

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD

MINUTES OF MEETING OF PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 24 SEPTEMBER 2026 AT 9.30AM IN JAMES HOUSE

PRESENT:

Mr Peter McReynolds MLA (Committee Chair)
Mrs Linda Dillon MLA*
Mr Keith Buchanan MLA
Ms Deirdre Hargey MLA
Mrs Marian Cree (Vice-Chair)
(1) Mr Brendan Mullan (Board Chair)
(1) Mr Mukesh Sharma (Board Vice-Chair)
Mr Patrick Nelson
Mr Tommy O'Reilly

POLICE SERVICE OF NORTHERN IRELAND IN ATTENDANCE:

(2) Chief Superintendent Sam Donaldson
(2) Superintendent Wilson

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mrs Sinead Simpson, Chief Executive
Mrs Paula Gow, T/Director of Partnership
Seven Board Officials

- (1) Item 7.1 only
- (2) Item 3.1 only

* Attended the meeting by video conference facility

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Dr. Kate Lavery and Cheryl Brownlee MLA.

The Committee agreed the agenda for the meeting.

2. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No conflicts were declared.

3.1 POLICING PLAN INDICATOR 2.6 ROAD SAFETY

Before PSNI joined the meeting, the Police Performance Officer provided Members with an overview of agenda item 3.1 - Policing Plan Indicator 2.6 Road Safety.

The Director of Partnership advised that given the natural link between this agenda item and the item at agenda 7.3 on today's agenda regarding legislation governing the use of E-scooters and scramblers, it was the intention to discuss agenda item 7.3 immediately following this agenda item at 3.1.

The Chair welcomed Chief Superintendent Donaldson and Superintendent Wilson to the meeting.

Chief Superintendent Donaldson presented the PSNI report card in relation to Policing Plan Indicator 2.6 Road Safety and noted the report card illustrated data from 1st January 2025 – 18th August 2026. Members were provided with an overview of the key headlines contained within it including:

- The 'fatal five' have been the most referenced caused of a collision with inattention being number one;
- 75% of collisions year to date are rural;
- Year to date there have been 48 fatalities, which is an increase from 35 during the same period last year;
- The Public Consultation on Road Safety has been completed which has resulted in many 60mph roads becoming 50mph and many 30mph roads becoming 20mph zones and it was noted there was no call for a blanket change in the consultation;

- There is a diverse approach to SIDs across different PCSP areas,
- There can be a lack of SIDs in rural areas due to lack of infrastructure to utilise the devices; and
- Due to advancements in technology, the approach taken by the NI Road Safety Partnership (NIRSP) in relation to speed vans and personnel will be changing within the next 6 years and work is already underway to progress this approach.

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

- If describing roads as 'dangerous roads' has changed the public narrative and removed the perception of responsibility from drivers;
- If the legislation was amended, what powers would PSNI need to tackle the issues around e-scooters and e-bikes;
- If the insurance legislation currently being used to police e-vehicles is sufficient;
- If and when the PSNI can test road users for suspicion of driving under the influence of drugs and if drug driving figures are reflected in drug driving incidents;
- How cameras or speed detection equipment mounted on infrastructure would be managed rurally due to the current lack of infrastructure and street furniture in rural areas;
- How PSNI engagement with Department for Infrastructure (DFI) in relation to the process of the reduction in speed limits could be accelerated;
- If collisions are mapped in order to plan locations of speed vans and cameras and the rationale for deciding on the location of SIDs;
- Why fatalities are higher in NI as opposed to other jurisdictions;
- PCSPs' use of SIDs.

The Committee Chair asked Chief Superintendent Donaldson to suggest key issues going forward. Chief Superintendent Donaldson suggested:

- Review of speed limits;
- Graduated driving licences;
- Reduction in the drink drive limit
- Introduction of a threshold for drug driving;
- Increase in speeding fines; and
- Acceleration of e-scooter legislation.

