

**NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD**

**MINUTES OF MEETING OF PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY  
18 MARCH 2021 AT 10:00am on Zoom.**

**PRESENT:**

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

**PSNI:** (1) DCC Mark Hamilton  
Mr Ryan Feeny, PSNI Director of  
Strategic Communications and Engagement

**OFFICIALS IN  
ATTENDANCE:** Mrs Amanda Stewart, CEO  
Mrs Dymphna Thornton, Director of Partnership  
3 Board Officials

(1) Present only for Item 6.1 and 6.2

## 1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were noted from John Blair and Joanne Bunting.

## 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 18 February 2021.

It was:-

### **RESOLVED:-**

- That the draft minutes of Partnership Committee meetings held on the 18 February 2021 be approved.

## 4. UPDATE ON ACTION LOG:

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

**AP 17.3** – paper 6.5 referred and action to close.

**AP 17.5** – The Chief Executive and Board Officials met with DoJ in January and February with a view to progressing this. Subsequent to the last meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2021, Board Officials have endeavoured on several occasions to follow up with DoJ officials, with no response to date. Board Officials have now notified the Dept Officials that with the imminent loss of a significant number of Partnership Directorate staff, it will be difficult to retain this as a priority piece of work in the short to medium term.

**AP 18.5** – The Annual Programme of Work continues, and engagement activities which are either pre-arranged or ad-hoc will be considered and noted on the programme. This is a living document, and suggestions made by Members are added to it as they arise. Members agreed this action could be closed.

**Action 18.7** – Officials are progressing a number of themed Webinar and online events. Members agreed this action could now be closed as webinars and online engagement events arranged by the Partnership Directorate team are now well underway.

**AP 19.4** - Remains open and Officials will be contacting PSNI in the coming weeks to agree a date for this presentation.

**AP 20.3** – Item of Chair’s Correspondence at agenda item 5.3 in today’s papers refers. PSNI have provided response as was the agreed action. Members agreed this action could now be closed.

**AP 21.3** – No further questions were received from Members in respect of the presentation from ACC Gray last month. Members agreed this action could now be closed.

**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 Request for funding – Special Olympics Torch Run**

The Director of Partnership informed Members that an application for funding was received by the Board from the Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary for £6360. Members discussed the application and

It was:-

#### **AGREED**

- Officials to process the funding request **(AP1)**.

## **5.2 PSNI Letter of response re: annual cost of FSNI**

The Director of Partnership provided Members with an update from a request to PSNI in January to provide the annual cost of Forensic services in 2020/21. T/ACC Roberts provided the total costs for the 2020/21 financial year

**NOTED**

## **5.3 PSNI Letter re: Members' comments on the Local Policing Review**

The Director of Partnership provided Members with an update from ACC Todd following the request for information from January's Committee meeting on the implementation of the LPR. Following discussion

It was:-

### **AGREED**

- Officials will contact PSNI seeking details of the new PSNI Leadership Team **(AP2)**; and
- Officials will invite ACC Todd to a future meeting provide Members with a Presentation on the Performance Management Framework for PSNI's call handling **(AP3)**.

## **6. ITEMS FOR COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

### **6.1 PSNI presentation on the Communications and Engagement Strategy**

The Chair welcomed DCC Hamilton and Mr Ryan Feeney, PSNI's Director of Strategic Communications and Engagement, to the meeting and expressed Members support for Mr Feeney in light of recent social media threats to Mr Feeney and his family. The DCC updated Members stating that

- From the Chief Constables point of view PSNI has brought rigour to PSNI Engagement corporately with the media and the public;
- Investment in staffing in this business area is a priority
- Increased demand on staff in this department through social media activity and

- Acknowledged that the demands on PSNI are very notable compared to previous demand on this area of business within the organisation.

