

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD

**MINUTES OF MEETING OF PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY
18 FEBRUARY 2021 AT 09:30am on Zoom.**

PRESENT:		Mrs Dolores Kelly (Chair) Mr Michael Atkinson Mrs Joanne Bunting Ms Liz Kimmins Mr Tom Buchanan Mr Mervyn Storey Mr Mike Nesbitt Mrs Janet Gray Mr Sean Lynch Ms Carmel McKinney
	(2)	Mr Edgar Jardine – Board member
PSNI:	(1)	ACC Barbara Gray D/Chief Supt. John McVea
IRC:	(2)	Ms M McWilliams, IRC Commissioner Mr J McBurney, IRC Commissioner Mr T O'Connor, IRC Commissioner
DOJ (TPPT)	(3)	Ms A Brown Ms C Galway Mr C Farrington Ms L Farrell (TEO)
OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE:		Mrs Amanda Stewart, CEO Mrs Dymphna Thornton, Director of Partnership 6 Board Officials

- (1) Present only for Item 6.1
- (2) Present only for Item 6.2
- (3) Present only for Item 6.3

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were noted from John Blair.

2. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The Chair asked Members to declare any conflicts of interests arising from the agenda. No conflicts of interest were declared. **NOTED**

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Committee considered the draft minutes of the Partnership Committee meeting held on 21 January 2021.

It was:-

RESOLVED:-

- That the draft minutes of Partnership Committee meetings held on the 21 January 2021 be approved.

4. UPDATE ON ACTION LOG:

Board Officials provided Members with an update on the Committee's rolling action log:

AP 17.3 – Officials are still awaiting an update from Crown Solicitors Office. It is hoped that a response will be issued very soon.

AP 18.5 –Further information is awaited from Members who had advised they would forward to Board Officials suggestions of groups that the Board should engage with.

AP 18.7 – The online event on Modern Slavery is still at the planning stage, when there is more definite information it will be brought to Members.

AP 20.2, 20.3 and 20.4 – Officials are awaiting the relevant information from PSNI.

NOTED

5. CHAIRPERSON'S BUSINESS

The Chair welcomed all members to the meeting and advised that two items of correspondence would be included under this agenda item and invited the Director of Partnership to provide further details.

5.1 Letter from DCC to Chair Re: Final Strategic Communications and Engagement Strategy

The Director of Partnership provided an update and;

It was:-

AGREED

- That Mr R Feeney, PSNI Director of Strategic Communications and Engagement will be invited to attend March Committee to provide an update on the PSNI's Strategic Communications and Engagement Strategy **(AP1)**

5.2 PSNI Uniform Trial update letter

The Director of Partnership provided Members with an update and;

It was:-

AGREED

- That ACC Roberts will be invited to attend the April Committee to provide an update on the PSNI Uniform Trial **(AP2)**

6. ITEMS FOR COMMITTEE BUSINESS

6.1 Update on Policing Plan measure 1.2.2 (OCGs)

The Police Performance Monitoring Officer presented the paper to Members highlighting the analysis of work relating to PSNI against the policing plan measure specific to repeat offending of Organised Crime Groups (OCGs) and paramilitary organisations alongside the PSNI OBA report card.

The Chair welcomed ACC Gray and D/Chief Supt. John McVea to the meeting to update Members, which included:

- Serious crime perspective overview;
- Rapidly evolving threat;
- Criminal activity is being driven by technology and encryption;
- National Crime Agency (NCA) threat assessment key priorities;
- Focus on exploitation of vulnerable people;
- Main OCG activity is importation of Class A and B drugs;
- Operation Frenetic, carried out jointly with the NCA regarding arrests and charges;
- Other crime types include money lending and PSNI are putting significant efforts in place to deal with this;
- The haulage industry as an enabler which another Operation is considering through the Organised Crime Task Force (OCTF);
- EU Exit has brought heightened opportunities for Organised Crime Groups (OCGs);
- Immigration /organised crime is an area of focus specifically post COVID as restrictions become more relaxed; and
- Paramilitary Crime Task Force (PCTF) and its focus on a number of paramilitary groups was discussed.

Members discussed:

- Encrypted messages and the work being done;
- The difference Unexplained Wealth Orders (UWO) will make;
- Money lending in local areas and community perception that many women are involved;
- OCGs that are from outside Northern Ireland and their links to Northern Ireland OCGs;
- Drug seizures and arrests and the increase in cyber-crime/scams which prey on the elderly and vulnerable;
- Paramilitary activity in the North Antrim area;
- Impact of reduced budgets on PSNI's ability to deal with OCGs; and
- The use of technology in tackling OCGs.

