

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD

MINUTES OF MEETING OF RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 22 SEPTEMBER 2022 AT 9AM AT WATERSIDE TOWER AND VIA ZOOM

PRESENT:

- Mr Trevor Clarke MLA (Chair)
- Ms Carmel McKinney (Vice Chair)
- Mr Frank McManus
- Mrs Linda Dillon MLA
- (1) Mr Maurice Bradley MLA
- Mr Michael Atkinson
- (1) Mr Mike Nesbitt MLA
- (1) Ms Deirdre Toner
- (2) Mr John Blair MLA

POLICE SERVICE OF NORTHERN IRELAND IN ATTENDANCE:

- (3) Ms Pamela McCreedy, Chief Operating Officer
- (4) Ms Clare Duffield, Assistant Chief Officer
People and Organisational Development
- (5) Mr Mark McNaughten, Assistant Chief Officer
Corporate Services
- (6) Head of External Recruitment
- (7) Mr Jonathan Glendinning, Head of Capital
Development including Estates
Two PSNI Officials

OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE:

- Mrs Sinead Simpson, Chief Executive
- Ms Jenny Passmore, Director of Resources
- Six Board Officials

- (1) **From item 5.1 on**
- (2) **From Item 6.1 on**
- (3) **Items 6.1 to 6.4 only**
- (4) **Items 6.1 and 6.2 only**
- (5) **Item 6.3 only**
- (6) **Item 6.1 only**
- (7) **Item 6.4 only**

The Vice Chair opened the meeting as several Members were delayed and it was agreed to review agenda items one to four prior to their arrival.

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Mr Gerry Kelly MLA.

The Committee agreed the agenda for the meeting and no one raised any business that they wished to discuss under 'Any Other Business'

2. **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

No conflicts of interest were declared.

3. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 30 JUNE 2022**

The Committee considered the draft minutes of the Committee meeting held on 30 June 2022.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The minutes of the Committee meeting held on 30 June 2022 be approved.

4. **UPDATE ON ACTION LOG**

The Committee noted the updates detailed within the Action Log and the related verbal overview provided by the Director of Resources.

In respect of Action Point 5 from the meeting on 30 June 2022, Members noted that matter raised in relation the disposal of Castlederg PSNI station has been resolved since only one party is now in a position to progress with the purchase the site. Next steps will be discussed at agenda item 6.4.1.

In respect of Action Point 4 from the meeting in June 2022, Members noted that the Catholic Police Guild will be invited to a future meeting of the

Committee.

In respect of Action Point 6 from the June 2022 meeting, Members noted a response is expected soon from the Professional Standards Department regarding the lessons to be learned from the case of Officer B.

In respect of Action Point 4 from the meeting on 24 March 2022, Members were advised that a meeting is scheduled between Board officials and PSNI Legal Service representatives in October to discuss information sharing in respect of compensation cases being brought to the Committee for decision.

The Director of Resources also provided an update on correspondence issued and received for agenda items 4.1 to 4.3.

4.1 Fixed Penalty Processing Centre

In respect of the Fixed Penalty Processing Centre (FPPC), Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) backlogs and cancelled fines which have previously been considered by the Committee, Members considered a response from PSNI further to their request for additional information (Action Point 1 from the meeting in June 2022).

The Committee noted the total value of the G4S managed contract and welcomed assurance that no breach of contract had been identified to date. Members also noted that PSNI have carried out a benchmarking exercise to establish how this process is managed in other parts of the United Kingdom and that, of the five Police Services approached in the benchmarking exercise, all carry out Fixed Penalty processing 'in-house'. PSNI is the only Service to contract this out to an external service provider.

Members requested further clarification in respect of the methodology used for the percentage calculations in the benchmarking report, the high number

of statute barred cases and the implications, if any, regarding contract management with the external provider. The Director of Resources agreed to write to PSNI for further information. **(AP1)**

Members **NOTED** the correspondence.

4.2 PSNI Sickness Absence Calculation

In respect of Action Point 3 from the meeting in June 2022, Members noted the response received from PSNI to correspondence from the Committee regarding the proposed PSNI Sickness Absence Calculation and that further information will be provided as part of the Review of Police Officer Sickness absence update which is scheduled to be considered at the October 2022 Resources Committee.

