**NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD**

**MINUTES OF MEETING OF PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 30 APRIL 2026 AT 9.30AM IN JAMES HOUSE**

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| **PRESENT:** | | Mr Peter McReynolds MLA (Committee Chair)<br>Mrs Linda Dillon MLA*<br>Mr Keith Buchanan MLA<br>Mrs Cheryl Brownlee MLA<br>Ms Deirdre Hargey MLA<br>Mrs Marian Cree |
| | **(1)** | Mr Patrick Nelson* |
| | | Mr Colin McGrath MLA*<br>Mr Tommy O'Reilly |
| **EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE** | **(2)**<br>**(3)** | Mr Brendan Mullan (Board Chair)<br>Mr Mukesh Sharma (Board Vice-Chair) |
| **POLICE SERVICE OF NORTHERN IRELAND IN ATTENDANCE:** | **(4)**<br>**(4)**<br>**(4)** | ACC Ryan Henderson<br>Superintendent Prendergast<br>Superintendent Gibson |
| **OTHER OFFICIALS IN ATTENDENCE:** | **(5)**<br>**(5)** | Mr Kieran Donnelly, Morrow Communications<br>Ms Sinead Lavery, Morrow Communications |
| **NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE:** | | Mrs Paula Gow, T/Director of Partnership<br>Mrs Sinead Simpson, Chief Executive<br>Six Board Officials |

**(1) On zoom until 11am**
**(2) Up to 7.3**
**(3) From 7.3 on**
**(4) Item 3.1 only**
**(5) Item 7.3 only**

* Attended the meeting by video conference facility

## 1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Dr Kate Laverty.

The Committee agreed the agenda for the meeting.

## 2. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No conflicts were declared.

Before PSNI joined the meeting, the Director of Partnership provided Members with an overview of agenda item 3.1 Children & Young People's Strategy.

## 3.1 PSNI UPDATE ON THE CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S STRATGEY

The Chair welcomed ACC Henderson, Superintendent Prendergast and Superintendent Gibson to the meeting and invited them to present PSNI's update on the Children and Young People Strategy, noting the focus of today's briefing was Children and Young People in Custody.

Superintendent Prendergast provided Members with an overview of the structure and geographical spread of custody suites across the province, including the total number of cells available for use. Members heard that from August 2025, Custody Policy had implemented a new audit system (part of which focuses on Children & Young People) focussing on improvements in three key areas, namely Juvenile Strip Search, overnight transfers to Juvenile Justice Centres and delays in authorisation of detention. Superintendent Prendergast advised Members of the audits undertaken against these three areas in the reporting period August 2025 – March 2026 and the compliance levels of each.

Superintendent Prendergast also provided Members with statistics for the same reporting period which included the total number of detentions, the average time in custody and the average time taken for detention to be authorised. A further statistical report will be provided at the next briefing in September 2026.

Members were also advised of recent improvements made to custody facilities and an upcoming six-month pilot in Waterside Custody Suite designed to support neurodivergent detainees. Superintendent Prendergast noted PSNI will report on the success of the pilot in future updates to the Committee.

Superintendent Gibson then provided Members with an update on various events, initiatives and early intervention programmes taking place with multiple partners across all council areas to engage with young people from a diverse range of communities and backgrounds.

Following the briefing, Members raised the following with the PSNI:

- How availability of appropriate adults impacts on time taken to carry out strip searches and also the length of time a young person spends in custody;
- A Section 75 breakdown of all the detainees in the reporting period and the criminal justice outcome of each, noting that PSNI will provide a statistical overview of CYP in custody to the Committee **(AP1)**;
- The anticipated benefits of the upcoming pilot designed to support neurodivergent detainees;

- Methods of assessing the legitimacy of neurodivergent claims in cases where there is no existing clinical diagnosis;
- The level to which engagement with Children & Young People informs policing priorities and policies;
- If the Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) screening tool also includes Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE); PSNI advised they would check and revert in writing **(included in AP1)**;
- If the additional training to support neurodivergent detainees in Custody Suites is mandatory or optional;
- How the material that is accessible on the ipads for neurodivergent detainees is monitored to ensure it appeases the situation rather than escalates it;
- Partnership working arrangements with other agencies in the Youth Justice and Education sectors; and
- Improvements in communication with Youth Justice partners.

