

**MINUTES OF MEETING OF POLICE PENSION BOARD
HELD AT NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD, JAMES HOUSE, BELFAST
TUESDAY 4 JUNE 2024 at 2PM**

PRESENT:

Mr Michael Burton, Chair
Ms Alison McClune (PSNI)
Ms Natalia McMahon, (Temporary/ Director of
Police Pensions and Injury Benefits, Northern
Ireland Policing Board)
Ms Sinead Simpson (Chief Executive Northern
Ireland Policing Board)
Mr Brian Quinn, (Independent)
Mr Damian Walsh (Police Federation NI)

**PSNI REPRESENTATIVES IN
ATTENDANCE**

Mr Jim Montgomery (PSNI Pensions Branch)

**NORTHERN
IRELAND POLICING BOARD
OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE**

1 Board Official

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received in advance of the meeting from ACC Bobby Singleton and Superintendent Amanda Ford.

2. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No conflicts of interest were declared.

3. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 5 DECEMBER 2023

The minutes of the Police Pension Board (PPB) meeting on 5 December 2023 were approved. The Chair asked that they also be published on the Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB) website. **(AP1)**

The Chair also commented on individual meetings held with members in March 2024.

4. ACTION LOG

Members noted that all outstanding actions following the previous PPB meeting had been completed.

It was noted that while Action Point 6 relating to *'The PSNI Pensions Branch Official should send key issues regarding the completion date of the McCloud project to PPB Secretariat who in turn will draft a letter from the Chair to the NIPB highlighting concerns raised'* is closed at present, there may be another opportunity to address this at a different date.

5. CHAIR'S BUSINESS

5.1 PPB ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

The Chair outlined the detail of the PPB Annual Report 2023/24 and asked that it is published on the NIPB website. **(AP2)**.

6. SCHEME MANAGER REPORT

The Director of PPIB provided an overview of ongoing workstreams following the previous PPB meeting in September 2023.

Items discussed included:

- There has been engagement with the Pensions Ombudsman (**PO**) regarding two ongoing complaints made by Former Officers. The Board has received a response from the PO in relation to one of the cases, whereby the PO has not upheld the Former Officer's complaint. The Former Officer concerned has not appealed the decision and with that in mind the PO has closed the case. A response remains outstanding from the PO in relation to the remaining complaint. Relevant updates will be shared with PPB once received.
- Officials recently presented a case to the Board's Resources Committee regarding whether a Former Officer, who was dismissed following misconduct proceedings, met the criteria for forfeiture of their police pension further to *Chapter 5, Part 13* of the *2015 Regulations*. Officials sought advice from Crown Solicitors Office (**CSO**) in relation to whether the Former Officer met the criteria for forfeiture, with CSO advising that they did not. Resources Committee agreed that this case did not meet the statutory bar for forfeiture and therefore recommended that the Former Officer's application for a Deferred Pension Paid Early Due to Ill Health can proceed to assessment by the SMP. Officials are currently in the process of arranging same.
- Board Officials have continued to progress the McCloud Reassessment project. It was reported that all those Former Officers who have consented to reassessment have been reassessed and Officials are in the process of reassessing the final cohort of non-consenters. The Independent Pensions Advisor raised the issue of those former officers who had not consented to be

reassessed but had been reassessed as being Upper Tier. By way of background this cohort of former officers were reassessed, as per advice by National Police Chiefs Council (**NPCC**) in the event that they come back at a future date asking to be reassessed. With that in it was agreed that PSNI Pensions Branch would not be made aware of the results of these cases. Board Officials will provide figures on those non-consenters who have been reassessed as being upper tier (**AP3**).

