

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD HELD ON THURSDAY 3 APRIL 2025 AT 9.30AM IN NIPB HQ, JAMES HOUSE, BELFAST

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

- Mr Mukesh Sharma (Chair)
- Mr Brendan Mullan (Vice-Chair)
- (1) Mr Cathal Boylan MLA
- Mrs Linda Dillon MLA
- (2) Ms Cheryl Brownlee MLA
- (3) Miss Nuala McAllister MLA
- Mr Tommy O'Reilly
- (4) Mr Peter Osborne
- Mr Les Allamby
- Mr Frank McManus
- (5) Mr Alan Chambers MLA
- (6) Mr Peter McReynolds MLA
- (7) Mr Trevor Clarke MLA
- (1) Mr Mark H Durkan MLA
- (8) Mr Gerry Kelly MLA
- (9) Mrs Marian Cree
- (10) Mr Keith Buchanan MLA

POLICE SERVICE OF NORTHERN IRELAND IN ATTENDANCE:

- (11) Mr Jon Boutcher, Chief Constable
- (11) Mr Bobby Singleton, Deputy Chief Constable
- (11) Ms Pamela McCreedy, Chief Operating Officer
- (11) Mr Mark McNaughten, Assistant Chief Officer Corporate Services
- (11) Ms Aldrina Magwood, Assistant Chief Officer Strategic Planning & Transformation
- (11) Mr Davy Beck, Assistant Chief Constable
- (12) Ms Melanie Jones, Assistant Chief Constable
- (11) Mr Ryan Henderson, Assistant Chief Constable
- (11) Mr Anthony McNally, Assistant Chief Constable
- (11) Three Officials

**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
Ms Sarah Reid, 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 9.45am, left after public session
- (3) Left at 2.10pm
- (4) Left at 11.50am
- (5) From 9.50am, left after public session
- (6) Left at 2.40pm
- (7) From 9.45am, left at 2.30pm
- (8) From 10.40am, left at 2.10pm
- (9) Left at 2.55pm
- (10) Left at 2.30pm
- (11) Item 10 only
- (12) Public session only

The Chair opened the meeting and set out the programme, reminding Members that today's meeting in public with PSNI will be held via livestream only.

Members **AGREED** the agenda.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mr Patrick Nelson and Dr Kate Lavery.

2. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No conflicts of interest were declared and Members did not indicate any matters they wished to raise under 'Any Other Business' at agenda item 12.

3. DRAFT MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING(S):

3.1 Thursday 6 March 2025

The Chair asked Members to consider the draft minutes from the Board meeting held on Thursday 6 March 2025.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- The minutes of the Board meeting held on Thursday 6 March 2025 be approved for publication.

4. QUESTIONS TO THE CHIEF CONSTABLE

4.1 Chief Constable's Accountability Report

Members **NOTED** the Chief Constable's Accountability report to inform discussion with the PSNI leadership team at the meeting in public and the private meeting at agenda item 10.

4.2 Individual Members Written Questions and Responses

Members **NOTED** the follow up responses to verbal questions from the Board meeting held in public on 6 March 2025 and the responses to Member written questions received during the reporting period.

In relation to follow up responses from the public meeting in March, the Vice-Chair expressed dissatisfaction with the detail provided by PSNI on disciplinary and misconduct processes and it was agreed to progress the matter with the Board's Performance Committee. **(AP1)**

4.3 Committee Written Questions and Responses

There were no Committee written questions or responses during the reporting period.

4.4 Key Issues of Public Interest

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

5. COMMITTEE REPORTS

5.1 Resources Committee – 27 March 2025

The Board **NOTED** the Resources Committee Chair's report of the meeting held on 27 March 2025.

The Committee Chair advised of four recommendations from the Committee in relation to the sale of the police college site at Desertcreat; the Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB) Resource Plan 2025-26; the Resources Committee Annual Report 2024-25; and a PSNI Above Delegated Authority Request relating solely to Plaintiffs' legal fees arising from a civil case.

A Committee Member raised the matter of Clause 22 and delegation of functions to Members and Officials and that the Committee agreed to recommend to the Board the functions to be delegated to Board Officials in circumstances when the Board is functioning and when it is not.

In response the Chief Executive advised that further work is required on this matter and the decision taken by the Committee will be included as part of a composite paper to be brought to the Board later in the year.

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

- That correspondence be issued to Mid-Ulster District Council regarding the sale of the police college site at Desertcreat,
- The NIPB Resource Plan 2025-26,
- The PSNI Above Delegated Authority Request outlined in relation to Plaintiffs' legal fees, and,
- The Resources Committee Annual Report 2024-25.