The Chair thanked all PSNI representatives for their briefing and they left the meeting.

Members **NOTED** the update provided.

## 4. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26 FEBRUARY 2026

The Committee considered the draft minutes of the Committee meeting held on 26 February 2026.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- The minutes of the Committee meeting held on 26 February 2026 be approved.

## 5. COMMITTEE ACTION LOG

The Committee **NOTED** the updates detailed within the Action Log and the Director of Partnership advised that updates on the open actions are detailed at agenda items 5.1, 5.2 and 7.4 below.

Members **AGREED** that Action Points 4, 5 and 6 from the meeting on 26 February 2026, regarding updating the Committee Terms of Reference, correspondence to Department of Justice (DoJ) re the Adult Protection Bill and submitting a response to Department for Infrastructure (DfI) on the Speed Limit Review public consultation respectively, could now be closed.

### 5.1 PSNI Responses to queries raised at previous meeting

Members **NOTED** the follow up responses from PSNI in relation to queries raised at the previous meeting in February 2026. Members confirmed they were content with the responses.

### 5.2 RUCGC response to query on Emergency Joint Response Unit

Members **NOTED** the follow up response from RUCGC in relation to a query raised at the previous meeting in February 2026. The Member confirmed she was content with the response provided.

## 6. CHAIRPERSON'S BUSINESS

The Chair advised there is one item for consideration under Chair's business today.

### 6.1 Joint Committee Update

Members **NOTED** the agenda for the Joint Committee meeting which took place on 29 April 2026, and the Director of Partnership advised that a fulsome update on the meeting would be provided at the next Committee meeting for Members' information.

The Chair provided Members with an overview of the key items discussed at the meeting. This included:

- Options paper for PCSP funding model;
- PCSP Action Plans for 2026/27 and letters of offer;
- PCSP Governance structures and ongoing audit reports;
- Joint Committee engagement and work plan;
- Neighbourhood Watch schemes and Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs); and
- Designated Organisations' attendance at meetings.

Members **NOTED** the update provided.

## 7.0 ITEMS FOR COMMITTEE BUSINESS

### 7.1 Review of Engagement 2025\26

The Engagement Manager presented a paper which provided Members with an overview of Engagement activity completed between April 2025 – March 2026 which is year one of the 2025 – 2030 Engagement Strategy.

The Engagement Manager advised that in July 2025, the Board agreed the Engagement Strategy and the associated Programme of Engagement, which incorporates the "Strands of Engagement" noted below:

- Strand 1 – Engagement with the Community through Partnership and Collaboration;
- Strand 2 – Engagement with Stakeholders;
- Strand 3 – Consultation, Research & Reports; and
- Strand 4 – Board Volunteering.

The Engagement Manager provided a comprehensive update on each strand at Annexes A-D of the papers and provided Members with an overview of the activities delivered under each of the strands for year one. The Engagement Manager highlighted key events which took place throughout the reporting period across each sector and noted these events have been utilised to promote and inform the wider community/community representatives of a number of key work areas for the Board. The Engagement Manager also drew Members' attention to a link to a video which has been included in the paper, which presented highlights of engagement activity throughout the year.

During discussion, Members commented that with regard to year two of the Engagement programme, they would like to see more direct engagement with local communities.

Members **NOTED** the update provided.

**7.2 Ulster University Advocacy Key Findings**

The Director of Partnership presented a paper which provided Members with an update on the progress of the Advocacy deep dive research.

