

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD

**MINUTES OF MEETING OF PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY
15 OCTOBER 2020 AT 10AM AT THE NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD,
WATERSIDE TOWER**

PRESENT:

- Mrs Dolores Kelly (Chair)
- Mr Michael Atkinson
- (4) Mrs Joanne Bunting
- Ms Liz Kimmins
- Mr Tom Buchanan
- (3) Mr Sean Lynch
- Mr Mervyn Storey (Zoom)
- Ms Carmel McKinney (Zoom)
- (5) Mr Mike Nesbitt
- Mrs Janet Gray

Mr Tom Frawley (Ex Officio)

PSNI:

- (1) DCC Mark Hamilton
- (1) ACC Alan Todd
- (2) T/ACC Jonathan Roberts

OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs Dympna Thornton, Director of Partnership
5 Board Officials

- (1) Present only for Item 6.1
- (2) Present only for Item 6.2
- (3) Left the meeting at 11:00am returned at 11:05am
- (4) Left the meeting at 11:05am returned at 11:10am
- (5) Left the meeting at 12:00pm returned at 12:05pm

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from John Blair. The Committee agreed the agenda for the meeting.

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 17 September 2020.

It was:-

RESOLVED:-

- That the draft minutes of Partnership Committee meetings held on the 17 September 2020 be approved.

4. UPDATE ON ACTION LOG:

The Director of Partnership provided Members with an update on the Committee's rolling action log:

Action Point 12.4 is included on the Agenda for today's meeting. An update was provided under Action Point 16.6 regarding the Police Property Fund.

Members agreed that the launch of the Fund should be postponed until early January 2021.

It was:-

RESOLVED:-

- That the Police Property Fund would not be launched until early January 2021.

5. CHAIRPERSON'S BUSINESS

Members agreed to include a PSNI update on the 11 operational actions attributed to PSNI in the Committee's Review on Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime. This will appear as an Appendix in the published document on the Board's website.

6. ITEMS FOR COMMITTEE BUSINESS

6.1 Policing Plan Measure 3.1.1 Local Policing Review Implementation Plan Update

The Director of Partnership introduced the item and provided members with an overview on the progress in implementing the LPR Plan from February to September 2020. The Chair welcomed the Deputy Chief Constable and ACC Alan Todd to the meeting. The DCC provided members with an update which included:

- The Implementation of the Plan ran well in the first 12 months however Covid-19 significantly impacted on delivery in a number of areas;
- The Project Board was stood down with staff diverted to Covid-19 response having been reinstated during the Summer and it now meets regularly with ACC Alan Todd taking on the role of Chair;
- The focus of the DCC was to put in place the additional 400 Neighbourhood Policing Team (NPT) Officers;
- Challenge acknowledged of doing so but potentially not achieving neighbourhood policing and also gaps have been created in other service areas e.g. drivers for 999 calls;
- Training is required to fill the gaps left in moving officers to other roles;
- Training had been difficult to deliver due to Covid-19 restrictions however, 1200 officers have completed Open University Modules and important training in problem solving has been provided;
- Part time reserves are realigned to NPTs to increase numbers;

- A single officer patrol pilot has restarted and is expanding into East Belfast; and
- PSNI are considering employer supported volunteering (similar to other UK models) as part of the actions around volunteers.

Members discussed:

- Some of the tools being used by NPTs in helping officers do the work e.g. the Niche database;
- How communities know who their NPT officers are;
- Number of School Liaison Officers projects progressing and queried if access to schools is an issue;
- Whether the PSNI are still delivering on Patten Recommendations 45 and 46 with PwC as a core function;
- If the plan remains workable, if any actions need to be re-worked or if timelines need to be revised;
- Concerns around increased social media interaction replacing face to face interaction with Police;
- The importance of Neighbourhood Policing reaching all people and not just those known to Police;
- Perceived lack of career progression within NPTs;
- Recommendations from the Peer Review;
- The need to ensure that any funding issues don't impact on NPT's;
- The need to ensure NPT's are part of any local response on crime to ensure Commanders feel supported by their NPTs;
- Would raise concerns in relation to the funding of the Pathfinder Project by DoH; and
- The need for an effective workforce planning exercise to deliver consistency.