5.2 Performance Committee – 13 March 2025

The Board **NOTED** the Performance Committee Chair's report of the meeting held on 13 March 2025.

5.3 Partnership Committee – 20 March 2025

The Board **NOTED** that some Members attended an engagement event at the PSNI Cyber Crime centre which took on 20 March 2025.

Committee Members expressed their gratitude to PSNI for the opportunity to visit the Cyber Crime Centre and gain a better understanding and appreciation of the work taking place in this area.

Members discussed ongoing funding challenges to facilitate the work of Cybercrime; the range of activities which take place at the centre and its crucial role in gathering and analysing digital evidence; the challenges associated with processing the backlog of digital devices; and the psychological impact of this type of work on the team working in this area.

5.4 Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) – 27 March 2025

The Board **NOTED** the ARAC Chair's report of the meeting held on 27 March 2025.

The Director of Resources advised of a matter relating to External Audit and accounting treatment of the Board's occupancy of James House which is likely to require a prior year adjustment to the financial statement.

The Director of Resources advised of one recommendation in relation to Committee membership and that following consultation with all Independent Members, Dr Kate Lavery has volunteered to replace Mr Frank McManus on the Committee.

The Board Chair offered his gratitude, on behalf of the Board, to Mr Frank McManus for his contribution to the work of the Committee and to Dr Kate Lavery for volunteering to join the Committee.

It was subsequently **AGREED** to:

- **APPROVE** the appointment of Dr Kate Lavery to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee pursuant to Section 20 paragraph (h) of the Board's Standing Orders to fill a casual vacancy.

6. BOARD BUSINESS

6.1 Draft Northern Ireland Policing Board Corporate Plan 2025-30

The Director of Resources presented a paper for Members to consider the revised draft of the NIPB Corporate Plan 2025-30 following a comprehensive review of the public consultation responses by the Corporate Plan Working Group (CPWG), made up of a small group of Members and Officials.

Specifically, Members were advised that the CPWG considered ten responses from the public consultation and reached a collective view in relation to proposed amendments to the draft Corporate Plan.

The Director of Resources asked Members to consider the revised draft version of the Corporate Plan with tracked changes and for the Board to consider and agree the final draft be submitted to the Department of Justice (DoJ) for approval. Members were advised that following approval by DoJ work can then progress on the development of the Annual Business Plan 2025-26.

Members suggested several amendments to the narrative in the draft Corporate Plan including the description of the role of the Board; reference to comparison with other parts of the UK when referring to recorded crime in Northern Ireland; the direct impact of resourcing challenges in other areas of the public sector on PSNI and the role of 'Right Care Right Person'; and for clarity regarding the use of 'indicators' instead of 'measures' in the new Corporate Plan.

The Chair thanked the Director of Resources and Board Officials for their hard work and commitment as part of delivering the new NIPB Corporate Plan and subject to the changes outlined above Members **AGREED** to:

- **APPROVE** the final draft of the Board's Corporate Plan 2025-2030, and
- **APPROVE** the correspondence be issued to the Department of Justice seeking approval of the Board's Corporate Plan 2025-2030.

6.2 Final Report from the Policing Plan 2025-30 Development Group

The Director of Performance presented the final report from the Policing Plan Development Group (PPDG) which included the response from the Justice Minister to the public consultation; the final draft of the new Policing Plan 2025-30, the draft performance monitoring framework and the public consultation summary document.

The Director of Performance provided an overview of the draft performance monitoring framework and outlined its purpose: to scrutinise the performance indicators of the new Policing Plan, the reporting structure for the Chief Constable incorporating a four scale Red/Amber/Green (RAG) assessment, and the role of surveys in the new Policing Plan.

Members asked about confidentiality issues in relation to publishing individual consultee responses on the Board's website; suggested a thematic approach focused on measurable outcomes on progress being made against the new Policing Plan indicators and suggested consideration of an annual reporting structure consisting of three separate updates to the Board on each of the three indicators and a fourth end of year update to focus on performance against the overall plan.

In response to confidentiality issues Members were advised that it was made clear to consultees as part of the consultation process that responses may be shared publicly.

Members **NOTED** the correspondence from the Justice Minister and following discussion it was **AGREED** to:

- **APPROVE** the draft Performance Monitoring Framework for publication on the Board's website, and
- **APPROVE** the draft Policing Plan 2025-2030 'Response to the Consultation' for publication on the Board's website.

The Chair thanked the Vice-Chair, Director of Performance and Board Officials for their hard work and commitment throughout the process to develop and launch the new Policing Plan for 2025-30.