The Director of Partnership noted that at the June 2025 meeting of the Committee and in response to recommendation 16 of the Sweeney review, Members agreed to commission a deep dive into how the Board can advocate and support policing with the community, especially within communities where trust in policing has been historically low. The Director of Partnership added at the Board meeting on 4 July 2025, Members agreed to support this piece of work through academic research, and they also considered that such work should not be limited to the role the Board can play but should look in its widest sense at the advocacy that is needed and consider who has a role to play in that.

The Director of Partnership advised the research was initiated in January 2026 and has been progressed by the University of Ulster, with stakeholders being invited to participate in either an interview or in focus group discussions. The Director of Partnership highlighted the progress report included at Annex B of the meeting papers and drew Members' attention to the range of stakeholders engaged with, the implementation of the methodology and the timescales for completion.

The Director of Partnership noted it is anticipated that the final report and key findings of the research will be available for Members' consideration in June 2026, following which the Committee programme of work will be reviews take account of any recommendations contained within the report and also the key findings from the Communications & Engagement Audit report at agenda item 7.3 below.

Members **NOTED** the updated provided.

**7.3 Communication and Engagement Audit**

The Chair welcomed the report authors Mr Kieran Donnelly and Ms Sinead Lavery from Morrow Communications to the meeting and invited them to present their draft report.

The report detailed the background and purpose of the audit, the range of stakeholders consulted with, the methodology which incorporated four different phases of the audit and how the information gathered was analysed and used to inform best practice findings and recommendations. Mr Donnelly noted the report made 12 key findings and 26 recommendations, based around nine core themes.

During the meeting Members provided feedback on various aspects of the report and discussion centred on:

- Clarity on the role of the Board, in relation to its accountability and advocacy functions;
- The volume of work undertaken throughout each year and the proposal for the Board to focus on key priorities;
- The need to ensure the Independent Member remuneration and recruitment specification is reflective of the expectations associated with the role;
- Potential amendments to the Members Code of Conduct; and
- The benefits of diversifying across social media platforms to target different audiences in order to promote the role of the Board.

Members **NOTED** the update provided and it was **AGREED** the report will be considered by the wider Board following further discussion by the Committee.

**7.4 Committee Annual Report and Programme of Work 2026/27**

The Director of Partnership provided Members with the draft Annual Committee Report for 2025/26 which provides information on the Partnership Committee business throughout the year. The Director of Partnership advised that the Committee met on six occasions throughout the 2025/26 year and the report outlines the membership and Members' attendance at each meeting and also summarises the key areas of focus for the Committee throughout that time.

The Director of Partnership noted that if agreed, final approval will be sought by the Board and a link to it, and the other Committee Annual Reports, will be included in the Board's Annual Report and Accounts for 2025/26.

Members **AGREED** to make a recommendation to the Board to approve the Partnership Committee Annual Report for 2025/26 for publication. **(AP2)**

The Director of Partnership presented the draft Committee Programme of Work for 2026/27 which had been amended following Member feedback received at the February Committee meeting. The Director of Partnership advised the Programme of Work and the feedback received from Members from the Committee Effectiveness Questionnaire need to be considered against the context of the Ulster University research on Advocacy and the Communications and Engagement Audit report and consequently proposed to hold a Committee "away day" to fully discuss both reports and determine how the findings from each, as well as the results gleaned from the Committee Effectiveness Questionnaire can be incorporated into the Committee Programme of Work and focus going forward.

Members subsequently **AGREED**:

- To hold an away day to consider the Advocacy Research and Communications & Engagement Audit findings and recommendations. Board Officials to circulate proposed dates. **(AP3)**

**7.5 Neighbourhood Policing Conference - Request for Financial Assistance**

The Engagement Manager presented a paper which sought Members' approval for financial support for the Neighbourhood Policing Conference 2026.