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

Members **NOTED** the update provided and following discussion it was **AGREED** that Members would bring the key issues around road safety raised by PSNI to the Minister of Justice at next week's Board meeting which she is due to attend. **(AP1)**

4. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 JUNE 2026

The Committee considered the draft minutes of the Committee meeting held on 25 June 2026.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- The minutes of the Committee meeting held on 25 June 2026 be approved.

5. COMMITTEE ACTION LOG

The Committee **NOTED** the updates detailed within the Action Log and the verbal overview provided by the Director of Partnership in relation to the two open actions.

Members **AGREED** that Action Points 1 - 6 from the meeting on 25 June 2026, regarding issuing congratulatory letters to two neighbourhood officers who were awarded KPMs, submitting a written question to the Chief Constable regarding the delay in filling the SCET Director & Deputy Director positions, updating the Police Property Fund Small Grants Scheme guidance documents and launching the fourth call for Small Grants, updating and publishing the Draft PCSP Effectiveness Report 2024/25 and including the draft programme of events for the Board's 25 year celebration in the Chief Executive's report to the July Board respectively, could now be closed.

5.1 PSNI response to Committee question re recruitment of SCET Director & Deputy Director posts

The Committee **NOTED** the Chief Constable's response to the Committee's question submitted following the June meeting regarding the delays in the recruitment for the roles of PSNI Communications Director and confirmed they were content with the response provided.

6. CHAIRPERSON'S BUSINESS

The Chair advised there are two items for consideration under Chair's business today.

6.1 Joint Committee Agenda

Members **NOTED** the draft agenda for the Joint Committee meeting scheduled for 21 October 2026.

Members requested that PSNI provide the Committee with their analysis of the use of SIDs across NI to inform a future discussion by the Joint Committee.

6.2 Engagement Activity (June-Sept 2026) - verbal update

The Director of Partnership provided Members with an overview of Board Engagement activity undertaken between June and September 2026 and thanked those Members who had provided support at the events.

Members **NOTED** the update provided.

7.0 ITEMS FOR COMMITTEE BUSINESS

7.1 Advocacy Research Report

The Committee Vice-Chair welcomed the research report authors from Ulster University to the meeting to present their draft Advocacy Research report.

Dr. Nugent-Stephens provided an overview on the terms of reference, methodology and timeline. Dr. Nugent-Stephens noted the audit consisted of qualitative data from 115 participants. The breakdown of this was:

- 31 PSNI from all ranks
- 84 coming from community and voluntary sector, faith and ethnic groups.
- 64 one to one interviews and 6 focus interviews were held.

Professor Morrow explained that Members were provided with an overall report with three smaller thematic reports - Policing Identity, Advocacy and Good and Effective Policing. He summarised the findings, which found that:

- Policing has transformed fundamentally since the conflict era, shifting from a security-focused “force” to a more community orientated human rights based “service”, built on partnership and problem solving;

- There is broad agreement across all respondents on the core functions of policing and therefore PSNI (crime prevention, keeping people safe and bringing offenders to justice), however concerns were raised regarding the public expectation of “being all things to all people” and often picking up work that other partners fail to deliver;
- Neighbourhood Policing emerged as emblematic of the new policing model and is central to public confidence, however many felt that it was under resourced and undermined by officers being abstracted to other duties;
- Concerns were raised regarding a media/social media that amplifies failings, whilst positive work can be overlooked;
- Lack of clarity regarding the definition of advocacy;
- Concerns/frustrations were raised regarding the effectiveness of the relationships between the Board, PSNI and the PCSPs, noting that PCSPs are seen to be underused, poorly supported and may be disconnected from the Board;
- Representation within the PSNI; and
- The importance of officers prioritising effective communication with the public and working in partnership to achieve positive outcomes.

Next steps should include:

- Further discussion with the full Board at the Development Event in January 2027.

The Committee Vice-Chair opened the floor to questions.

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

- the Impact of resources on confidence in policing;
- the relationship between advocacy and accountability;

- the importance of advocating for good policing;
- The impact of legacy on confidence;
- The terms of reference in the research refers to communities with low confidence. Are there practical measures we can take to improve confidence?
- the role of PCSPs in building confidence in policing and how the Board and DOJ can support PCSPs with a focus on the upcoming reconstitution; and
- The Board's corporate identity.

