

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD

MINUTES OF MEETING OF PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 15 JUNE 2023 AT 9.30AM AT CONFERENCE ROOM CASTLEREAGH PSNI

PRESENT:

Mr John Blair MLA (Chair)
Mr Mukesh Sharma (Vice Chair)
Mrs Linda Dillon MLA
Mrs Joanne Bunting MLA
Mr Les Allamby
Mr Peter Osborne
(1) Dr Janet Gray
(2) Mr Gerry Kelly MLA

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr Edgar Jardine (Board Vice Chair)

POLICE SERVICE OF NORTHERN IRELAND IN ATTENDANCE:

(4) Mr Bobby Singleton, Assistant Chief Constable
Local Policing
(5) Mr Norman Haslett, Superintendent Newry,
Mourne and Down
(3) Director of Strategic Communications &
Engagement Department
(3) Head of Digital Engagement & Creative Relations
(3) Head of News & Media

OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE:

Ms Jenny Passmore, Director of Partnership
Four Board Officials

- (1) Left at 11.45am
- (2) Left at 12.15pm
- (3) Item 6.1 only
- (4) Items 6.1 to 6.2 only
- (5) Item 6.2 only

The Partnership Committee Chair welcomed all Members to the final Partnership Committee meeting before the summer recess in Castlereagh Police Station conference room.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Dr Kate Lavery, Mr Mark H Durkan MLA, and Mr Maurice Bradley MLA.

The Committee agreed the agenda for the meeting.

2. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The Chairperson asked Members to declare any conflicts of interests arising from the agenda. No conflicts of interest were declared.

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 May 2023

The Committee considered the draft minutes of the Committee meeting held on 25th May 2023.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- The minutes of the Committee meeting held on 25th May 2023 be approved.

4. UPDATE ON 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.

It was agreed that the following actions would close as they had been implemented:

- Action Point 7 from the meeting in November 2021 and
- Action Points 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 from the meeting in May 2023.

4.1 Correspondence re closure of Coleraine Custody Suite

The Director of Partnership updated the Committee in relation to ongoing correspondence between the Board and PSNI on the closure of Coleraine Custody suite, the Working Group established to develop an understanding of any potential service delivery impacts as a result of the closure and also the outworkings of the wider review of I Custody Provision.

Members **NOTED** the update provided.

Members discussed the need for more information in relation to any discussions having taken place with Stakeholders and PCSPs, when these discussions took place and the criteria used when deciding on Custody Closures.

It was **AGREED**:

- To write to PSNI to seek assurance in relation to the consistency of approach regarding the closure of custody suites in general, and in particular, the processes followed to close Coleraine Custody Suite.

(AP 1)

4.2 M Atkinson - Letter of Appreciation

Letter sent on 6 June 2023.

Members **NOTED** the update provided.

5. CHAIRPERSON'S BUSINESS

5.1 PCSP Funding Update

The Committee Chair updated Members on correspondence between DoJ and the Board in relation to the costs associated with the recruitment of PCSP Independent Members. The Chair highlighted that Committee Members had agreed a position by written procedure regarding the funding.

Agreement was reached between DoJ and the Board to split the cost, both agreeing to highlight it as an inescapable pressure which would likely be funded in-year when other easements should be identified. It was also agreed that the Joint Committee funding to the PCSPs would remain the same as the previous year and both DoJ and the Board would highlight this cost as an additional inescapable pressure. DoJ were advised that the approach, both in terms of funding for the recruitment and in respect of not reducing the Joint Committee funding, should not be seen as a precedent. PCSPs have been advised of the Joint Committee funding position and Letters of Offer will issue within the next few weeks.

Following the update Members discussed:

- PCSP underspend noted in the Annual Accounts for 2022/23 and how this would be managed for the current financial year.

The Partnership Manager advised that underspend related to the meeting expenses budget, which has been reduced for the current year, and expenditure against this budget will be monitored throughout the year.

The Chair thanked the Board's Chief Executive, Partnership Director, and Partnership Manager for their work in achieving this position.

Members **noted** the update provided.

6. ITEMS FOR COMMITTEE BUSINESS

6.1 PSNI Strategic Communications and Engagement Department

A Board Official provided an overview of the structure and work of the PSNI Communications and Engagement Department. In line with the Chief Constable's transformation and vision programme and following recommendations from the consultation process on Local Policing 2018; a new five-year Strategic Communications and Engagement plan was published. Following a review of communications capacity in 2019 the structure of the department was changed to ensure it was able to provide appropriate support to the organisation in the context of a changing Police communications environment.

In May 2020, the Partnership Committee was briefed on a new 5-year Strategic Communications and Engagement Strategy.

The Chair welcomed PSNI Officials to the meeting.

PSNI representatives provided Members with a presentation on the structure and work of the PSNI Communications and Engagement Department.

