

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD

**MINUTES OF MEETING OF PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY
26 FEBRUARY 2026 AT 9.30AM IN JAMES HOUSE**

PRESENT:

Dr Kate Laverty (Committee Vice Chair)

Mrs Linda Dillon MLA

Ms Deirdre Hargey MLA

Mrs Marian Cree

(1) Mr Patrick Nelson

Mr Tommy O'Reilly

(2) Mrs Cheryl Brownlee MLA

(3) Mr Colin McGrath MLA

**POLICE SERVICE OF
NORTHERN IRELAND IN
ATTENDANCE:**

(3) Deputy Chief Constable Bobby Singleton

(3) Assistant Chief Constable Ryan Henderson

(3) Inspector McMullan

(3) Sergeant Lorimer

(3) Constable McCaw

(3) Representative from Strategic Partnerships &
Prevention Team

(3) T/Deputy Director Strategic Communications &
Engagement

(3) Representative from Strategic Communications
and Engagement Team

(4) ACC Anthony McNally

(4) Chief Superintendent McDonald

**RUCGC IN
ATTENDANCE:**

(5) Mr Michael Atkinson

(5) Mr Jon Henry

(5) Sergeant Doherty

**NORTHERN IRELAND
POLICING BOARD
OFFICIALS IN
ATTENDANCE:**

Mrs Paula Gow, T/Director of Partnership
Six Board Officials

(1) Until 11am only

(2) From 9.40am

(3) Item 3.1 only

(4) Item 3.2 only

(5) Item 7.1 only

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1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mr Peter McReynolds MLA (Committee Chair) and Mr Keith Buchanan MLA.

The Vice-Chair welcomed all members to the meeting, and the Committee agreed the agenda for the meeting.

2. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No member declared any conflicts.

3.0 PSNI ITEMS

3.1 POLICING PLAN INDICATOR 2.2 ENGAGEMENT WITH COMMUNITIES UPDATE

Before PSNI joined the meeting, the Police Performance Monitoring officer provided Members with an overview of agenda item 3.1.

The Vice-Chair welcomed Deputy Chief Constable (DCC) Singleton, Assistant Chief Constable (ACC) Henderson, Inspector McMullan, Sergeant Lorimer, Constable McCaw, a representative from the Strategic Partnerships & Prevention Team, T/Deputy Director Strategic Communications & Engagement (SCET), and a representative from the SCET team to the meeting.

DCC Singleton presented the PSNI report card in relation to Policing Plan Indicator 2.2 Engagement with Communities, which highlighted data from results of four surveys carried out between 2023-2025 one of which was a self-assessment effectiveness 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. It was noted this survey has been carried out on five occasions during 2021- 2025, however, the Year 5 survey results are

the lowest recorded since Year 1, with only 58.0% of NPTs assessing themselves to be effective or highly effective in this area. ACC Henderson advised however, that due to resourcing challenges and abstraction levels, the staffing numbers within NPTs are currently at a lower level leading capacity issues. ACC Henderson added that as part of the PSNI Recovery Plan, from April 2026, 100 officers are being moved into NPTs to provide resilience.

DCC Singleton advised the SCET team continues to deliver engagement initiatives to meet the goals outlined in the PSNI's "Here For You" Engagement Strategy and provided Members with an overview of each of the five pillars of the strategy. DCC Singleton reminded the Committee of the origin of the SCET team in 2020 and noted a key aim of the team is to create and maintain engagement networks across communities.

Inspector McMullan then provided Members with an overview of various activities, events, initiatives and programmes SCET are undertaking with multiple partners to ensure engagement and outreach with all sections of the community in order to build trust and confidence in policing.

The Strategic Communications & Engagement Department also provided Members with an update on the work of the Department, with particular focus on community engagement activity. Members heard of the range of duties across the organisation this team undertakes and an overview of the work of each branch was provided and roles and responsibilities explained. Some key statistics, examples of TV and media campaigns, marketing materials and digital developments the team have been involved in were highlighted.

During discussion, Members raised the following with PSNI:

- The positive impact of the Problem Solving training and any barriers to the training delivery and implementation;
- The selection process for Cultural Understanding and Awareness events and if there is a targeted approach to hold these events in areas where it is known that trust and confidence in PSNI is low;
- How PSNI are working collaboratively with the media to promote policing;
- Concerns regarding the high number of problem solving folders remaining open throughout 2025;
- The decision making process for abstractions from NPTs;
- How NPTS will be resourced under the PSNI Recovery Plan, and internal communication to PSNI officers and staff;
- Awareness and understanding amongst NPTs of the Hallmarks of Neighbourhood Policing; and
- What additional promotional work PSNI could do to attract applications to join the service from individuals from under represented communities.