6.3 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) PEEL Inspection 2025-26

The Director of Performance presented a paper outlining a request from HMICFRS to consult with the Board in relation to the proposed areas of inspection for the next Police Efficiency, Effectiveness and Legitimacy (PEEL) programme for 2025-26.

Members were provided with the background to HMICFRS inspections noting that every year DoJ commissions HMICFRS to produce an Inspection Report in relation to PSNI.

The Director of Performance indicated that the current PEEL framework inspects against ten core questions and two core questions have been identified

for inclusion in the inspection for the forthcoming year, and that HMICFRS have advised there may be value to inspect a third core question.

The two core questions were outlined as follows:

- **Core Question 2** - How good is the service at treating the public fairly, appropriately and respectfully?
- **Core Question 4** - How good is the service at responding to the public?

Members were advised of the costs to inspect PSNI against the two PEEL questions outlined above and subject to the availability of resources a third core question was highlighted by HMICFRS for potential inclusion in the inspection programme for 2025-26, and Members were asked to consider one of the following for potential inclusion:

- **Core Question 8** - How good is the service at building, developing and looking after its workforce and encouraging an ethical, lawful and inclusive workplace? Or,
- **Collaborative option** - Working in partnership with the Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJINI) to inspect the effectiveness of roads policing in Northern Ireland.

Members raised the following matters:

- Support for core questions 2 and 4 as well as the inclusion of both core question 8 and the joint inspection with CJINI.
In relation to the partnership with CJINI the Director of Performance advised this lies outside the normal framework as it would be a joint inspection, and that a final decision will likely depend on available funding.

- To include specific reference to emergency response times for life-threatening emergencies (999 calls) as part of the inspection framework.
- The Inspection in relation to core question 8 to include an analysis of PSNI transformation programmes with a focus on workforce and inclusivity.
- View that core questions 2 and 4 seem to cover similar areas of inspection. In response the Boards Human Rights Advisor outlined that core question 2 is focused on suspects and core question 4 probes crime related complaints.
- Additional costs of a third question and how this will be funded. In response Members were advised that DoJ is responsible for funding the HMICFRS inspection programme.

Following discussion Members **AGREED** to provide the following feedback to HMICFRS on the 2025-26 PEEL inspection proposal:

- To support the inclusion of core question 2 and core question 4 as part of the 2025-26 inspection programme, and
- The inclusion of core question 8 as well as the partnership with the CJINI to inspect the effectiveness of roads policing in NI, if sufficient funding is available.

7. ACTION LOG

Members **NOTED** the action log for the Board meetings held on 6 March 2025 and 6 February 2025.

In relation to the open action points from the Board meeting on 6 March 2025 the Chief Executive provided the following updates:

- Action point 6 – this relates to the proposed removal of Ill Health Retirement (IHR) and Injury on Duty (IOD) scheme management responsibilities from the Board and a formal response is awaited from the Chief Constable on his views of this matter. This action will remain open.
- Action point 8 – this relates to the Board's draft response to the Omagh Bomb Inquiry (OBI), and that discussions are continuing prior to submitting the Board's response to the Inquiry. This action will remain open.
- Action point 9 – this relates to a complaint from a serving PSNI officer and correspondence has been issued to the Chief Constable to request assurances. A response is awaited and this action will remain open.

In relation to the open action points from the Board meeting on 6 February 2025 the Chief Executive provided the following updates:

- Action point 4 – this relates to correspondence from the Committee for the Executive Office regarding Historical Institutional Abuse (HIA). Further correspondence has been issued to PSNI to progress this matter and this action will remain open until PSNI confirm that a response has been submitted to the HIA Inquiry.
- Action point 6 – this relates to the proposed schedule for the publication of the McCullough Review report and it is expected that PSNI will advise the Board in due course of a specific timeframe. This action will remain open.

Members expressed ongoing concerns regarding the limited progress being made to remove the management of IHR and IOD schemes from the Board and whether this was a priority for some of the stakeholders involved.

In response Members outlined work taking place in the NI Assembly to lobby for reform in this area and the need to establish DoJ's priorities in relation to legislative change; potential benefits of external research to provide an independent view regarding future scheme management; that scheme management responsibilities [in respect of IHR and IOD] are not separated as this is likely to adversely impact individual claimants as well as increase costs and complexity; and highlighted correspondence from the DoJ Permanent Secretary in response to the Board's Corporate plan consultation acknowledging that removal of IHR responsibilities would require consideration outside the Northern Ireland Audit Office NIAO report (2020) recommendations on IOD processes.

