media platforms to highlight positive work done with local voluntary and community groups;
- The protocols for PSNI social media users responding to online commentary/feedback;
- How to raise the profile of Board Members/highlight their advocacy;
- How the SCET could positively impact future recruitment campaigns and any learning derived from the most recent recruitment campaign;
- How PSNI could partner with local sporting organisations to extend the reach/target audience to encourage young people to consider a career in policing;
- Consideration to working with other emergency services partners such as NI Fire & Rescue Service (NIFRS) and NI Ambulance Service (NIAS) to liaise with schools to advocate for a career in the PSNI/emergency services;
- The reason(s) attributed to the record high number of calls received by the News & Media desk in one day in 2024; and
- Steps being taken to fill the internal staff vacancies in the SCET team.

The Chair thanked the T/Director Strategic Communications & Engagement Team, the Head of Digital, Engage & Creative Relations, the Head of News & Media and the representative from the Public Affairs & Engagement Team for their briefing and they left the meeting.

6.4 Draft PCSP Effectiveness Report 2023/24

The Partnership Manager presented a paper which provided Members with the draft Policing and Community Safety Partnership (PCSP) Annual Effectiveness Report for 2023/2024. The Partnership Manager noted this report highlighted the work undertaken by the 11 PCSPs and 4 DPCSPs during the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. The Partnership Manager

advised £4.4m of public money is invested annually into PCSPs and this report identifies the impact and outcomes of the projects delivered across the province throughout the year.

The Partnership Manager advised that during 2023/24 PCSPs played a vital role in engaging with local communities and worked alongside several agencies and designated partners to improve community safety, tackle crime and increase community confidence in policing and highlighted some key statistics and a range of examples of successful initiatives across all PCSPs.

During discussion Members suggested the following:

- A breakdown of the Belfast District PCSPs budget, currently they are recorded as one combined budget; **(AP2)**
- Some minor amendments to wording and information, noting the Member will send in the suggested changes.

Following discussion Members **AGREED**, (subject to Joint Committee approval and the above amendments being made), to make a recommendation to the Board to approve the report for publication on the Board's website.

7. QUESTIONS FOR THE CHIEF CONSTABLE

Members **NOTED** the PSNI response to a question submitted following last month's Committee meeting regarding interview facilities for vulnerable people in the South Armagh area.

8. COMMUNICATIONS ISSUES / OPPORTUNITIES

None.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Director of Partnership advised Members that instead of the usual monthly Committee meeting on 20 March 2025, it has been agreed to visit the PSNI Cybercrime Centre. A programme and itinerary for the visit will follow in due course.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled for **Thursday 17 April 2025** at 9.30 am in James House

The meeting ended at 12.40pm

CHAIR

PARTNERSHIP DIRECTORATE

FEBRUARY 2025