The Vice-Chair thanked the PSNI representatives for attending the meeting. Members **NOTED** the update provided.

3.2 Custody Provision Update

The Vice-Chair welcomed ACC McNally and Chief Superintendent McDonald to the meeting to provide Members with an update on Custody Provision across NI, including updates on the Custody Healthcare Model, Access to Custody Records, and Changing Needs of Detainees.

Members raised the following with PSNI:

- Progress on the regional roll out of the nurse-led model; noting that this model will be rolled out in custody suites in Omagh, Banbridge, Lurgan, and Dungannon in June 2026;
- The cost benefits of the nurse-led model of treating detainees in the custody environment; noting that PSNI are developing an evidence base in this respect so that the benefits to Department of Health (DoH) can be quantified to allow for a further discussion with the DOH regarding the current funding arrangements;
- Plans to reduce the level of Forensic Medical Officer (FMO) expenditure; noting that PSNI are currently considering various options in relation to the provision of Forensic Medical Services and are in the process of preparing a proposal to submit to the Belfast Health & Social Care Trust (BHSCT). PSNI advised they would provide the options paper that is currently being considered to Members for their information;
- Ongoing consultation exercise in respect of female detainees; noting PSNI would confirm and revert in writing;
- Support measures in place within custody suites for people with vulnerabilities and those who are neurodiverse;
- The Custody Estates Strategy, noting that Justice Department are working collaboratively with the Assistant Chief Officer (ACO) Planning & Transformation to ensure the Custody Estates Strategy links in with the overall Estates Strategy which is considered at Resources Committee;
- Support measures in place for those who may be victims/witnesses of a crime; noting that there are provisions in place for those individuals, however those individuals wouldn't be brought into the custody environment;
- ICV access to custody records; noting that a legislative change is imminent; and

- Details of the evidence base of the audits of strip searches of under 18s in custody suites.

The Vice-Chair thanked ACC McNally and Chief Superintendent McDonald for the briefing and they left the meeting.

Members **NOTED** the update provided. Board officials will follow up with PSNI in relation to the questions PSNI said they would revert on in writing. **(AP1)**

4. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 22 JANUARY 2026**

The Committee considered the draft minutes of the Committee meeting held on 22 January 2026.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- The minutes of the Committee meeting held on 22 January 2026 be approved.

5. **COMMITTEE ACTION LOG**

The Committee **NOTED** the updates detailed within the Action Log and the Director of Partnership advised that following the previous meeting on 22 January 2026, AP2 and AP3 relating to arranging Member interviews in respect of Advocacy Research and forwarding Members a copy of the oral question on Speed Indicator Devices be closed subject to Members' agreement.

Members **AGREED** that these Action Points from the meeting on 22 January 2026 could now be closed.

5.1 **Right Care Right Person Risk Register**

Following a request from a Member at the previous meeting, Members **NOTED** the Right Care Right Person Risk Register.

6. CHAIRPERSON'S BUSINESS

The Vice-Chair advised there are no items for consideration under Chair's business.

7.0 ITEMS FOR COMMITTEE BUSINESS

7.1 RUC GEORGE CROSS (RUCGC) FOUNDATION BURSARY SCHEME

The Vice-Chair welcomed Mr Michael Atkinson, Mr Jon Henry and Sergeant Doherty to the meeting, and invited them to brief the Committee.

Mr Atkinson provided some background information to the scheme, noting that the RUCGC Foundation Bursary Scheme has been running for over 20 years and helps to fulfil the Foundation's mandate to "support the professional development of police officers and staff and innovations in policing". Mr Atkinson advised the bursaries are delivered by the RUCGC in partnership with the PSNI and Ulster University. Mr Atkinson advised the scheme supports policing in Northern Ireland by sponsoring research that enhances recipients' professional development, experience and skills, while generating policy proposals and recommendations, through the research, to address current policing challenges and suggest improvements to the service overall.

Mr Henry provided Members with an overview of the process, including eligibility requirements, the amount of funding which can be applied for, the application timeline and selection process, identification of bursary themes and how research findings are presented and implemented.