In addressing Member's comments, ACC Gray and D/Supt. McVea provided the following comments:

- Opportunities for law enforcement to gain evidence from encrypted messages by working with other agencies; however, social media presents a challenge when support is sought;
- UWOs are not a widely used tool in the UK because the threshold is high, however their use is increasing;
- PSNI are keen to assure Members that leaders of paramilitary groups have been considered to assess the possibility of using an UWOs against them;
- PSNI are keen to see UWOs come into legislation as an additional and welcome tool;
- Money lending and the future exploitation of vulnerable individuals who have engaged with money lenders;
- In relation to drugs – the circumstance of seizure determines the outcome;
- PSNI are keen to confirm that every effort is being made to investigate and deal with paramilitary activity; and

- A locality based approach led by local Commanders will be necessary should budgets be reduced.

It was:-

AGREED

- Members will provide any further questions to the Director of Partnership for ACC Gray (**AP3**)

The Chair thanked the PSNI representatives for attending the meeting and wished ACC Gray well as she commences her new role with the Metropolitan Police

6.2 Independent Reporting Commission (IRC) – 3rd Report

The Partnership Committee Chair welcomed IRC Commissioners; Mr T O'Connor, Ms M McWilliams and Mr J McBurney to the meeting who provided members with an overview of some of the key findings and recommendations from the IRC's Third Report, published in November 2020, and progress on recommendations relevant to the Board in the Executive Action Plan (EAP) which included:

- A third track approach is now required to look at engaging with paramilitary groups with a focus on disbandment, with IRC keen to have Board feedback on this approach;
- Recognition that engagement around disbandment is a difficult challenge but a serious option that needs to be considered;
- One recommendation is that an assets recovery agency is required;
- The Department of Education involvement is welcome, particularly its work to address underachievement of those young people at risk and those who are socially and economically deprived;
- While the IRC's work makes reference to the culture of lawfulness, there is a parallel need to tackle the culture of lawlessness, which sees Paramilitary Style Attacks take place;

- Developing OCG legislation which is applicable in Scotland and the ROI would assist with "de-badging" paramilitarism if introduced in NI;
- UWO legislation needs to be operational to allow cases to be brought expeditiously through the criminal justice system; and
- It is important that communities see paramilitary activity being dealt with to demonstrate that there are no untouchables in society.

Members made the following comments:

- Having a two track approach allows an outcome based approach which is critical;
- An Outcomes Based Programme for Government is critical in order to implement reform;
- The third track approach as referred to by Commissioners is not clear cut;
- Politicians responsibility to support the transformation;
- Agree that the IRC report and recommendations will need a collaborative approach through working together with the Board and through policing;
- Major problem with incidents happening in local communities and clear cut messages need to be sent to strengthen trust;
- Is there evidence to show that the legislation in Scotland and the ROI has had an impact?
- Concerns around a third track approach being introduced before the first two tracks have been fully achieved;
- Good examples of engagement in local areas such as the Resurgam Trust in Lisburn which is made up of ex-prisoners who are helping in the community through social enterprises, education and reintegration of communities;
- Links between the three tracks and ensuring the correct people were being engaged with regarding disbandment; and
- Involvement of PCSPs, Local Policing Teams will be important in addressing paramilitary activity and supporting local communities.

In addressing Member's comments, the IRC commissioners provided the following comments:

- Acknowledged major complexities with the introduction of a third track approach but see no contradictions in it running alongside the first two tracks;
- The IRC has had lengthy discussions with the Minister of Justice and a paper around a future strategic approach on engagement is being developed;
- Acknowledged the work currently being done by PSNI;
- Asked members to consider the approach of Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration and whilst Disarmament and Demobilisation have been partially delivered, Reintegration has not yet been implemented;
- The makeup of loyalist groups consist of mainstream and splinter organisations, and this creates problems;
- The IRC is not an assessment body but there to analyse and provide an overview and there is a need for a Whole of Government approach to move forward with engagement;
- "Memorialisation" , if it is to be progressed, will require to be handled well;
- The Good Friday Agreement whilst silent on group transition assumed that paramilitarism would end but this has not been the case and the introduction of a third track approach would create a robust approach to engagement;
- Neighbourhood policing is crucial as it interfaces with communities; and
- Suggestion that it may be beneficial if the Paramilitary Crime Task Force were more widely distributed across other geographic locations.

It was:-

AGREED

- Members will further consider the report.

The Chair thanked the Commissioners for attending the meeting.