Mr Feeney, then provided Members with a briefing on the final version of the PSNI Strategic Communications and Engagement Strategy including:

- An update on the PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) review of Communications in PSNI in 2017 which identified three main areas:
  - 24 Hour Response;
  - The need for proactive campaigns for consistency of message; and
  - A need for a consistent social media approach;
- Development for a proactive calendar;
- A need for a centralised approach across Districts;
- External stakeholders to inform the Strategy which will allow a specific local focus;
- Innovative project to develop a new website linking with NI Direct; and
- The PSNI's appointment of a Journalistic Safety Officer which is now viewed as best practice across the UK.

Members discussed:

- A review of the Strategy and tests to understand if it is working;
- Concerns about the campaign and the proactive calendar with a need for it to be reflective, with an accurate narrative;
- Queries around the use of the Irish language and infographics; and
- Need for engagement with other Loyal Orders;
- Visibility of local teams and their use of social media as a way of engaging with communities;
- Absence of older people referenced in the engagement programme; and;
- The value of pieces of work such as the "Next Door" project.

In addressing Member's comments, PSNI provided the following comments:

- Acknowledged that relationships between PSNI and the media have greatly improved;
- The Corporate PSNI Communications Team were asked by the Chief Constable to horizon-scan for events that may involve PSNI with acknowledgement that they continue to learn from this process;
- Made reference to work which Corporate Communications have carried out to ensure a reflective and accurate approach;
- Referred to Policing with the Community Strategy which sits within the Community Safety Department and is responsible for engagement with local communities;
- Acknowledgement that pressure which can be placed on PSNI for response to incidents can place PSNI in "reactive mode, which often does not allow for good messaging, however with the new approach PSNI are better able to control their own narrative;
- Acknowledgement from PSNI that the news media environment places increased demand on staff working in this area in PSNI; and
- PSNI are keen to stress that the document is a working draft which will require additional content and they are happy to address this in their Strategy.

It was:-

**AGREED**

- That PSNI will update the Strategic Communications and Engagement Strategy to include greater reference to older persons **(AP4)**

## **6.2 Update on PSNI Branding and New Uniform Trial**

DCC Hamilton provided Members with information on the outcome of the pilot for the new PSNI uniform and an update on the refresh of PSNI Corporate Branding which included:

- Cost implications being minimal;
- A refresh of the image of PSNI;

- A very positive response to the uniform following the trial; and
- Costs over 10 years for the new uniform will represent significant savings.

Members discussed:

- The use of the Irish language by PSNI in branding where possible, making reference to the European Charter for Minority Languages;
- The decision taken for the new uniform to be available for particular ranks; and
- Queried the new uniform being provided for Part Time Reserve Officers.

In addressing Member's comments, DCC Hamilton provided the following comments:

- PSNI will act in line with guidance for public sector bodies.
- Executive Direction will come to PSNI as legislation, and PSNI will have the opportunity to respond
- The PSNI Service Executive Team were not part of the uniform trial and the current uniform for ACC and above will remain as is; and
- When phasing in of the new uniform commences it will take time and a decision will be necessary on provision all at once or in stages.

**NOTED**

The Chair thanked the PSNI representatives for attending the meeting.

### **6.3 Independent Community Observer (ICO) Scheme update**

The Engagement Manager provided Members with an update on the ICO Scheme and referred Members to the draft Annual Report 2020/21, which included:

- Statistical information on visits made by ICO's to Assessment Centres;
- Implications of visiting during COVID and the impact on visits; and

- Pending Member's consideration of the Annual Report, Board approval is sought to publish it following 31 March 2021.

Members discussed:

- The report and statistics contained therein compared to previous years; and
- The impact that COVID had on the findings in the report.

In addressing Member's comments, the Engagement Manager provided the following comments:

- ICOs visited the assessment centres individually as opposed to in pairs to follow guidance agreed with the recruitment providers; and
- There was an increase in the number of sessions attended by ICO's;

It was:-

**AGREED**

- To approve the ICO Annual Report 2020/21 and recommend to the Board to approve at the meeting in April for publication in April 2021 **(AP5)**.