In response the Chief Executive advised Members of the resourcing challenges facing DoJ; referenced the NIAO report, published in March 2020, on IOD schemes for Officers in PSNI and the Northern Ireland Prison Service and subsequent discussions where the need not to separate IHR and IOD had been accepted; and that a Steering Group is scheduled to meet in June 2025 to progress work in this area and agree a project plan.

Following discussion it was agreed to schedule a meeting with the DoJ Permanent Secretary, Board Chair and Chief Executive to discuss the IHR/ IOD schemes, and to share the NIAO report referenced above with Members. **(AP2)**

The Board's Human Rights Advisor advised Members of his availability to offer guidance and support to Members should there be any questions in anticipation of the McCullough Review report.

Members **NOTED** the updated provided.

8. CHAIRPERSON'S BUSINESS

8.1 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 6 March 2025 to 2 April 2025.
- A full list of correspondence issued and received by the Chair during the period 6 March 2025 to 2 April 2025.

In respect of engagements which may be of particular interest the Chair referred Members to Appendix 1A of the report for further information.

The Chair highlighted the following matters:

- Invitation from Assistant Chief Constable (ACC) Beck to Members who had raised concerns in specific suspected domestic abuse cases . ACC Beck will liaise directly with Members to arrange briefings and consideration will be given to sharing review outcomes with the Board.
- Attempts to disrupt Policing and Community Safety Partnership (PCSP) meetings in February and March 2025 and improving future attendance at PCSP meetings from political representatives.
Following discussion it was agreed the Chair will write to political Members on the Board to highlight the importance of political participation at PCSP meetings. **(AP3)**

- The Board's Human Rights Advisor will soon be participating in an interview with the BBC in relation to police surveillance powers.

In relation to correspondence the Chair highlighted the following matters:

- Correspondence from the Chief Constable in relation to a six month pause in all sensitive research conducted by PSNI in connection with disclosure requests in order to complete similar work required by the Omagh Bomb Inquiry. The correspondence noted how this will affect ongoing and any new requirements placed on the PSNI for sensitive research in court-based work.
- Positive feedback from the Justice Minister in relation to the new Policing Plan 2025-30.

Members raised the following matters in relation to the Chair's report:

- Items of correspondence from the Justice Minister and PSNI to the UK Home Secretary in relation to the provision of feedback for the National Crime Agency Strategic Priorities 2025-26.
In response to Members concerns that correspondence was not received by the Board to provide feedback on this matter it was agreed to seek further clarification. **(AP4)**
- Concerns in relation to the six month pause in sensitive research conducted by PSNI due to the work required by the OBI and the impact of this decision on court based work.
Following discussion Members outlined their intent to follow up on this matter with the Chief Constable at today's public and private meetings.

- Confirmation of attendees for the meeting on 7 April 2025 with the report authors of the Independent Review of the Northern Ireland Policing Board, as outlined in correspondence from the Justice Minister.
In response Members were advised that the Board Chair, Vice-Chair and Chief Executive will be attending this meeting.
- Correspondence from the Chief Constable regarding anonymous allegations of abuse of the IHR process and whether 'anonymous' allegations of this type should be treated in such a formal manner by the Board.
In response Members were advised of the need to treat all allegations, including those which are anonymous, in a consistent and professional manner by sharing with PSNI to look into the matters further.

Members **NOTED** the additional updates provided.

9. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

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

The Chief Executive highlighted the following matters:

- Ongoing discussions with auditors regarding a potential change to the financial treatment of the Board's occupancy of James House in the annual accounts and that it could be treated as a peppercorn lease, noting that discussions were ongoing.
- In relation to information management, work continues to manage a backlog of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests, reviews of decisions on FOIs, and Data Protection Act requests.

- Phase one of the NIPB Retention and Disposal project is complete with the final disposal of material to be scheduled. Phase two and a review of material held offsite will commence soon.
- In relation to Senior Officer matters a response has been submitted to the pay review bodies for federated and senior officers, and Members were referred to correspondence in the Chair's report at agenda item 8.1.

Members were reminded of upcoming TEAM PSNI events and Attestation ceremonies.

- In relation to partnership and engagement, the first formal meeting of the 'Youth and Policing Partnership Forum' was held on 8 March 2025 and Members were referred to the Chief Executive's report for more details on the range of issues discussed.

- PCSP recruitment is now complete and positive feedback has been received from the online training delivered to PCSP Chairs and Vice-Chairs.

In relation to potential disruption at future PCSP meetings a guidance document has been produced in conjunction with PSNI and shared with PCSP Chairs.