Members **NOTED** the correspondence and requested the Sickness review document is circulated to Members in advance of the October 2022 meeting.

4.3 Update to Committee Terms of Reference

In respect of Action Point 7 from the June 2022 meeting, the Director of Resources highlighted the proposed amendment to the Resources Committee Terms of Reference with the addition of a Strategic Objective for the Committee.

Members were content with the changes and **AGREED** the update to the Committee's Terms of Reference.

5. CHAIRPERSON'S BUSINESS

The Chair advised that there was no Chair's business to bring to the Committee, however the Chief Executive would like to bring two matters to

the attention of Members.

The Chief Executive provided Members with an update from a recent meeting between the Chair of the Policing Board and Chair of the Police Federation. The Police Federation welcomed the opportunity to attend a future Resources Committee meeting and the Chief Executive suggested representatives from the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA) and the Superintendents Association of Northern Ireland (SANI) may also be invited to attend.

A Member suggested that it would be helpful if these meetings could take place on the same day as the scheduled Committee meeting. It was agreed Board officials would take account of this as part of future planning. **(AP2)**

5.1 Grievance Process

The Chief Executive presented a paper seeking Members' views on a proposed process in circumstances where a grievance is raised against the Chief Constable. The CE acknowledged that the paper had been made available at short notice following receipt of legal advice.

The Chief Executive provided some background and noted that while the PSNI Dignity at Work Policy provides for dealing with such issues in relation to Senior Officers internally, the policy does not provide for the process of addressing a grievance raised against the Chief Constable. Members noted that the Chief Executive had engaged with PSNI Head of People and Organisational Development on the matter and sought legal advice on a proposed process if a grievance is received against the Chief Constable.

Members considered the proposed Grievance Process provided and raised a number of issues, including:

- in relation to the definition of an independent panel,
- agreeing the Terms of Reference,

- the process for the appointment of an external Chief Constable.
- the role of the Policing Board in the process, and
- the need to establish points of contact within PSNI throughout the process.

Following discussion Members were of the view that there was insufficient time to fully consider the information provided and make a recommendation to the Board.

Therefore, it was **AGREED**:

- An updated paper will be provided to the Board for consideration at the October meeting. **(AP3)**

6. ITEMS FOR COMMITTEE BUSINESS

6.1 Representativeness – Measure 2.3.1 of Police Performance Plan

The Chair welcomed the Chief Operating Officer (COO), Assistant Chief Officer (ACO) People and Organisational Development (OD) and PSNI Head of External Recruitment to the meeting.

The Committee received a briefing from the ACO People and OD on the Report Card in respect of the Policing Plan measure on Representativeness. Members noted the PSNI Outcomes Based Accountability report card and comments regarding current trends, community background, ethnic minorities and socio-economic background. Engagement activities to improve representativeness included attendance at community events, working with external Police Services and exploring direct entry recruitment opportunities.

Members noted the positive actions being taken to address representativeness in the PSNI and discussed changes they would like to see in the format of the report card to improve structure and presentation. This

included a focus on service areas, providing absolute percentages with a year on year trend analysis, moving activities to a separate page on the card, and a Member requested more information in respect of baseline figures (percentage officers by rank/grade). This will be followed up with correspondence to PSNI. **(AP4)**

A Member also expressed concern in respect of the lack of progress in implementing changes to the Report Card format despite this issue being raised by Members on a number of previous occasions.

The Head of External recruitment presented the Student Officer 2021 Campaign Debrief and Equality Analysis including highlights from the campaign, equality monitoring results, breakdown by community background, gender, ethnic minority, LGBT, disability and age. Further information was provided in respect of socio-economic figures focusing on a multi-deprivation measure analysis and the next steps following campaign analysis.

In respect of multi-deprivation analysis, further information was sought regarding the work taking place to address the gap between the number of applicants in most deprived areas versus least deprived areas.