Following the presentation by PSNI, Members discussed:

- The important and stressful nature of the topics that the team deals with on a daily basis,
- The loss of the students roles across the organisation due to budgetary pressures and the impact this will have on the teams,
- The impact on diversity with the loss of the students,

- What is being done to reach the 14-17 demographic and the imagery and language that can be used to target these groups,
- The increase of “keyboard warriors” and if there is anything that can be legally or practically done with these persons,
- Why investigative journalists do not use wording that is provided to them,
- Whether there is a way to be pre-emptive on matters,
- Whether all communications have to go through Senior ranks and if this causes delays in issuing messages.

PSNI addressed Members issues outlining the following:

- The loss of the students across all departments will be felt as they had energy, enthusiasm, creativity and challenged thinking on how to reach young people within different communities,
- Small amounts of paid advertising on Snapchat and Instagram are proving worthwhile in reaching the younger demographic along with District officers working with schools,
- The potential for formalising this through an educational programme which could be offered online or to schools,
- The fact that “keyboard warriors” have always existed and whilst direct contact and engagement can be successful, some will continue,
- Journalists can and have used narratives that are incorrect, which can lead to distress and unwarranted backlash even when they remove the media post as the damage has already been done,
- The team do push back and have frank and candid conversations and will ask for a correction to be printed or a paragraph to be inserted,
- The team try their best to be pre-emptive where possible to help quash unfounded and untrue rumours,
- There is no one size fits all template for communications and there is a

need at times to liaise with senior members such as Gold Command or SIO's to ensure that the information is factual and correct,

- Some District Commanders can be more cautious than others in releasing information to politicians and the public, and tend to seek advice from senior ranks.

The Chair thanked the officials from PSNI Strategic Communications and Engagement Department for their attendance and they left the meeting.

6.2 South Armagh Policing Review – Update

Superintendent Norman Haslett, District Commander for Newry and Down presented an update regarding the remaining four Recommendations emanating from this Review that were assigned to Partnership Directorate to monitor.

Members **NOTED** the update and discussed several issues with PSNI including:

- Whether examples could be provided in relation to what is being done within the Independent Advisory Group (IAG),
- Whether further consideration has been given in relation to the academic aspect of recommendation 50,
- The reduction in local Neighbourhood Policing Team (NPTs) numbers and the effect this will have on the community as this is where confidence in the community largely emanates from,
- Has support for PSNI increased in the South Armagh area to allow patrols to be lessened,
- The benefits of Cross Border working with The Garda Síochána (Recommendation 49),
- The length of time for changes in diversity (Recommendation 5) within PSNI and any lessons that have been learned,

- Clarification on how IAG Members were chosen and how any potential conflicts of interest were considered,
- What impact Neighbourhood Policing cuts will have on Recommendation 35 (Community Information Networks) and recommendation 40 (Vulnerability).

PSNI addressed Members issues outlining the following:

- There are 17 members on the Independent Advisory Group made up of all demographics,
- Recommendation 50 was considered, however the IAG has asked if there is another way of capturing this suggesting the option to use an internal group (subject to budget),
- South Armagh NPT numbers were geographically high for the area, but this was necessary to increase confidence in policing in this community,
- All Neighbourhood Policing areas are reviewed against threat harm and risk and any reduction in numbers to NPTs will still ensure a Neighbourhood Policing footprint in all areas,
- The Neighbourhood Delivery Board within PSNI is now focusing on budget and numbers, however, there will be a neighbourhood team model in all areas,
- Cross-border relationships are working well between PSNI, County Louth and County Monaghan and monitored by holding joint monthly tactical meetings and formal bi-monthly meetings to oversee tactical meetings. This works well as it is driven by mutual interest and benefits for both agencies,
- That diversity has changed significantly since recommendations were made and this is monitored so it doesn't revert to the way it was,
- The thought process and criteria that was used in choosing IAG Members and the need for Members to be invested, living in the area and reporting back with legitimate issues and findings,

- A form was used for Members to declare any conflicts of interest, and none were declared,
- PSNI decided to move forward with Recommendations to honour the report and understand there were issues with IAGs,
- The recognised issues in establishing IAGs has resulted in PSNI moving towards different styles of engagement like the Reflection, Engagement and Listening (REaL) events,
- Recommendation 35 will not be affected – social media working well, with Cold Calling and Farmwatch campaigns ongoing. Recommendation 40 is covered daily within policing operations,
- PSNI offered to provide the committee with an update on the new approach to IAGs. **(AP2)**.

The Chair thanked PSNI for their attendance.

6.3 Board Programme of Engagement 2023-25

The Engagement Manager provided Members with a copy of the Board's Draft Programme of Engagement 2023 - 2025 and further advised that the Engagement Strategy was issued out to Public Consultation for 12 weeks and will close on 5 September 2023.

Members discussed:

- The need to exercise caution within the Code of Ethics and managing public expectation,
- The need to reinclude PSNI and Key Stakeholders in the Privacy Report round table discussion,
- The attendance figures for the PCSP Information evenings and the need to have a theme for these events which may attract a higher attendance,
- Reviewing what engagement events to attend over the next two years to reach different audiences and resourcing issues for these events,
- The need to attend events outside the Belfast and Derry/Londonderry

areas.