The Engagement Manager advised that following the success of the first Neighbourhood Policing Conference, in January 2025, PSNI are planning to hold a second conference in June 2026. The Engagement Manager noted the aim of this conference is to recognise the commitment and dedication of Neighbourhood Officers, while highlighting the substantial and positive contribution that Neighbourhood Policing continues to make across the organisation. The Engagement Manager explained the conference is a platform to highlight best practice, share learning, and reinforce PSNI's commitment to meet community expectations, improve outcomes for victims, and supporting their workforce. It will also further contribute to the continued embedding of the Hallmarks of Neighbourhood Policing across Northern Ireland. The Engagement Manager noted the theme of the conference is "Collaborative Working with Diverse Communities in Northern Ireland," and the event will place a particular emphasis on the PSNI's Race and Ethnicity Action Plan (REAP) and the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy.

The Engagement Manager advised that it is anticipated that Board Members will have an active role at the conference and the Board also plans to host an information and engagement stall at the event.

The Engagement Manager advised PSNI submitted correspondence to the Board Chair on 5 March 2026 seeking consideration towards a funding contribution to support delivery of the Conference. The Engagement Manager provided Members with an overview of the programme for the event and noted the total cost for the delivery of the Conference is £6,866.60. The Engagement Manager advised PSNI have secured sponsorship of £1,300 and have requested that the remainder of the cost is split between the Board and themselves (£2,783.30). The Engagement Manager noted several funding options have been provided in the paper for Members' consideration.

Following discussion, Mrs Marian Cree proposed that the Committee agree to pay half the costs of the conference (£2,783.30). This proposal was seconded by Mrs Cheryl Brownlee MLA.

Members subsequently **AGREED**:

- To approve the full amount requested of £2,783.30. Board officials to advise PSNI. **(AP4)**

### 7.6 Problem Solving Awards Update

The Engagement Officer presented a paper which provided members with an update on the Problem Solving in Partnership Awards 2026, which took place on 19 February 2026 at the Harbour Commissioners Office in Belfast.

The Engagement Officer advised the awards were first held in October 2022 and were designed to recognise and celebrate innovative crime fighting projects where the police, community and external partners successfully work together to make a difference in communities. The Engagement Officer noted the embedding of Problem Solving within the PSNI is one of the key elements within the Hallmarks of Neighbourhood Policing specifically "Hallmark 4 – Solving Problems". The Engagement Officer advised the Awards are delivered by PSNI in partnership with the Board, and this initiative is incorporated within Strand 2 of the Board's Engagement Strategy 2025-2030, 'Engagement with Stakeholders'.

The Engagement Officer advised that the category for PCSPs was a new addition to the 2024 awards and was included to help raise the profile of the work they do, providing an opportunity to highlight innovative projects being co-delivered by local Neighbourhood Policing Teams through the PCSP action plans. The Engagement Officer added this category was retained for the 2025 and 2026 awards and of the 24 applications that were received 7 (29%) were for this award category.

The Engagement Officer provided an overview of the winning applications in each of the 5 categories (Delivering for Communities, Partners, Serious Crimes & Investigations, Enhancing Service Delivery, Policing & Community Partnerships) and noted that the winner in the PCSP category, was Derry and Strabane PCSP with the "Addressing Geographic Inequity and Service Fragmentation through a Consensual Grant Making Model" project. The Engagement Officer explained this model was implemented to overhaul community safety funding which previously suffered from geographic inequities and service fragmentation.

The Engagement Officer advised the overall winner was the "Public Protection Arrangements NI Thresholding Panels" project, under the Serious Crimes and Investigations category which consisted of the Public Protection Branch (PPB) and its partners implementing a new Multi-Agency Thresholding Panel system to address significant delays in managing sexual and violent offenders.

Members **NOTED** the update provided.

**7.7 Independent Reporting Commission – Eighth Report**

The Director of Partnership presented a paper which provided Members with an overview of the findings and recommendations of the Independent Reporting Commission's (IRC) eighth report which was published in December 2025.

The Director of Partnership explained the IRC was established in 2017 to report on progress towards ending paramilitary activity in Northern Ireland. The Director of Partnership noted the IRC is governed by an international treaty agreed by the UK and Irish Governments which reflects the terms of the 2015 Fresh Start Agreement. The Commission published its first report in October

2018 and this is its Eighth report since its creation. The Director of Partnership advised the IRC has a statutory duty to report annually on two key functions namely, general progress towards ending paramilitary activity, and to report specifically on implementation of measures of the UK and Irish Governments and of the Northern Ireland Executive.