Members also discussed the recent Census results, under representation in specific community backgrounds and for consideration to be given to the value of outreach events and how these could be done differently. Officer attrition rates post training was also discussed and the importance of exit interviews to understand the reasons for this. The COO advised that pay, overtime and the current economic environment impacted on officers leaving the service and will provide a more detailed leavers analysis to the Committee. **(AP4)**

Members discussed the salary profile for new officers and the impact of applicant qualification requirements (5 GCSE's) on representativeness and Members agreed that further discussion was required on this important issue at a future meeting.

Members **NOTED** the updates provided and the Committee thanked the Head of External Recruitment for the briefing and she left the meeting.

6.2 Resourcing for the Future – People Strategy Principle and verbal update on the Cultural Audit

The ACO People and OD provided Members with an update on the Resourcing for the Future principle from the PSNI People Strategy Action Plan. This included an overview of actions taken in respect of streamlining selection and promotion processes to move towards a more agile workforce supported by working groups, debriefs and trained assessors. In the medium term the goal is to implement best practice from external organisations, build upon talent management and explore direct entry routes.

Following the Human Resources review, Members were advised that seven recommendations from a Grant Thornton review in 2021 will be fully considered for implementation in line with organisational capacity and capability. These will be supported through bespoke workshops across the Human Resources function to engage with stakeholders and promote high performance.

The COO updated Members on the workforce plan which aims to incorporate enhanced succession planning, secure opportunities to work collaboratively with partners and share specialist capabilities.

Members were reminded of the ongoing challenges regarding the PSNI budget position and the impact of the resources gap on total officer headcount. Despite these challenges there is a continued focus to protect key resources including Neighbourhood Policing Teams and call handling in the emergency contact centre.

The COO described the methodology used to manage a reduction in headcount due to financial pressures as a 'rank ratio' approach benchmarked against other Police Services. This will have an impact on officer numbers at

all ranks and whole units within PSNI may also be affected. Approximately 140 long standing vacancies which have remained unfilled have also been removed to mitigate cost pressures.

The COO also advised that due to the current budget situation and a partial freeze on recruitment it is likely to be 2025 before successful candidates from the 2021 student officer merit list will be able to join PSNI.

Members raised the following points with the COO and ACO People and OD:

- The rank ratio approach to reduce Police headcount and perceived disproportional impact on officer numbers at lower ranks.
- Timeframe for impacts on service delivery, defined ringfenced services and work carried out to benchmark against the private sector.
- Funding required to improve the situation and raise headcount to the desired levels.
- Appreciation that budget cuts are impacting other areas of government such as Health and Education.
- Likely impact on confidence in policing due to a reduction in numbers on the frontline.
- Utilising new and innovative technology to drive efficiencies and productivity.
- Percentage of officers in a public facing role.
- The number of officers currently on temporary promotion by rank and duration. PSNI agreed to provide the Committee with this information.

(AP4)

In respect of an update on the PSNI Cultural Audit, the ACO People and OD advised Members that the procurement process is underway to select an independent provider to work alongside an internal Cultural Audit team.

This will be followed by a four-phase process to deliver the Cultural Audit. Phase one will be 'assess and design' to create a Cultural Audit tool, followed by the 'engage and implement' phase, scheduled to be completed in this

financial year. The third phase will be 'analyse and report' followed by the final phase of 'future support' to facilitate delivery across PSNI.

A Member raised several points in relation to the Cultural Audit, these included Quality Control checks and links to the PSNI Code of Ethics, training competencies, external focus to identify best practice and strategic resourcing. It was agreed the PSNI would revert on these matters in writing to facilitate a more fulsome response. **(AP5)**

Members **NOTED** the updates provided and the Committee thanked the ACO people and OD for the briefing and she left the meeting.

6.3 PSNI Finance Report – August 2022

The Committee **NOTED** the PSNI monthly Finance Report and the Chair welcomed the Assistant Chief Officer (ACO) Corporate Services to the meeting.

The ACO Corporate Services presented an overview of the monthly Finance Report and a summary of the PSNI financial position at the end of August 2022.

In respect of the Resource Plan, a £59m funding gap in the PSNI budget was identified at the beginning of the financial year. Actions have already been taken to address the £59m funding gap and this was achieved by identifying and implementing cost reduction measures. However, there is now a full year financial pressure of £41m as at the end of August due to additional cost pressures including an increased depreciation requirement, shortfall in NI protocol funding, additional utility costs and pressures from an anticipated Police Officer Pay Award. It was noted that any overspend at the end of this financial year will also carry forward to the new financial year.