#### **6.4 Paper on Proposed Research**

The Director of Partnership provided a paper proposing work to be carried out an independent external panel to assess how, 20 years on from the Patten Report, the Policing with the Community (PwC) culture has become embedded in PSNI since its establishment.

Members discussed:

- A need for greater clarity on the remit of this proposal with greater detail to be provided;
- Suggestion that this should be brought back to Committee with more detail particularly in respect of the proposed panel, its composition, remit and expectations;



- Potential overlap between work outlined in this proposal and that of the group working on Outcome Three of the Policing Plan, therefore a holistic discussion, taking into account other pieces of work, might be beneficial; and
- Need for Terms of Reference for such a piece of work and the need for representation and balance of proposed panel.

In addressing Member's comments, the Committee Chair provided the following comments:

- PWC is referred to in the Partnership Committee Terms of Reference and in light of recent events, the definition of PwC may benefit from being clarified; and
- This work may assist the work on Outcome Three of the Policing Plan;

It was:-

**Agreed**

- Any comments from Members should be forwarded to the Director of Partnership by 24<sup>th</sup> March 2021 **(AP6)**.

## **6.5 PCSP Removal Policy update**

The Partnership Manager provided Members with advice provided by the Crown Solicitor's Office in respect of draft policy on the Management of a Breach to the PCSP Code of Conduct in line with the current Removal Policy highlighting the following key points:

- There is a risk that any process can fall into the area of employment law – therefore it is recommended that the document is regarded as Guidance that the Board can follow rather than a Policy; and
- Some of the wording and suggested steps could also be regarded as having employment connotations and suggested amendments have been included as tracked changes.

Members discussed:

- Whether references to PCSP Managers resolving some local issues should be amended to being the PCSP Chair.

The Partnership Manager advised Members that:

- Minor issues such as attendance are dealt with locally using the PCSPs' Standing Orders.

It was:-

**Agreed**

- That Members would recommend to the Board that it approve the updated Guidance at their April meeting and that any further suggested amendments provided by Members to the Partnership Manager would be reflected as track changes in the Board paper (**AP7**).

## **7. QUESTIONS FOR THE CHIEF CONSTABLE**

### **7.1 Chief Constable questions and answers from February Committee meeting (for noting)**

The Director of Partnership provided the recent correspondence received from the Chief Constable. This correspondence was a response to questions posed by Members following February's Committee meeting regarding the monitoring of social media by PSNI. Members were content with responses received.

**NOTED**

## **8. Communications Issues/Opportunities**

The Communications Manager will contact PSNI for information around the launch of branding and the new uniform trial following the presentation from the DCC. A recruitment campaign for ICOs launched last week and the Police Property (PPF) fund will launch today. Members are asked to share the

information around both. The Chair thanked all staff for their input to the PPF and informed Members that packs are available from officials.

## **9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### **9.1 Update on Support Hub funding for PCSPs**

The Director of Partnership provided Members with information relating to correspondence from the DoJ to all Council CEOs who have a Support Hub in their area and how the future funding of Support Hubs could be met going forward.

Members discussed:

- Continued support for Support Hubs by the DoJ;
- Concerns regarding the letter from DoJ;
- Concerns regarding Support Hub work being subsumed into PCSP work and referred to this matter being discussed by the Justice Committee; and
- Whilst the letter indicated broad agreement for Support Hubs being subsumed into PCSP Action Plans, Officials should seek clarification to establish whether the statement relating to discussions between DoJ and PCSP Managers suggests that only PCSP Managers were consulted.

It was:-

#### **AGREED**

- A letter will be issued by the Committee Chair to the DOJ seeking clarification on whether the meeting described in the letter included the PCSP Chair or PCSP Members or whether it was solely with the PCSP Manager. **(AP8)**.

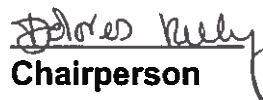
## 10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was agreed as 22 April 2021 at the new committee time of 2pm.

(Meeting closed at 12:05pm)

## PARTNERSHIP DIRECTORATE

MARCH 2021

  
Chairperson