PSNI provided the following responses:

- PSNI recognises that there is a lot more for Neighbourhood Policing than being visible and should include:

- Effective problem solving;
- Intelligence on local issues; and
- Responding to calls where possible;
- All Neighbourhood Officers have been added to the PSNI website and different mediums are being used locally;
- Hoped to do a launch but difficult with Covid-19;
- Two hundred officers are funded through EU Exit funding that has not yet been received from DoJ, which is creating a £4.5 million deficit;
- Discussions are ongoing regarding the attachment of Neighbourhood Officers to schools which has been impacted by Covid-19 however before this schools were very receptive;
- In relation to Patten recommendations, there is a reinforced commitment to PwC and the DCC advised that officers are not bound to stay in NPTs for 3-5 years as it may be perceived by officers to prevent promotion/diversification.
- Possible need to revise timelines to ensure achievability;
- Would not propose making any changes to the local policing review action plan as significant effective collaborative work was carried out between NIPB and PSNI to develop the plan with any changes potentially undermining this.;
- Continued work in relation to partnership working is required and there is a need to also consider delivery against funding availability;
- Some very useful recommendations came from the 101 review leading to a 101 improvement plan by PSNI;
- Advised that EU funding has allowed for more officers for rural and border areas;
- The pilot of single officer patrolling in Ards and North Down has produced some positive outcomes;
- Would welcome advice from the Board on mechanisms for engaging with communities to familiarise them on their NPT Officers e.g. leaflet drops;

- Provided a breakdown on this year's funding but reminded Members of the current EU Brexit funding gap and the potential shortfall in relation to the custody healthcare provision; and
- Challenge of expecting commitment for an extended period when there is annual attrition and approximately 200 constables promoted each year.

ACC Todd provided the Committee with an update on PwC during the Covid-19 restrictions and advised that a Memorandum of Understanding was put in place in April with Solace to ensure collaboration with Councils. He also advised that he will be discussing the latest restrictions with the Chief Medical Officer which could help inform priorities for policing.

The Chair thanked PSNI for their attendance and input and PSNI left the meeting.

6.2 PSNI Uniform Update

The Director of Partnership introduced the item to provide Members with an update on the pilot of PSNI's new uniform and welcomed T/ACC Roberts to the meeting. T/ACC Roberts gave a presentation on the plans for the Pilot and provided members with new uniform samples to consider. The presentation included:

- Costings for the uniform trial;
- Material and design and versatility of the new uniform;
- Timelines for the launch to commence on 19 October 2020 for a 3 month period ending 17th January 2021;
- Areas in which trial will take place; and
- The number of officers taking part in the trial.

Members discussed:

- The increase in the cost of uniforms compared to those currently worn;
- Availability and provision of funding from the PSNI budget;

- Possible contention in some areas to the new uniform;
- The more casual look to the new uniform which could potentially undermine the authority of Policing;
- The durability of the material;
- The need to ensure that there is sufficient engagement with officers that are not taking part in the trial to ascertain their views;
- The need to consider any gender issues in relation to the uniform;
- How the new uniforms will fit over body armour etc.

PSNI provided the following responses:

- PSNI has allocated £1million from next year's budget to new uniforms;
- There are a number of factors to be considered, including who would receive the new uniform and what quantity each officer would receive before costs can be confirmed;
- Feedback from frontline officers is that the current uniform is not practical, it is important that these officers feel supported;
- Engagement will continue with all officers as part of the trial;
- The importance of striking a balance with communities for a non-authoritative approach to local policing;
- The trial will consider both durability and affordability;
- An equality assessment has taken place to consider any gender issues, however the drive for the change comes from a significant number of frontline officers;
- New body armour has been introduced and it will be important to capture how this works with the trialled uniform.

Members noted that following completion of the trial, the PSNI will report back to the Board on the findings.

It was:-

AGREED

- PSNI presentation would be uploaded onto Decision Time and; **(AP1)**
- That ACC Roberts contact details are shared with Members to allow feedback of the pilot launch. **(AP2)**

6.3 NPM Response to the MoJ Consultation on Strengthening the Independent Scrutiny Bodies through Legislation

The Engagement Manager provided a summary in relation to the MoJ consultation which included the UK's NPM submission to the Consultation advising that the Board's Independent Custody Visiting Scheme is a Member of the NPM. The UK's NPM submission contains 12 key elements, which were included in the paper.