Following discussion, Members advised they would like to consider a paper at the 2027 January Board Development Event which combines agenda items 7.1 and 7.2 and it was noted:

- A paper to be drafted for the Board Development Event in January 2027.
(AP2)

7.2 Draft Response to Communications and Engagement Audit

This item was considered in tandem with item 7.1 above. As noted above, Members agreed that a paper be drafted for the Board Development Event in January 2027.

7.3 Legislation Governing the Misuse of Scramblers and E-Scooters

The Director of Partnership advised that the Committee for Justice (CfJ) wrote to the Board Chief Executive in July 2026 asking for the Board's views on the current legislation governing the misuse of scramblers and e-scooters in public spaces, and whether, in their opinion, additional legislative measures are required. The Director of Partnership noted Board Officials also wrote to PSNI to seek their view on same and Members considered their response.

During discussion, Committee Members agreed that they support a review of the current legislative framework relating to powered transporters and would like to see stronger action taken with regard to the illegal and anti-social use of e-vehicles, and acceleration of comprehensive e-scooter legislation which is clear, proportionate and capable of effective enforcement.

Members subsequently **AGREED:**

- To write to the Committee for Justice advising of Member feedback as above. **(AP3)**

7.4 Independent Community Observer Annual Report 2026

The Engagement Officer presented a paper on the Independent Community Observer Scheme (ICO) Annual Report for 2026.

The Engagement Officer provided background information to the scheme and explained that ICOs are impartial volunteers from the community, monitoring key aspects of the PSNI recruitment process and reporting to the Board. The Engagement Officer advised that, working in pairs to carry out unannounced visits, ICOs focus on observing that the same procedures are applied to all candidates and that the facilities and arrangements are adequate to support a recruitment process that is independent, transparent and fair.

The Engagement Officer noted that ICOs are involved at the Assessment Centre stage to observe a sample of the recruitment process for the post of PSNI Police Constable.

In respect to this Annual Report, the Engagement Officer advised applications for the 2026 PSNI recruitment campaign for Police Constables opened on 14 January 2026. The assessment stage of the process commenced on 6 May 2026 and concluded on 6 July 2026.

The Engagement Officer highlighted some key facts in the report such as:

- ICOs carried out 27 visits and observed 27 Sergeant's Briefings, 88 role plays and 2 closing briefings;
- During this campaign ICOs reported that in 93% (25) of their visits the same procedures were being applied across all assessments. This is an increase of 4% from the previous campaign (89% from 35 visits).
- In relation to facilities, ICOs indicated that these were "good" in 96% (26) of the visits which was an increase from the previous campaign (60%).
- ICOs rated 4% (1) of the facilities as acceptable compared to 40% from the previous campaign.

Members **NOTED** the update provided.

Following discussion, Members **AGREED** to:

- Make a recommendation to the Board to approve the ICO Annual Report for publication. **(AP4)**

8. QUESTIONS FOR THE CHIEF CONSTABLE

A Member had asked PSNI's views in respect of the current legislation regarding e-scooters / e-bikes.

9. COMMUNICATIONS ISSUES / OPPORTUNITIES

9.1 25 Year Anniversary Plans - Verbal update

The Communications Manager noted the three Conversations With Purpose (CWP) events with PCSPs had been extremely constructive with a range of issues covered which will be fed into the main conference events.

The Communications Manager confirmed that arrangements for the 3-day anniversary events and conference were on track with a blend of in person and online viewing.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Communications Manager noted that the Board would be supportive of Chief Superintendent Donaldson's suggested areas where further changes would improve road safety.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members were advised the next meeting is scheduled for Thursday 22 October 2026 at Musgrave PSNI station and a tour of the Custody Suite will follow after the meeting. Details will be circulated in due course.

The meeting ended at 13.40pm.

PARTNERSHIP DIRECTORATE

SEPTEMBER 2026