The Director of Partnership noted the Report is primarily concerned with activity in the financial year April 2024 to March 2025 and comprises six sections. The Director of Partnership advised the report makes three strategic recommendations, namely:

- Sustained, strategic investment in the policing and criminal justice system is required;
- A particular focus on paramilitarism needs to be maintained after the end of the current mandate for the Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime (EPPOC) in March 2027; and
- A whole-system approach to tackling paramilitarism, with collaboration, suitable structures, and ownership of responsibilities.

The Director of Partnership advised Members that the Board Chair and Vice Chair, along with the Chairs of both Performance and Partnership Committees met with the IRC on 22 April 2026 to discuss the report and noted that the briefing for this meeting is attached at Annex A of this paper for Members' information. The Director of Partnership noted the briefing contains a more in depth analysis of the report's key findings and the Board's response to each.

Members **NOTED** the update provided.

**8. QUESTIONS FOR THE CHIEF CONSTABLE**

None.

## 9. COMMUNICATIONS ISSUES / OPPORTUNITIES

### 9.1 25 Year Anniversary Plans - Verbal update

The Communications Manager advised that the plans for the 25-year anniversary conference are well developed with arrangements continue to be progressed for the two-day Conference in early November 2026, and a number of regional Conversations with Purpose (CwP) events being held in advance of the Conference. The Communications Manager encouraged Members to forward any suggestions for invitees to Board Officials.

## 10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

### 10.1 Draft Terms of Reference for CJI Inspection of Contact Handling & Management

Members **NOTED** the draft Terms of Reference for the Criminal Justice Inspection NI (CJINI) Inspection of Contact Handling & Management within PSNI.

### 10.2 ICV Legislative Amendment

The Engagement Manager provided Members with an update on the ongoing issue impacting the delivery of the Board's Independent Custody Visiting (ICV) Scheme specifically, relating to ICVs being unable to access custody records for those detainees who are unable/unavailable to provide consent.

The Engagement Manager outlined the history of the issue, including the timeline of events since the issue first arose in Summer 2024 whereby ICVs were being denied access to custody records by PSNI for those detainees who were unable/unavailable to provide consent. The Engagement Manager advised that following legal advice obtained in Autumn 2024, the Board wrote to the Minister of Justice requesting that consideration be given to making a legislative amendment to Section 73 of the Police (NI) Act 2000 via the Justice

Bill in order to resolve this issue and align the Northern Ireland ICV Scheme with those in other UK jurisdictions.

The Engagement Manager explained that liaison with DOJ and PSNI had been ongoing throughout 2025 to progress this legislative amendment and a proposal was submitted by the DOJ to the Office of the Legislative Counsel (OLC) in March 2026. The Engagement Manager advised the OLC had raised concerns with the proposed approach and an alternative was subsequently proposed and agreed by all partners however, initial feedback from the DOJ has indicated that the Minister has reservations with this late change in approach and have indicated that further time would be required in order to fully consider and consult on the amended approach. The Engagement Manager noted that DOJ have indicated that this amendment is unlikely to be included in the forthcoming Justice Bill, as previously agreed, nor progressed within the current mandate.

Following discussion, it was agreed that the Board Chair would write to the Minster of Justice as soon as possible to highlight the urgency of the requested amendment and confirming cross-party support within the Board for the change. **(AP5)**

## 11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members were advised there is no Committee meeting in May 2026 – instead there is an engagement focusing on VAWG which all Board Members are invited to attend, to **PSNI Public Protection Branch** at **PSNI Antrim Road, Belfast on 28th May 2026**. Invitations to be circulated to all Members. **(AP6).**

The meeting ended at 12.50pm.

**CHAIR**

**PARTNERSHIP DIRECTORATE**

**APRIL 2026**

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