

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD

MINUTES OF ONLINE* MEETING OF THE AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 28 MAY 2026 AT 2PM

PRESENT:

MEMBERS

Mr Patrick Nelson (Chair)
Mr Tommy O'Reilly (Vice-Chair)
Dr Kate Lavery
Mr Keith Buchanan MLA
Ms Deirdre Hargey MLA

IN ATTENDANCE:

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

One Official

INTERNAL AUDIT

Mr Gary Curran, Head of Internal Audit
Mr Paul McIlroy, Audit Manager

NORTHERN IRELAND AUDIT OFFICE

Ms Laura Murphy, Audit Manager

AAB ACCOUNTANTS

Ms Suzanne Villiers, Senior Audit Manager

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD

Mrs Sinead Simpson, Chief Executive
Mr Sam Hagen, Senior Director of Resources
Mr Adrian McNamee, Director of Performance
Four Officials

* Virtual meeting via Microsoft Teams

The Chair welcomed attendees to the virtual meeting and advised of the shortened agenda to focus primarily on the Board's Draft Annual Report and Accounts for 2025-26.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair also extended thanks to Mr Gerry Kelly MLA, who has recently departed the Committee, acknowledging his hard work, commitment and valuable contribution during his tenure.

Members were advised of the proposal to appoint Ms Deirdre Hargey MLA to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) and Members indicated that they were content to approve this change.

The Chair subsequently welcomed Ms Deirdre Hargey MLA to her first Committee meeting.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mr Peter McReynolds MLA.

The meeting was confirmed as quorate.

2. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No conflicts of interest were declared and the Agenda was agreed.

No matters were raised under 'Any Other Business'.

3. DRAFT NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS 2025-26

The Chair asked Members to consider the NI Policing Board (NIPB) Draft Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2026 including the Board Chair's Foreword, Performance Report overview, Accountability Report, and Financial Statements.

The Director of Resources outlined the process for the preparation of the Annual Report and accounts. This includes consideration by the Committee of the draft report at today's meeting to allow for discussion and to seek approval to formally submit the report to External Audit.

Members were advised that it is normal for the draft version to contain outstanding items. Updates required for the final draft include information on remuneration and the staff report (pensions), as well as clarification with the auditors on two notes relating to accounting standards.

Following submission to External Audit, and subject to completion of their work, it is anticipated that a final draft will be presented to the Committee at the next scheduled meeting in June 2026. The External Audit opinion will provide the additional assurance required.

Members were reminded of the tight timeline and the statutory requirement to complete the Annual Report and Accounts prior to the Assembly Summer Recess, to allow the final report to be laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly.

The Chair asked for Members views on the sections of the draft Annual Report, as follows:

- Board Chair's Foreword - that reference to the 'burden' of legacy costs be amended and following discussion it was agreed to amend to 'the resource implications of legacy'.

In respect of the section on representativeness within PSNI to remove 'is more likely' and replace with 'would better understand the communities it serves'.

Following discussion these amendments were agreed. **(AP1)**

It was proposed that reference to the PSNI Recovery Business Plan be removed, however, following discussion, Members agreed not to proceed with this change, noting that the Plan is not intended to be in perpetuity.

- Performance Report Overview - The Director of Resources highlighted the risks identified throughout the year and the role of the Chief Executive in ensuring risks are effectively managed through the Corporate Risk

Register. An explanation was provided on the 'going concern' declaration within the report, and it was confirmed that no events, as defined in International Accounting Standard 10, occurred subsequent to the year-end.

The Committee also noted the detailed Performance Analysis of the NIPB Corporate Plan 2025–2030 and Business Plan 2025-26, with quarterly business plan updates having been presented to the Board throughout the year.

- Policing Plan Assessment (2025–2030) - In relation to the Board's annual assessment of Year 1 of the Policing Plan 2025–2030, the Director of Performance advised that a revised approach had been adopted, focusing on assessment of the three outcomes against the 16 indicators within the Plan.

Members discussed the content to be included in this section of the Annual Report, seeking clarity on ownership of the Policing Plan outcomes and whether responsibility for reporting rests with the Board or PSNI. Concerns were raised that the PSNI's assessment of performance had not been considered or formally approved by the Board. Members also considered whether the Board's own assessment of the Policing Plan should be included in the Annual Report and emphasised the need to ensure that the two assessments are clearly distinct and separately presented.

In response, Senior Officials advised that the Board's assessment will be presented to the next Board meeting in June 2026 alongside the PSNI's assessment of its performance, and it was agreed to keep the Committee updated. **(AP2)**

It was noted that further consideration will be given to the content and presentation of the Board's assessment following today's meeting. Officials confirmed that there will be two separate assessments of the Policing Plan - one by the Board and one by PSNI.

As part of the revised process, the Board will agree its own view on performance following discussion at the June 2026 meeting, which will

then be compared with the PSNI's assessment.

Members emphasised the need to clearly communicate any differences between the Board's and PSNI's assessments of the Policing Plan.

They also highlighted the importance of avoiding duplication and agreed that the Board should produce its own distinct assessment document, clearly setting out and highlighting any differences between the two assessments.