Members agreed the UK's NPM submission and acknowledged the importance of the Board's ability to provide further input in relation to a greater legislative basis.

NOTED

6.4 Policy on the Removal of PCSP Independent Members

The Partnership Manager provided Members with background on the development of a Policy on the Management of Breaches of the PCSP Code of Conduct and the Policy on the Removal of Independent Members of the PCSP.

As requested at the February 2020 Committee meeting, engagement has taken place with PCSP Managers to establish whether a procedure to deal with minor issues at the local level was viable. As a result of these discussions, she advised that a 'one size fits all' procedure would not be possible and suggested that PCSP Standing Orders are in place to initially deal with attendance issues however all other issues should be reported to the Board.

Members were advised that the Policy on Management of a Breach of the PCSP Code of Conduct has been updated to reflect this. Members were also advised that the Policy on Removal of PCSP Members had not been amended since the original agreement and requested that the Committee approve both policies to allow a legal opinion to be obtained in advance of issuing.

Members were supportive of all the amendments and approved all.

It was:-

AGREED

- The Partnership Manager will liaise with the Crown Solicitor's Office to establish whether a legal opinion is required on both policies in advance of issue. **(AP3)**

6.5 Joint Committee Update

The Partnership Manager provided an update on the current work of Joint Committee in relation to their statutory obligation as the oversight body of PCSPs. The update included a summary of discussions from the Joint Committee's 24th June meeting. All papers relating to this meeting have been uploaded to Decision Time.

Members were also provided with summary of the recent PCSP Managers meeting including the progress in implementing their Action Plans under the ongoing restrictions, examples of alternative delivery methods adopted and emerging issues.

In addition, members were advised that the Joint Committee will be commencing a strategic review of PCSPs. The review is likely to consider the current governance and oversight arrangements and the strategic priorities which the PCSPs must implement their plans against.

Members discussed:

- Effectiveness and the impact that the review will have at ground level;
- The need for the review to avoid a purely top-down approach where changes are implemented without consultation; and
- An issue with Belfast PCSP in relation to funding allocations.

It was:-

AGREED

- A letter to issue from the Committee to the Chief Executive of Belfast City Council raising concerns on funding allocation; **(AP4)** and
- The review will be brought to Committee at a later stage for consideration; **(AP5)**

6.6 Draft response to DoH Consultation on Cross-Departmental Covid-19 Vulnerable Children and Young Peoples Plan

The Director of Partnership introduced the item and provided a summary of the consultation. She advised that a supportive letter has been drafted for members' consideration to be approved by the Board for issue.

Members were advised that in considering the information within the consultation, it was recognised that PCSPs play a critical role and may be regarded as a lead agency. The response letter therefore includes reference to the key role that PCSPs can play.

Members agreed that PCSPs are critical in supporting the currently identified lead agencies on the consultation document but could not be regarded as a Lead Agency in themselves. Members were content to approve the response letter with a small amendment in relation to the recommended role of PCSPs.

It was:-

AGREED

- The response letter will be amended in relation to the role of PCSPs and brought to the Board for approval at their November meeting. **(AP6)**.

6.7 Community Safety Board request for input

The Director of Partnership introduced this item and advised Members that they have been provided with a letter issued by the Community Safety Board to all its members which sought input in relation to a range of community safety issues identified by the Community Safety Board secretariat. Board Officials provided Members with draft responses for consideration but recommended that a full review was conducted on the identified community safety issues to ensure focus and to remove duplication.

Members agreed that the letter should have provided more time for consideration and a presentation from the Community Safety Board's secretariat would have been welcomed.

Members also requested that attacks on older people and places of worship should be included as community safety issues.

Members agreed to officials recommended responses and requested that the letter be amended in line with their comments.

It was:-

AGREED

- The response letter will be amended in line with Members' comments and issued to DoJ **(AP7)**

7. QUESTIONS FOR THE CHIEF CONSTABLE

NONE

8. COMMUNICATION ISSUES

The Communications Manager asked Members to note the media launch of the new PSNI uniform.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

NONE

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was agreed as 19th November 2020.

(Meeting closed at 12.15 PM).

PARTNERSHIP DIRECTORATE

OCTOBER 2020


Chairperson