- At December's meeting of the PPB it was reported that a targeted consultation has been launched by the Department of Justice in relation to the *Draft Police Pension (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024*. The consultation closed on 20 December 2023. The Board's consultation response was agreed by Resources Committee Members at its sitting in December 2023 and the final response was uploaded thereafter.
- In March 2024 the Department of Justice's (**DOJ**) launched a further targeted consultation in relation to the draft *Police Pensions (Remediable Service) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2024*. The purpose of the consultation was to amend a number of oversights made in the *Draft Police Pension (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024*. The consultation response was drafted in conjunction with the Independent Pensions Advisor. The Board's consultation response was agreed by Resources Committee Members at its sitting in April 2024 and the final response was uploaded thereafter.
- Members were notified of The Pensions Regulator's (**TPR**) new general code of practice which was laid in Westminster and subsequently came into force on 27 March 2024. TPR's new general code, brings together and updates 10 existing codes of practice into one set of clear, consistent expectations on scheme governance and administration. Members were provided with a copy of the new general code which had been completed by the Scheme Manager.
- The Independent Pensions Advisor advised that the new general code was more relevant to private sector schemes, however he would provide some

training slides at the next PPB meeting regarding what public sector schemes should be doing to be compliant (**AP4**).

7. PSNI GOVERNANCE REPORT AND SCHEME FINANCE

7.1 Quarterly Scheme Administrator Report

The Pensions Branch Official provided an overview of the Quarterly Scheme Administration Report. The paper provided Members with an analysis of scheme membership, financial reporting, branch performance and governance.

Items discussed included:

- The impact of the pay award and how pensions contributions are being affected.
- It was reported that a campaign of abuse, from former officers, was affecting PSNI Pensions staff. The Chair put on record his thanks to Pensions Branch for their hard work.
- Those that have been reassessed as being upper tier, under the McCloud reassessment project will still not be in a position to be processed due to tax issues. Guidance is currently outstanding on this issue from the Treasury/ Tax Office.
- The issue of pensionable pay arrears and the remedy suggested within the Regulations i.e. there is a facility to backdate same. The PSNI will be the first police force to do this. It was advised that there will be financial implications for this, however, the PSNI's systems need to be updated in order for this to be rectified. Legislation requires that this is completed by early 2025.
- The PSNI Portal will be launching imminently.

7.2 Pensions Dashboard

The Pensions Branch Official provided an overview on the progress of the Pensions Dashboard Programme. Members were informed that this will require more attention from Pensions Branch in the coming months and with that in mind a dedicated member of staff has been allocated to this project. It was reported that

the NPCC will extend the deadline for completion, which currently sits at September 2025.

7.3 Procurement of Electronic Pension Administration System Update

The Pensions Branch Official confirmed that the next stage of the project involving the Electronic Pension Administration System will launch shortly. This will involve all officers having staff portals on their computer desktops.

7.4 PSNI ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENT AND ANNUAL REPORT

The Pensions Branch Official presented a paper on the above. It was reported that:

- While the majority of the figures will remain the same, some may change slightly due to changes between receivables and payables and some disclosure elements.
- The work of the Auditors (KPMG) is ongoing with regard to accounts. One issue identified relates to how the PSNI shares data with the auditors, as they are unable to share electronically anymore.
- PSNI had asked GAD to prepare actuarial assumptions, which have been verified by PSNI. PSNI Official provided on update on recommendation.

8. POLICE PENSION BOARD RISK REGISTER

The Chair informed that the formatting of the Risk Register had been amended slightly to become more aligned with the Board's Risk Register. The Chair had previously met with the Chair of the Board's Audit and Risk Committee (**ARAC**) to discuss same.

Members discussed each Risk on the Register including the inherent and residual risk scores and agreed on the Register being updated accordingly.

It was agreed that a new risk should be added to the Risk Register regarding the pension dashboard. The PSNI Pensions Branch Official will provide wording around this risk (**AP5**).

Officials agreed to action all Risk Register changes as requested by Members (**AP6**).

9. MCCLOUD REMEDY PROJECT

9.1 Legislative Update

The Independent Pensions Advisor provided a short presentation on the McCloud reassessment project.

9.2 Scheme Administrator Update including Staffing/Resourcing and IT

In addition to item 7, the Pensions Branch Official provided an update on staffing/resourcing and IT infrastructure.

10. MEMBER TRAINING

The Independent Member was scheduled to provide training to new members, however as apologies had been received from same, this presentation will take place at another time.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would take place on Tuesday 3 September 2024.

MR MICHAEL BURTON

CHAIRMAN