

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD

MINUTES OF MEETING OF PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 25 JUNE 2026 AT 9.30AM IN JAMES HOUSE

PRESENT:

Mr Peter McReynolds MLA (Committee Chair)
 Dr Kate Lavery* (Committee Vice-Chair)
 Mrs Linda Dillon MLA
 Mr Keith Buchanan MLA
 Mrs Cheryl Brownlee MLA
 Ms Deirdre Hargey MLA
 Mrs Marian Cree

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

(1) ACC Ryan Henderson
 (1) Chief Superintendent McDonald
 (1) Chief Inspector Lowry
 (2) T/Deputy Director Strategic Communications &
 Engagement
 (2) Head of Digital, Engage & Creative Relations
 (2) Head of News & Media
 (2) Representative from the Public Affairs &
 Engagement Team

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

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

- (1) Item 3.1 only
- (2) Item 3.2 only

* Attended the meeting by video conference facility.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mr Patrick Nelson and Mr Tommy O'Reilly.

The Committee agreed the agenda for the meeting.

2. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No conflicts were declared.

Before PSNI joined the meeting, the Police Performance Officer provided Members with an overview of agenda item 3.1 - Policing Plan Indicator 2.3 People feel safe in their communities and 999/101 calls.

3.1 POLICING PLAN INDICATOR 2.3 FEEL SAFE AND 999/101 CALLS

The Chair welcomed ACC Henderson, Chief Superintendent McDonald and Chief Inspector Lowry to the meeting.

ACC Henderson presented the PSNI report card in relation to Policing Plan Indicator 2.3 Feel Safe & 999/101 Calls and noted the report card provided illustrates data from January 2025 – February 2026 and during this period, on average, the PSNI response times were as follows:

- 12.37 minutes for emergency (999) calls which is within the Service Level Agreement (SLA) agreed response time of 15 minutes; and
- 40.75 minutes for priority (101) calls which is within the SLA agreed response time of 60 minutes.

ACC Henderson commended PSNI officers and staff for maintaining performance levels, particularly against the backdrop of the record low officer numbers and the significant budgetary and resourcing challenges currently experienced by PSNI. ACC Henderson added that a significant factor in PSNI's ability to maintain these performance levels is the increase in the use of the online reporting tool, combined with the introduction in 2025 of the Video Officer Attendance Team (VOAT) which have both helped to reduce demand in relation to the number of calls received into the Contact Management

Centre and has helped balance the management of resourcing against the priorities of emergency and non-emergency call answering.

Chief Superintendent McDonald advised recruitment into the Contact Management Centres is ongoing, both for call handlers and dispatchers and noted that 53% of calls received in the Centres are dealt with and resolved at that stage without needing to be directed to Local Policing Teams as calls for service. Chief Superintendent McDonald advised that a new 101 service for priority calls is expected to soon be rolled out nationally and the PSNI are one of the forces that have been selected to take part in the pilot. Chief Superintendent McDonald noted online reporting continues to increase, with approximately 4500 incidents of online/video reporting being logged each month and there are currently 19,000 accounts in operation on the online portal.

Chief Inspector Lowry stated since the introduction of the VOAT in April 2025, the team has increased from 13 to 41.5 officers dealing with over 12,000 incidents in this time. Chief Inspector Lowry advised that in addition to the initial hub at Castlereagh, a second VOAT hub was opened in Dungannon in January 2026 with seven role-adjusted officers assigned and a third hub opened in April 2026 with another seven role-adjusted officers assigned to it. Chief Inspector Lowry noted that when VOAT was initially established it was mainly for incidents of "lower level" crime, however there is an increase in the number of medium and high level reports received, such as hate crime or domestic abuse where the victim does not want to be seen openly engaging with PSNI.

Chief Inspector Lowry added that following the introduction of VOAT, the next stage of the implementation of the Remote Policing initiative is to develop a team in collaboration with Public Protection Branch to deal with higher level

crimes such as domestic abuse/safeguarding/non recent sexual offences. Chief Inspector Lowry advised work is ongoing with Public Protection colleagues to develop this model, and noted that once this team is established, the next aim is to create a Video Detective Attendance Team (VDAT) which would be fully staffed by detectives.