Mr Atkinson outlined examples of bursary awards given over the past several years which cover a broad range of themes, however highlighted some recent

examples which include bursary recipients focusing their research on advancements in technology such as Live Facial Recognition (LFR) and Counter-Drone technology and examining best practices in London, South Wales and USA, including engagement with agencies such as the FBI and the United States Secret Service.

Mr Atkinson introduced Sergeant Doherty to the Committee, noting that Sergeant Doherty is a current recipient of the bursary, having been successful in the 2025\26 cohort of applicants. Sergeant Doherty provided Members with an overview of her research project and advised that as part of her project she travelled to the USA and Canada to research initiatives that police departments there have taken relating to positive action and community engagement for the recruitment of ethnically diverse police officers and to inform the research and gain access to many external stakeholders and other international contacts. . Sergeant Doherty advised that whilst the research is yet to be completed, the learning gained from the research is transferable and could be used within PSNI to target other underrepresented groups.

During discussion, Members raised the following with the RUCGC representatives:

- The level of awareness of the bursary scheme amongst PSNI officers and staff and the accessibility of information regarding it; noting that information is available on the PSNI Intranet regarding the scheme;
- If the Cross Sectoral partnerships referred to in the presentation under recent examples of bursary projects are similar to the Multi-Agency Triage Teams (MATTs) which were piloted in certain areas across NI several years ago; noting that Mr Atkinson will check and revert in writing;

- The level of support and guidance given to those who have been awarded a bursary throughout the duration of the project; noting that this is the primary purpose of the partnership RUCGC have with Ulster University and each project has regular milestone check in deadlines with Foundation trustees and University staff, as well as events where researchers can speak to each other and offer peer-to-peer support;
- and
- Consideration to be given to seeking input from the communities sector, through PCSPs in relation to identifying future research themes.

The Vice-Chair thanked the panel for attending the meeting and the Committee **NOTED** the update provided.

It was **AGREED** that Board officials will follow up with RUCGC reps to request information to be provided on the difference between MATTs and the Emergency Joint Response Unit and to request Sergeant Doherty's report on her research into recruitment of ethnically diverse police officers. **(AP2)**

7.2 PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE GOVERNANCE UPDATE

The Director of Partnership presented the draft Committee Programme of Work for the period April 2026 – March 2027 and included the Committee's Terms of Reference (ToR) which were previously agreed by the Board in October 2024. The Director of Partnership added the Programme of Work is a live document and may be updated throughout the year as and when necessary.

Members discussed the Committee Terms of Reference and Mrs Linda Dillon MLA proposed some additional wording be included in paragraph 1.2 in respect of the strategic objective of the Committee. The proposal was

seconded by Dr Kate Lavery and was subsequently **AGREED** by all Members present.

Members also **AGREED** that paragraph 3.1 should be amended to reflect the revised number of Committee meetings required to be held throughout the year and paragraph 3.3 should be amended.

Members also noted it will be necessary to carry out a review of all Committee ToR later in the year.

The Director of Partnership presented the Programme of Work for the period April 2026 – March 2027 to the Committee, noting that when compiling the programme, she had endeavoured to group the Committee meetings into “themes” and invited Member feedback. Members were advised of the upcoming engagement with PCSPs and as part of the 25yr anniversary events that will require support from all Board Members, with updates provided by Board officials throughout the year. Members were encouraged to support the programme of events as part of their role on the Committee. This includes engaging with and attending PCSP meetings, participating in engagement events, and contributing to CWP.

During discussion, Members suggested amending the timing of some PSNI updates, proposed themes for future Conversation with Purpose (CwP) events, suggested more a community engagement element to some visits and requested that the event planned for October 2026 is changed to a Committee meeting instead.

The Director of Partnership also asked Members to complete the Committee Effectiveness Questionnaire.

It was subsequently **AGREED**:

- The Director of Partnership to redraft the Committee Programme of Work for 2026\27 based on Member feedback and it will be added to the agenda for the April Committee meeting for further consideration **(AP3)** and
- The Committee Terms of Reference to be updated with Members proposed amendments and forwarded to Strategic Planning and Governance branch for inclusion in composite Board paper re ToR for all Committees **(AP4)**

7.3 ADULT PROTECTION BILL DRAFT RESPONSE

The Director of Partnership presented a paper which asked Members to consider and agree the Committee's response to the Committee for Justice in relation to provisions in the Department of Health led Adult Protection Bill and the potential impact on NIPB.