Overtime costs remain on target despite a reduction in budget at the start of the year and further information was provided in respect of spending from NI

Protocol funding.

Members asked questions in respect of accommodation costs, depreciation, and legacy funding.

The Committee thanked the ACO Corporate Services for the update provided.

6.3.1 Above Delegated Limits Approval – Legal Costs

The ACO Corporate Services presented a paper for Members to consider and approve the PSNI payment of legal fees associated with a high value legal claim that was considered and approved by Committee at the June 2022 meeting when settlement was approved.

Discussions took place in respect of the future approach to presenting legal costs to the Committee for approval as a result of an above delegated authority settlement, areas covered included:

- Members having visibility on all legal costs, not just those for the plaintiff, and
- The possibility of, where possible, providing estimated legal costs to Members when the Committee is being asked to approve the settlement amount. Members acknowledged the potential difficulties in providing reasonable estimates in what can be time-sensitive situations.

Following discussion Members **NOTED** the breakdown of legal costs provided and:

- **AGREED** that a recommendation should be made to the Board to approve the payment of legal costs.

The Committee thanked the ACO Corporate Services for the briefing provided and he left the meeting.

6.4 PSNI Estates Strategy update

The Chair welcomed the Head of Capital Development including Estates to the meeting and he presented a paper to Members which provided a progress update on the PSNI Estate Strategy 2021 and Beyond.

This included an overview in respect of progress against some of the seven pillars of the Estate Strategy:

- Safe, secure and compliant – reactive and planned maintenance carried out plus major improvements at Seapark.
- Modern – additional storage facilities at Lislea Drive, improved facilities at Steeple in Antrim and plans to enhance facilities at the Waterside Custody Suite. Large scale projects are ongoing for the Police College and Police Museum.
- Sustainable – installation of Electric Vehicle Charging Points, Solar Photo Voltaic Panels and LED lighting.
- Right size and right place – update on surplus assets and Estate Disposals.

Members raised several points in respect of the maintenance backlog, progressing the disposal of unused stations, the business case for the Police College, and the impact of the challenging budget situation on the Estate Strategy.

Members **NOTED** the update.

6.4.1 Disposal of Castlederg PSNI Station and update on York Road Station

The Head of Capital Development including Estates provided Members with an update on the proposed disposal of Castleberg PSNI station and an update on the current position of the York Road Station.

Members were asked to consider the report from PSNI Estate Services of the intention to sell and transfer lands/building assets at Castleberg and make a recommendation to the Board to approve the disposal of Castleberg PSNI Station.

Members noted that the Committee made a recommendation to the Board at the meeting in June 2022 to approve the disposal of the former Castleberg PSNI station, however Members had sought further clarification relating to the two parties who expressed an interest in purchasing the property before considering which party the property should be sold to. Members were advised by PSNI that only one party is now in a position to progress with the purchase.

A Member sought clarification on whether or not Derry and Strabane District Council were supporting both applications and PSNI confirmed they were.

In respect of York Road Station, the intent was to request approval to dispose of this station as a bid had been received, however the vendor withdrew the offer on 6 September 2022 and the property has been placed back on the open market.

Members **NOTED** the updates provided and following discussion:

- **AGREED** to recommend to the Board the disposal of the former Castleberg PSNI Station to the successful applicant.

The Committee thanked the Head of Capital Development including Estates for the update and the COO for her contribution throughout and they left the meeting.

6.5 NIPB Management Accounts

The Committee **NOTED** a paper providing an update on the NIPB Management Accounts and Financial Information to the end of August 2022.

The Finance Manager provided an overview of the Board's expenditure against the 2022/23 budget and outlined the current underspend position of £22k.

6.6 Assisted Removals Case – Extension Beyond Delegated Limits

The Director of Resources presented a paper which asked Members to **NOTE** the update provided in respect of the Assisted Removals case and consider a further request under the Assisted Removal Scheme to extend a PSNI Officer's time in Police Leased Accommodation and for the PSNI to pay storage costs for the officer's personal possessions and furniture.