ACC Henderson then provided Members with an overview of various programmes and initiatives PSNI are undertaking to help people feel safe in their communities, for example Domestic and Sexual Abuse community toolkits, projects supporting the Chinese and Asian communities, projects focused on ending violence against women and girls and programmes whose aim is to strengthen resident-police relations by reducing Anti-Social Behaviour in areas of Belfast. ACC Henderson also highlighted the value of the PSNI ReAL events which are focal points for communities and noted the success of the recent Neighbourhood Policing Conference, the aim of which was to highlight the substantial and positive contribution that Neighbourhood Policing continues to make across the organisation, reinforce PSNI's commitment to meet community expectations and improve outcomes for victims. ACC Henderson also advised that two neighbourhood officers were recently awarded King's Police Medals (KPMs) in the King's Birthday Honours List 2026, receiving awards for their distinguished service, dedication and commitment to policing and public safety.

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

- Target response times for online reporting;
- Allocation of resources amongst VOAT and Public Protection Branch once VOAT is rolled out to cover medium and higher levels of crime incidents;
- The level of demand that results in Calls for Service;

- Sharing of best practice initiatives across the service;
- The number of arrests made during the recent public disorder; and
- What events the PSNI are planning for over the summer period.

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

Members **NOTED** the update provided and **AGREED** to:

- **WRITE** to the two neighbourhood officers who were recently awarded KPMs in the Kings Honours List to congratulate them. **(AP1)**

3.2 PSNI UPDATE ON STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

The Chair welcomed the T/Deputy Director Strategic Communications & Engagement Team (SCET), the Head of Digital, Engage & Creative Relations, the Head of News & Media and a representative from the Public Affairs & Engagement Team to the meeting and invited them to present an update on the work of the PSNI Strategic Communications branch.

The T/Deputy Director of SCET noted this small team carries out a vital range of duties across the organisation. The T/Deputy Director of SCET's presentation detailed the work of each branch, outlining staff roles and responsibilities and highlighted key statistics, examples of media campaigns, marketing materials and digital developments the team have been involved in throughout 2025/26.

Following discussion, Members agreed to submit a written question to the Chief Constable requesting clarity on the delay in progressing recruitment competitions for the positions of Director and Deputy Director of SCET which have been vacant for three years. **(AP2)**

The Chair thanked all PSNI representatives for the update report and they left the meeting.

Members **NOTED** the update provided.

4. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 30 APRIL 2026

The Committee considered the draft minutes of the Committee meeting held on 30 April 2026.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- The minutes of the Committee meeting held on 30 April 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 2 - 6 from the meeting on 30 April 2026, regarding making a recommendation to the Board to approve the Partnership Committee Annual Report, securing a date to discuss the findings of the Advocacy research report, advising PSNI of the NIPB funding contribution to the Neighbourhood Policing Conference, writing to the Minister of Justice regarding the legislative change in respect of Independent Custody Visitors, and inviting all Members to the visit to PSNI Public Protection Branch respectively, could now be closed.

6. CHAIRPERSON'S BUSINESS

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

6.1 Partnership Committee Vice-Chair position

The Chair noted the current Partnership Committee Vice-Chair Dr Kate Lavery has indicated her intention to step down from the position of Committee Vice-Chair with effect from September 2026 and the Committee is now required to elect a Vice-Chair from among its Members.

The Chair advised that whilst not specifically stated in legislation it has been the convention that the Vice-Chair of the Board's Committees is an Independent Member; and, as far as is practicable there is a gender and community background balance between Chair and Vice-Chair. In the case of Partnership Committee, the remaining Independent Committee Members available for selection are Mr Patrick Nelson, Mrs Marian Cree and Mr Tommy O'Reilly.

The Chair stated that taking into consideration existing roles and responsibilities held by the Independent Members on this Committee and noting that Mr Patrick Nelson and Mr Tommy O'Reilly currently already hold the positions of Chair and Vice-Chair respectively of the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC), it is suggested that Mrs Marian Cree is invited to undertake the role of Committee Vice-Chair.

Following a vote by a show of hands, all Members present confirmed they were content to **AGREE** that Mrs Marian Cree be appointed to the position of Committee Vice-Chair.

6.2 Summary of issues raised at visit to PSNI Public Protection Branch 28 May 2026

Members NOTED the attached paper which was a summary of the issues raised at the visit to PSNI's Public Protection Branch on 28 May 2026 which all Members present agreed was a very thought provoking and informative visit which will continue to be a focus for the Board.

The Director of Partnership added that as well as Board Members raising issues with the Chief Constable and the Service Executive Team at the Board meeting on 4 June 2026, the Board Chair also recently wrote to the Chief Constable on the matter and Public Protection Branch will be briefing Performance Committee within the next six months so Members will not lose sight of the issues raised.