Members **NOTED** the update provided and requested a number of minor updates to the wording within the Programme of Engagement. **(AP3)**

Members **Considered** the Programme of Engagement for each strand, provided at Annexes A, B and C and **Recommended** that the Board note the Draft Programme of Engagement (2023-2025).

6.4 Police Property Fund – Proposal to open a 3rd call Small Grants Scheme

The Partnership Manager provided Members with an update in relation to commitment and expenditure under calls 1 and 2 of the Small Grants Scheme and proposed the opening of a third call and advised that whilst a call for the Large Grants Scheme was expected to launch, it might be more prudent, given the current budget challenges, to release another Small Grants Scheme call. She advised that there was sufficient funding in the remaining budget to release £200,000 under this call.

Members **NOTED** the update provided in relation to commitment and expenditure to date for calls 1 and 2 of the Small Grants Scheme and **APPROVED** the proposal for the opening of a third call at a value of £200,000.

6.5 Problem Solving in Partnership Awards

The Partnership Manager provided members with an overview of initial discussions held with PSNI regarding the next Problem-Solving Awards, including the indicative timeline and potential inclusion of PCSPs. The PSNI Problem Solving Awards were first held in October 2022 to recognise and celebrate innovative crime fighting projects where the police, community and external partners successfully work together to make a difference in communities. They were also an opportunity to highlight and recognise

excellence and best practice in relation to PSNI Business Support (staff).

The embedding of Problem Solving within PSNI is one of the key elements within the Hallmarks of Neighbourhood Policing, specifically, “Hallmark 4 – Solving Problems” under which PSNI aim to place problem solving and crime prevention at the core of their service to deal with locally identified priorities. As such, these awards were designed to highlight the efforts of police officers and staff in using the Scanning, Analysis, Response & Assessment (SARA) problem solving methodology to resolve issues and prevent crime within communities. Members were reminded that applications for the last awards could be submitted across the five categories, namely Probationers, Neighbourhood Policing, Partnerships, Investigations and Business Support.

Members discussed:

- Who should attend these awards,
- The need to consider the use of a community venue for the ceremony,
- The option of adding another category specifically acknowledging PCSP involvement within these categories,
- The need to ensure that the main focus of the awards was on encouraging problem solving by the PSNI.

It was **AGREED**:

- Given the indicative timeline for the awards correspondence will be issued to Members to agree an approach by written procedure in respect of Problem-solving event. **(AP4)**

Members **NOTED** the update provided.

6.6 Draft Annual Effectiveness Report on PCSPs 2021/22

The Partnership Manager provided Members with the draft PCSPs Annual

Effectiveness Report - 2021/2022 and noted the breadth of projects and initiatives delivered by PCSPs through a period which continued to experience lockdowns and Covid restriction. The Chair thanked the Partnership Manager for the detailed report.

It was **Agreed**:

- PCSP Annual Effectiveness Report for 2021/22 to be brought to the Board for approval at the July meeting. **(AP5)**

Members **NOTED** the draft PCSPs Annual Effectiveness Report - 2021/2022 and **agreed** that subject to approval by the Joint Committee and a few minor suggested amendments, to **Recommend** to the Board, to publish it on the Board's website.

6.7 Report on Communications Activity 1 April 2022 - 31 March 2023

The Communications Manager provided Members with the details of communications activity to support the work of the Policing Board during the period 1 April 2022 - 31 March 2023.

Members were asked to note **Annex A** – Communications Action Plan 2022 – 23 and **Annex B** – Report on Progress against Action Plan.

- At Members request, all events in the corporate diary be issued to them for easier diary management. **(AP6)**

Members **NOTED** the information in the Communications Report.

6.8 Annual Review of Partnership Committee Terms of Reference

The Partnership Director sought Members agreement to recommend that the Board approve the Partnership Committee Terms of Reference (ToR) and note

that no amendments are proposed to the current ToR which were last agreed by the Board in November 2022.

Members **reviewed** the ToR at Annex A, and **agreed**, to make a **recommendation** to the Board that the Terms of Reference for the Board's Partnership Committee stand.

7. **QUESTIONS FOR THE CHIEF CONSTABLE**

No questions were raised.

8. **COMMUNICATIONS ISSUES / OPPORTUNITIES**

The Communications Manager informed Members of the upcoming reports being published as follows:

- Human Rights Strip Searching Report,
- Policing Plan Survey Statistical Report 2022,
- Human Rights Privacy and Policing Report, and
- NIPB Annual Report and Accounts.

Members **NOTED** the update provided.

9. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

10. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting is scheduled for **Thursday 21st September 2023** in James House. Members were reminded that Partnership Committee has moved to morning meetings therefore the meeting will commence at 9.30am.

The meeting ended at 12.35pm

CHAIR

PARTNERSHIP DIRECTORATE
JUNE 2023