6.3 Tackling Paramilitarism Programme Team (TPPT) update

The Chair welcomed lead officials from the Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme, Protection and Organised Crime Division (DOJ) and the Executive Office who provided an update on the work of the TPPT which included:

- An update on the review of the work to date and the programme of work for the next three years;
- Plans for the next phase of the programme are scheduled to go to the Programme Board for approval in the next week;
- Building resilient communities and the need to tackle harm now and in the future;
- The implications of COVID need considered in Phase 2;
- A collaborative approach and linking individual areas alongside Performance measurement and building confidence in communities;
- Raising public awareness through media platforms; and the development of a new campaign to gain public support;
- Neighbourhood policing increase will create a wider community impact;
- The Executive Office official provided an overview of the Community in Transition (CIT) initiative confirming that eight smaller geographical B4 arrangements have been identified;
- Under the theme of Health and Wellbeing people with health issues can fall prey to paramilitary groups and preventing this requires a collaborative approach; and
- Locally delivered projects are essential and a regional response is required with engagement between PSNI and communities.

Members discussed:

- In terms of the design, review and evaluation of projects – how are PCSPs involved?

- People in some communities feel that they are not heard, and that the aims of projects can be changed mid-project, leading to fragmentation and lack of longevity of projects;
- A need for continuity and engagement across groups especially when sharing positive outcomes;
- While £49m has been spent over a five year period, concerns were expressed about its return in building community confidence; and
- Looking at the third track approach option in the IRC Report needs to be considered.

In addressing Member's comments, the TPPT and TEO officials provided the following comments:

- A number of structures have been established , for example Area Based Meetings;
- Building capacity is important in identifying those in communities who are vulnerable to paramilitary influence;
- The Communities in Transition initiative focuses on individuals rather than on Paramilitary Organisations;
- A need to increase budgets for policing to allow the development of relationships with community groups;
- A need for political discussion to target particular areas during the next phase; and
- A Behaviours Framework has been developed and is a condition of a delivery partner accepting a contract;

It was:-

AGREED

- Contact details for the TPPT and TEO Officials invited to speak to Committee are to be shared with Committee Members to allow further discussion and Board officials may arrange presentations to PCSP Managers **(AP4)**.

The Chair thanked the TPPT and TEO officials for attending.

6.4 Proposed consultation responses – Draft PfG

The Engagement Manager provided an overview and draft response to the Consultation on the Programme for Government (PfG) Draft Outcomes Framework. Following on from the discussions with the IRC she also suggested including the Board's commitment to tackling paramilitarism in the response.

Members discussed:

- The police powers to tackle paramilitarism and organised crime with particular reference to the Scottish and Republic of Ireland legislative models in place;
- The urgent need for a Civil Recovery Agency; and
- Aligning the Policing Plan 2020-25 with the Draft Strategic Outcomes Framework.

It was:-

Agreed

- That the Board's commitment to tackling paramilitarism and organised crime, to include: support for strengthening police powers, in particular referencing the models in place in Scotland and the Republic of Ireland; the urgent need for a Civil Recovery Agency in NI; and the importance of the Policing Plan strategically aligning with the Draft Outcomes Framework should be added to the draft response and brought to the Board for approval **(AP5)**.

7. QUESTIONS FOR THE CHIEF CONSTABLE

7.1 Chief Constable questions and answers from January Committee meeting (for noting)

The Director of Partnership provided the recent correspondence

received from the Chief Constable by way of response to questions posed by Members following January's Committee meeting. Members were content with responses received.

NOTED

7.2 Paper proposing questions for the Chief Constable from February meeting

Members agreed to ask a follow up question of the Chief Constable following a recent media article around PSNI's use of social media monitoring **(AP6)**.

8. Communications Issues/Opportunities

The Committee agreed a statement should be issued on the updates received in this meeting and scrutiny of ongoing work to tackle organised crime and paramilitarism **(AP7)**.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

9.1 The Human Rights Advisor provided an update on the review of the Board's Human Rights Monitoring Framework. Engagement with key stakeholders is ongoing and Members views are sought given the portfolio of Partnership Committee with PCSPs and engagement. The Chair suggested consultations should take place with BAME groups and the HR Advisor suggested consulting with the Ethnic Minority Police Officer Association.

It was:-

AGREED

- The final draft of the Human Rights Monitoring Framework would be brought back for approval to the Performance Committee in the coming months.

9.2 The Chair had a request from Committee Member Mr John Blair to change the time of Partnership Committee to the afternoon to allow him to avoid another conflicting Committee each month.

AGREED

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was agreed as 18 March 2021.

(Meeting closed at 1:00pm)

PARTNERSHIP DIRECTORATE

FEBRUARY 2021


Chairperson