7.0 ITEMS FOR COMMITTEE BUSINESS

7.1 Police Property Fund Small Grants Call 3 – request for project extension

The Partnership Officer presented a paper which sought approval from Members for a three-month extension to a project that had been funded under Call 3 of the Police Property Fund Small Grants Scheme in 2024.

The Partnership Officer advised that further to a paper that was circulated to Members via Written Procedure on 19 May 2026, which outlined that the project was requesting an extension beyond the 24 months permitted for Small Grant projects, the Committee had been asked to make a determination on the request. The Partnership Officer advised that following the Written Procedure request seven Members confirmed they were content to approve the extension, however other Members had raised concerns about the potential risk of starting a precedent and had requested that the case be tabled at a Committee meeting for discussion.

The Partnership Officer advised that in order to address concerns in terms of precedent, Board officials were seeking Members' views on a potential option to include additional language into the Small Grants Guidance documents *"Requests for project extensions beyond 24 months may be considered at the discretion of the Committee on a case by case basis"*.

Following discussion, Members **AGREED**:

- To grant the three-month extension to the project; and
- Additional wording to be added to the Small Grant Guidance documents in relation to requests for project extensions beyond 24 months in advance of the opening of future Calls for applications. **(AP3)**

7.1.2 Police Property Fund Small Grants Call 4 Proposal

The Partnership Officer presented a paper which provided Members with the final draft documents for the fourth call of the Police Property Fund Small Grants Scheme. The Partnership Officer advised that subject to Committee approval, Board officials were proposing to launch the fourth call for Small Grants on 20 July 2026, with a value of £150,000 and noted the proposed implementation timeline.

Members confirmed they were content with all documentation, subject to the additional wording agreed as per agenda item 7.1.1 above, noted the implementation timeline, and **AGREED** to proceed with the launch of the fourth Call for the Small Grants Scheme on 20 July 2026 with a value of £150,000. **(AP4)**

7.2.1 Joint Committee Update

The Partnership Officer presented a paper which provided Members with an update on the work of the Joint Committee in relation to their statutory obligation as the oversight body of Policing & Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs).

The Partnership Officer advised Members that the Joint Committee last met on 29 April 2026 and that these minutes will be made available subject to their agreement at the next meeting of the Joint Committee in October 2026. The

Partnership Officer noted that the minutes of the meeting which took place in April 2025 are available for Members to view on Decisiontime.

The Partnership Officer provided an overview of items discussed at the recent meeting, which included an options paper for PCSP funding formula, PCSP Governance paper, an update on the Causeway Coast and Glens (CCG) PCSP audit, PCSP Action Plans for 2026-27 and Strategic Assessments, discussion on Designated Organisations' attendance at meetings, the Joint Committee Engagement and Work Plan, and an update on Speed indicator Devices (SIDS) and Neighbourhood Watch Schemes.

The Partnership Officer noted that with regard to PCSP funding, Board Officials recently received direction from the Department of Justice (DoJ) regarding 2026/27 funding for PSCPs. The Partnership Officer advised Board Officials are working with the Board Finance team to issue Letters of Offer and funding agreements to all PCSPs within the coming days..

The Partnership Officer advised that Board Officials attended the quarterly PCSP Managers on 16th June 2026. Discussion at this meeting focussed on:

- Development of training package for Members to be issued now and for use after reconstitution, including Chair / Vice Chair Training, Policing Committee training, member training, and discussion around mandatory training for PCSP members;
- PSNI in attendance to discuss new district commanders report, general consensus on proposed changes to the reporting template to streamline the information, and links to the policing plan;
- Neighbourhood Watch Scheme;
- CJINI in attendance – Discussion and feedback from Managers for upcoming report on 101/999 calls; and
- PCSP funding.

During discussion, Members asked for the indicative timetable for the 2027 PCSP reconstitution and it was noted that a draft programme will be considered at the next Joint Committee meeting in October 2026 and brought to the Partnership Committee meeting in November 2026.

Members **NOTED** the update provided.

7.2.2 Draft PCSP Effectiveness Report 2024\25

The Partnership Officer presented a paper which provided Members with the draft PCSP Annual Effectiveness Report for 2024/2025 drafted by DOJ colleagues. The Partnership Manager noted this report highlighted the work undertaken by the 11 PCSPs and 4 DPCSPs during the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.