The Director of Resources provided a summary of the case noting it had first been considered by the Committee two years ago. The applicant was required to leave his home and in line with the Assisted Removals (SPED) policy, for an initial period of 26 weeks, provision was made for use of police leased accommodation and expenses were also met for the storage of the applicant's furniture and personal effects.

The Committee has considered and approved the applicants request to extend support under the scheme on several occasions because of delays in resolving the case initially due to the Coronavirus pandemic and more recently as the property in question has been deemed 'unmarketable' by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE). The NIHE has therefore withdrawn an offer to purchase the property at the previously agreed price.

The case remains unresolved and this has resulted in a wider discussion of the SPED policy with both PSNI and NIHE awaiting legal advice to establish if there is a legal obligation for NIHE to purchase the vacant property and

explore other options to resolve the case. Correspondence will be issued to PSNI to request an update when legal advice has been received. **(AP6)**

Members were also advised that total costs to date for providing Police Leased accommodation and storage of possessions and furniture to date. PSNI have indicated that if the officer returned to the property the security threat would increase and that the officer will be unable to pay the costs associated with the property as well as rented accommodation if financial assistance was removed.

Members were asked to consider the information provided and approve a six month extension to allow for the receipt of legal advice and decide on next steps if it is confirmed that the NIHE is not required to purchase the property.

During discussion Members expressed their support for approving the extension, acknowledged the unique elements of the case, questioned the time it has taken to seek legal advice, the risk of reputational damage and the NIHE reasoning for not purchasing the property.

Following discussion it was **AGREED**:

- To approve the request for a six month extension up to 31 March 2023 for Police Leased Accommodation and for PSNI to pay the costs associated with the storage of furniture and personal possessions.

6.7 Vetting Report to the Minister of Justice

The Director of Resources provided Members with an overview of the Annual report submitted to the Minister of Justice from the Independent Assessor of PSNI Recruitment Vetting. Eighteen applications were reviewed by the Independent Assessor and in all cases the decisions taken by the Vetting Panel were upheld. Members noted that further information had been

requested in respect of a small number of candidates and the Panel was asked to reconsider these after reviewing the additional information.

Three other issues were raised by the Independent Assessor for further consideration by PSNI:

- To provide unsuccessful candidates with an indication of the reasons in letters of rejection.
- To review the current Vetting Questionnaire completed by candidates to broaden the scope and allow candidates to provide additional information.
- To ensure individuals drafting rejection letters are fully trained in the current guidance as it was found that letters contained the incorrect guidance on two occasions.

Members were advised that PSNI have accepted the three issues highlighted by the Independent Assessor. The Vetting Questionnaire has been updated and work is underway to progress the other recommendations.

A Member highlighted reference in the report to unacceptable tattoos as a reason for rejecting applications and requested more information on how this is defined. It was agreed to contact PSNI for their tattoo policy. **(AP7)**

Members **NOTED** the report.

6.8 Police Pensions and Injury Benefits Cases for Committee Decision

Due to time constraints the Chair asked if Members were content to consider and provide written responses to the Police Pensions and Injury Benefits (PPIB) Cases for Committee Decision. Members will receive a written communication sent on behalf of the PPIB Directorate to provide a written response.

Following discussion Members:

- **AGREED** to consider and provide a final decision in relation to the Police Pensions and Injury Benefits cases outlined for August and September 2022 via written procedure.

7. QUESTIONS FOR THE CHIEF CONSTABLE

7.1 Response to Member Question

The Committee **NOTED** the response provided by PSNI to a written question submitted.

8. COMMUNICATIONS ISSUES / OPPORTUNITIES

Due to recent media reports on officer recruitment and impact on service delivery this is likely to be raised at the next Board meeting.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was conducted.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for **Thursday 27 October at 9.30am** in Antrim, full details to be confirmed and Members will be advised accordingly.

It was also **AGREED** to invite all Board Members to attend as the meeting will be held offsite and will be a good opportunity for Members to engage with

PSNI. **(AP8)**

The meeting ended at 12.25pm

CHAIR

**RESOURCES DIRECTORATE
SEPTEMBER 2022**