- Accountability Report - this section outlines how the NIPB meets its key accountability requirements and ensures best practice with corporate governance norms and codes.

The Director of Resources highlighted the addition of a Sustainability Statement with detail provided on governance, asset management, resourcing, responsible disposal of ICT waste, sustainable procurement, Single Use Plastics, and the goal to introduce a Sustainability Champion for the organisation.

Members noted the Board's positive performance in relation to sickness absence compared to the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) and emphasised the importance of ensuring this is clearly reflected within the report.

Following a query, Officials agreed to review the sickness absence figures, which appear in two places within the report, to confirm whether the figures are consistent or are being presented differently.

(AP3)

The Head of Internal Audit proposed updates to the Governance Framework section and Internal Audit arrangements to reflect that the Board's Audit function will be provided by an alternative Department within the NICS Internal Audit Group Service. This includes noting the change of the Board's Audit provider from the Department for Communities to the Department for Economy in June 2025. **(AP3)**

The Vice-Chair sought clarity regarding sustainability arrangements, the Scheme of Delegations, and how these link to the Chief Constable's Annual Assurance Statement to ensure transparency in respect of Board assets managed by PSNI.

In response, Officials advised that consideration will be given to whether amendments are required to the Chief Constable's Annual Assurance Statement to reflect legislative developments, including sustainability obligations. **(AP4)**

It was also noted that work is ongoing in relation to sustainability; the PSNI Annual Report and Accounts will also address this area; and the PSNI report will be shared with the Committee when available.

- Financial Statements - Members were referred to the primary financial statements and accompanying notes. They were advised there are no additional disclosures compared to the previous year, and that the item introduced last year in relation to the lease of the Board's premises at James House remains unchanged.

It was noted that two items relating to accounting standards, referenced earlier in the meeting require further consideration.

The Director of Resources outlined the segmental results for the year in respect of core business and PCSPs and provided information on Related Party Transactions. Members were also advised that the financial statements will be formally audited by the Northern Ireland Audit Office and the External Audit team.

Members **NOTED** the updates provided and subject to the amendments outlined above it was **AGREED**:

- That the draft document of the NIPB Annual Report & Accounts 2025-2026 be shared with the NI Audit Office, and following audit, the final draft will be considered at the next ARAC meeting in June 2026.

4. COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2025-26

The Director of Resources presented the ARAC Annual Report 2025-26, summarising the work undertaken by the Committee during the reporting period.

Key areas of work highlighted included Objective E reporting on the Board's Corporate Plan 2025–2030, Internal Audit activity and the implementation of audit recommendations, External Audit, the NI Policing Board Governance Statement, Risk Management, the Stewardship Statement to the Department of Justice, and the Committee Effectiveness Questionnaire.

Members confirmed they were content that risk control and governance arrangements within the NI Policing Board are at a satisfactory level.

The Committee also thanked the Strategic Planning & Governance Manager for the work undertaken in preparing the report.

Members **NOTED** the report and, following discussion, it was **AGREED** to:

- **APPROVE** the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Annual Report 2025–26.

It was further noted that the Board will be asked to note the report at its next meeting in June 2026, and that a composite Annual Report document detailing the work of all the Board's Committees will be brought to the Board for approval and published on the Board's website.

5. NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD ACCOUNTING OFFICER STEWARDSHIP STATEMENT

The Director of Resources referred Members to the Chief Executive's Stewardship Statement to the Department of Justice (DOJ) for the period of

assurance from 1 October 2025 to 31 March 2026.

The Statement provides assurance that the necessary controls are in place to support effective delivery of organisational performance.

Members were asked to note the high-level processes and procedures in place, any exceptions identified, and the proposed remedial actions.

It was confirmed that there were no significant issues to bring to the attention of the Committee.

Members acknowledged the progress made during the reporting period and:

- **NOTED** The Chief Executive's Stewardship Statement for the period 1 October 2025 to 31 March 2025.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

6.1 Northern Ireland Sustainability Reporting Guidance for NICS Departments 2025-26

Members **NOTED** the documents provided in relation to the Sustainability Reporting Guidance and Template for 2025-26. The guidance reflects the strategic importance of sustainability reporting and emphasises the accountability of Accounting Officers in ensuring robust, accurate and transparent disclosures.

6.2 Northern Ireland Audit Office Public Reporting Programme 2026-27

Members **NOTED** the document provided on the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) Public Reporting Programme 2026-27, recognising its role in supporting independent and objective examination of whether public services

are delivered economically, efficiently, and effectively.

The Chief Executive followed up on earlier discussion in the meeting on the Assurance statement and outlined potential options to enable assurance to be provided on all requirements relating to Buildings and Estates within PSNI, including sustainability obligations.

The Director of Resources thanked the Strategic Planning and Governance manager and the Finance team's Accountant for their hard work and dedication in preparing the draft annual report and accounts considered by the Committee.

The Chair concurred and, on behalf of the Committee, recorded appreciation for the commitment and effort of all Officials involved.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will take place on Thursday 18 June 2026 at 2pm in James House.

(Meeting closed at 3.10pm)

STRATEGIC PLANNING & GOVERNANCE

Date: May 2026

Chair