The Partnership Officer advised £4.25m of public money is invested annually into PCSPs and this report identifies the impact and outcomes of the projects delivered across the province throughout the year. The Partnership Manager advised that during 2024/25 PCSPs played a vital role in engaging with local communities and worked alongside several agencies and designated partners to improve community safety, tackle crime and increase community confidence in policing and highlighted some key statistics and a range of examples of successful initiatives across all PCSPs.

During discussion Members suggested the following:

- Some minor amendments to wording and information, noting the Member will send in the suggested changes. All Members present confirmed they were content with the proposed amendments; and

- Consideration to be given to including some detail on the ongoing issues relating to the Causeway Coast and Glens audit. **(AP5)**

Following discussion, Members **AGREED**, (subject to Joint Committee approval and once the above amendments are made), to make a recommendation to the Board to approve the report for publication on the Board's website. (The report will come to a future Board meeting for consideration once the amendments have been made).

7.3 Board Communications Plan 25/26 and Action Plan for 26/27

The Communications Manager presented a paper which provided Members with details of communications activity to support the work of the Policing Board during the period 1 April 2025 - 31 March 2026 and also provided the Communications Action Plan for 2026/27.

The Communications Manager outlined the six main work areas of the Communications team and provided an overview of actions taken under each area in relation to the Communications Action Plan for 2025/26. The Communications Manager advised that actions and activities highlighted in the Communications Action Plan are reviewed on a regular basis to allow new or emerging activities or priorities to be incorporated into the Plan. It was noted that through the work of the Board, Board Members and officials frequently engage and communicate with a wide range of audiences and an assortment of communication channels and assets are used in the delivery of this Plan.

In relation to the Communications Action Plan for 2026/27, the Communications Manager advised that the Plan follows the format and structure as previous years, however noted that key activities included in this year's plan will include outworkings from the Communications and Engagement Audit completed in 25/26 year, support for the launch and

publication of the revised Code of Ethics, the launch of the fourth funding call for the Police Property Fund Small Grants Scheme, the development and progression of plans in support of the establishment of the Board, and to mark 25 years of policing in 2026, and support PCSP reconstitution plans.

Members **NOTED** the update provided.

7.4 Draft Engagement Programme of Work 2026/27

The Engagement Manager presented the Programme of Engagement (POE) for 2026/27, noting this initial POE has been completed based on the events and activities that the Board are currently aware of and/or committed to. The Engagement Manager advised this is a live document which will be kept under review and it will be updated in due course to reflect key upcoming reports, such as the Advocacy “deep dive” research and the recommendations in the recent Communications & Engagement audit.

The Engagement Manager noted that the POE 2026/27 for each of the four Engagement Strands can be found at Annexes A, B, C and D of the papers and provided Members with an overview of the events and initiatives ongoing under each Strand. The Engagement Manager advised that in addition to the existing 30 actions, the 2026/27 POE has two new actions specifically relating to this reporting period namely:

1. PCSP Reconstitution (Strand 1 – Action 1.4) – This action involves delivering a series of engagement opportunities to promote the upcoming appointment process for PCSP Independent Members.
2. Northern Ireland Policing Board ‘25th Anniversary Events’ (Strand 2 – Action 2.8) – This action incorporates the delivery of a variety of

seminars, conferences and events in support of the Board's 25th Anniversary.

During discussion, officials confirmed that the Conversations with Purpose (CwP) events (part of the 25 year celebrations) had been amended, at the Board's request, from Tuesdays to Wednesdays or Thursdays to allow political Members to attend. Board officials noted that advice was being sought from the Department of Justice on whether there would be a Justice Corner at PRIDE following the guidance issued by the NICS.

Following discussion, Members **AGREED** to:

- **APPROVE** the Programme of Engagement for 2026/27.

8. QUESTIONS FOR THE CHIEF CONSTABLE

Members **NOTED** the PSNI response to a question Mrs Linda Dillon MLA had raised in relation to the trialling of the new Child Criminal Exploitation tool.

9. COMMUNICATIONS ISSUES / OPPORTUNITIES

9.1 25 Year Anniversary Plans - Verbal update

The Communications Manager advised the 25 year anniversary programme would be shared with all Board Members in the Chief Executive's report at the July Board meeting. **(AP6)**

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members were advised the next meeting is scheduled for Thursday 24 September 2026.

The meeting ended at 11.40pm.

CHAIR

PARTNERSHIP DIRECTORATE

JUNE 2026