The Director of Partnership advised the draft Bill seeks to make provision for the purposes of protecting adults from harm. The Director of Partnership advised at its meeting on 13 November 2025, the Committee for Justice considered correspondence from the Committee for Health regarding its call for evidence on the draft Adult Protection Bill. The Committee for Justice subsequently agreed to ask the Department of Justice (DoJ) for its views on the provisions in the Bill.

The Director of Partnership provided Members with an overview of the Bill and proposals contained within it, most notably the establishment of an Independent Adult Protection Board (APB) whose role it will be to oversee how agencies, including the police, fulfil the duty of protecting adults at risk, resulting in PSNI potentially subject to direct scrutiny on their safeguarding performance. The Director of Partnership further outlined the proposed new

Board's role and responsibilities, objectives and governance structures and highlighted the potential for duplication both with the Right Care Right Person (RCRP) initiative and with NIPB, as the existing oversight body for PSNI.

During discussion and after considering the draft letter, Members proposed some alternative wording, designed to strengthen the language and to better align with the PSNI comments on the issue, and requested that direct reference be made to the Right Care Right Person initiative.

It was subsequently **AGREED** that the Director of Partnership would amend the draft response letter and subject to the amendments, Members agreed to make a recommendation to the Board to approve the draft letter for issue.

(AP5)

7.4 SPEED LIMIT REVIEW CONSULTATION

The Director of Partnership presented a paper which advised Members of a public consultation exercise currently being carried out by the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) to review potential opportunities to improve road safety and reduce casualties through evidence-based speed limit changes.

The Director of Partnership noted the purpose of the consultation is to seek the views of key stakeholders and other interested parties around potential opportunities to improve road safety, reduce casualties, and support environmental and public health objectives designed to address and reduce the number of those killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents across Northern Ireland.

The Director of Partnership advised this consultation seeks views on three main areas:

- 20mph Speed Limits;
- National Speed Limits on Rural Single and Dual Carriageway roads;
and
- Heavy Good Vehicles (HGV) Speed Limits.

The Director of Partnership noted that using evidence and best practice examples gathered from a range of jurisdictions from across the UK, Europe and the ROI on different approaches and key findings, DfI have presented a list of options for each of the three elements of the consultation for consideration to help inform responses.

Following discussion, the Committee approved the draft letter of support and **AGREED** to make a recommendation to the Board to approve the draft letter for issue. **(AP6)**

8. QUESTIONS FOR THE CHIEF CONSTABLE

Members **NOTED** the follow up response from PSNI in relation to a query a committee member raised at the previous meeting in January. The Member confirmed she was content with the response.

9. COMMUNICATIONS ISSUES / OPPORTUNITIES

9.1 25 year Anniversary Plans

The Director of Partnership provided Members with an update on plans to mark the Board's 25-year anniversary in the autumn of 2026 and advised this will become a standing agenda item.

A Member of the 25 year anniversary working group provided the Committee with an overview of some current proposals under consideration which were discussed at an event planning meeting on 20 February 2026. It was noted

that the working group aims to have a programme of events agreed and finalised for June 2026.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

10.1 Police Property Fund Large Grants Scheme

The Partnership Manager provided Members with an update on the implementation process for the Police Property Fund Large Grants Scheme.

The Partnership Manager confirmed that following the debriefs in January 2026 with unsuccessful applicants, no appeals of the assessment panel's decision had been received. The Partnership Manager advised that information workshops took place with representatives from the successful projects in early February 2026 and following a satisfactory review of their accounts by the Board's Finance team, Letters of Offer were issued to the six projects on 11 February 2026. Following receipt of the signed acceptance of the Letters of Offer, the initial payment of 80% of the funding awarded was issued to the successful projects a view to five projects commencing on 1 March 2026 and the other on 1 April 2026.

Members **NOTED** the update provided.

The Partnership Manager advised that representatives from some of the successful projects were attending a photocall with the Board's Communications Team to mark the launch of the Scheme immediately following this meeting and encouraged Members to join them.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members were advised there is no Committee meeting in March 2026 – instead there is a visit which all Board Members are invited to attend, to the

PSNI Hydra Minerva Suite (9.30am-1pm) at PSNI Steeple on 26th March 2026. Invitations to all Members will be issued next week. **(AP7)**

The meeting ended at 1pm

CHAIR

PARTNERSHIP DIRECTORATE

FEBRUARY 2026