Board Officials are in the process of reviewing draft PCSP action plans for 2025-26 and subject to agreement, letters of offer and funding agreements will be issued to all PCSPs.

- In relation to the Board's Police Pensions and Injury Benefits directorate, a few technical matters have been reported to the Pension Board, and good work has taken place to implement some process changes.
In respect of the recruitment of additional Selected Medical practitioners, two applications have been received to date and a third is expected.

A Member referred to the scheduled meeting with the report authors of the independent review of the Board and that Members were provided with an update following the meeting, and it was agreed to circulate the review working group paper on next steps as soon as possible. **(AP5)**

Members **NOTED** the updated provided.

10. PRIVATE SESSION WITH THE CHIEF CONSTABLE AND PSNI LEADERSHIP TEAM

The Chair welcomed the Chief Constable Jon Boutcher, Deputy Chief Constable Bobby Singleton, Chief Operating Officer Pamela McCreedy, Assistant Chief Constable (ACC) Ryan Henderson, ACC Davy Beck, ACC Melanie Jones, ACC Anthony McNally, Assistant Chief Officer (ACO) Strategic Planning & Transformation Aldrina Magwood and ACO Corporate Services Mark McNaughten to the meeting.

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

- **HMIC Report - VISOR system, Occupational Health and Technology:**

In response PSNI highlighted that it is the only agency in Northern Ireland using the VISOR system, meaning they handle all data input which causes a significant administrative burden and can lead to inconsistencies with national guidelines.

This is in contrast to England and Wales where VISOR is effectively used across partner organisations and neighbouring police forces, supporting cross-border offender management.

Detail was provided around the risks of offenders moving across regions, and it was emphasised that whilst the risk is considered small and measures are now in place to mitigate it, there is a need for a shared framework to manage this risk more effectively.

PSNI also highlighted the work to keep technology up to date as part of a continuous improvement process. A performance and action plan based on the HMIC's report's recommendations is being developed and will be regularly reported to the relevant Committee's and Boards.

In relation to Occupational Health and Wellbeing (OHW) PSNI highlighted that an extensive amount of work has been done over the past 3 years, however staff awareness and accessibility remain an issue.

It was emphasised that whilst the perception is that services are unavailable, a broad range of support options exist for staff and further detail was provided on targeted support, enabling access to wellbeing tools and ensuring those who need clinical intervention are directed to the appropriate available resources.

With regards to screening and welfare provision, PSNI highlighted that unlike England and Wales, Northern Ireland does not receive specific Home Office funding for psychological screening and as such this cost would come from the main budget.

- **HMIC Report - Internet Risk Assessment Tools, Neighbourhood Policing, Child Protection and Case Management:**

In response PSNI detailed that in relation to child protection and case management, whilst there are tools to support risk assessments, human judgment is still critical.

It was highlighted that there has been a significant increase in indecent image cases and whilst high-risk cases remain with the public protection units, lower and medium-risk cases are handled by criminal investigation units within the

districts. This helps distribute workload and introduces local context in handling such cases.

PSNI emphasised that whilst there's a recognition of a need to improve adherence to timelines and manage backlogs, it was felt that the distribution model is working and justifiable.

Detail was then provided on the challenges of maintaining the balance between neighbourhood policing whilst also retaining sufficient response officers.

It was highlighted that in urgent situations resources from neighbourhood teams are being redirected, creating strain. Events like protests or sporting occasions also draw on the same pool of officers, adding further pressure.

While new officers are being brought into neighbourhood teams and supervision structures are being introduced to support them, a delay exists in them becoming operational due to lengthy training periods and the broader issue of the overall need for more personnel across neighbourhood, criminal investigation and specialist teams remains.

- **Succession Planning at ACC level.**

In response to a Member's question regarding current officers' eligibility to apply for positions at ACC level, the Chief Constable:

- updated Members on the number of current officers below the rank of ACC who have successfully completed the Executive Leadership Programme (ELP),
- advised Members that while no PSNI officers are on the current ELP, applications would next open in June 2025 and that recommendations for any prospective applicants need to be provided by September 2025, and,
- discussed the importance of attracting a strong pool of candidates (including external) to apply for these positions and noted the forward

planning work being completed at lower ranks which is anticipated to lead to a strong cohort of candidates within the next 18 months.

The Chair thanked the Chief Constable and his team, and they left the meeting.

11. COMMUNICATION ISSUES

The Communications manager provided an update in relation to activity in support of the public launch of the Policing Plan.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next full Board Meeting is scheduled for Thursday 8 May 2025 at 9.30am in James House.

The meeting closed at 3pm.

Strategic Planning & Governance
April 2025

Chair