

**NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD**

**MINUTES OF MEETING OF PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY  
21 NOVEMBER 2024 AT 9.30AM IN JAMES HOUSE**

**PRESENT:**

- Dr Kate Laverty (Committee Vice Chair)
- Mrs Linda Dillon MLA
- (1) Mrs Cheryl Brownlee MLA
- Mr Keith Buchanan MLA
- Mr Cathal Boylan MLA
- Mrs Marian Cree
- Mr Patrick Nelson
- Mr Tommy O'Reilly
- (2) Mr Mark Durkan MLA\*

**POLICE SERVICE  
OF NORTHERN IRELAND IN  
ATTENDANCE:**

- (3) ACC Bobby Singleton
- (3) Inspector Hawkins
- (4) Chief Superintendent Gary McDonald
- (5) T/ACC Ryan Henderson

one PSNI official

**NORTHERN IRELAND  
POLICING BOARD**

Ms Jenny Passmore, Director of Partnership  
Five Board Officials

**OFFICIALS IN  
ATTENDANCE:**

- (1) From 9.40am
- (2) On zoom from 9.45am
- (3) Item 6.1 only
- (4) Items 6.2 and 6.3 only
- (5) Item 6.3 only

\* Attended meeting by video conference facility

**1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Mr Peter McReynolds MLA.

The Vice-Chair welcomed the new Partnership Manager to her first Partnership Committee meeting.

The Committee agreed the agenda for the meeting.

## 2. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No conflicts of interest were declared.

## 3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17 OCTOBER 2024

The Committee considered the draft minutes of the Committee meeting held on 17 October 2024.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- The minutes of the Committee meeting held on 17 October 2024 be approved.

## 4. COMMITTEE ACTION LOG

The Committee **NOTED** the updates and correspondence detailed within the Action Log and the related verbal overview provided by the Director of Partnership.

In relation to Action Point 1 from the meeting on 17 October 2024 regarding meeting with Community Restorative Justice (CRJ) to discuss their recent survey on the PSNI South Armagh Review - Three Years On, the Director of Partnership noted that the survey results had been provided as requested. Following discussion, Members **AGREED** that an informal meeting with CRJ should be arranged and all Board Members invited to attend. **(AP1)**

In relation to Action Point 2 from the meeting on 19 September 2024 regarding requesting further detail from the PSNI on the legal advice they obtained in respect of call handlers involved in the Right Care Right Person

initiative, the Director of Partnership advised that a response had been received on 18 November 2024 providing the legal advice and noted the advice covers the scenarios that call handlers are likely to face upon receiving “Concern for Safety” calls.

Members **NOTED** the correspondence.

Members **AGREED** that Action Point 2 from the meeting on 17 October 2024 and Action Point 1 from the meeting on 19 September 2024 relating to the retrospective approval of the National Driver Offending Retraining Scheme fees and a meeting with Community Restorative Justice respectively, could be closed.

## **5. CHAIRPERSON’S BUSINESS**

The Committee **NOTED** the updates and related verbal overview provided in respect of the following agenda items.

### **5.1 Correspondence from the Minister of Justice to the Committee Chair re PCSP Impartial Assessors Report**

The Vice-Chair asked Members to note the correspondence received from the Minister of Justice to the Committee Chair in relation to his letter of 2 October 2024 providing her with a copy of the report and noting the Committee’s feedback on the recommendations contained within the report.

Members **NOTED** the correspondence.

### **5.2 PSNI written responses to follow up questions from October Committee meeting**

Members **NOTED** the written responses provided by PSNI to follow up

questions raised by two Members at last month's Committee meeting.

Members confirmed they were content with the responses.

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

Before PSNI joined the meeting Board officials provided Members with an overview of agenda items 6.1 to 6.3 (Policing Plan Indicator 1.3 - People in all Communities Feel Safe, update on Children and Young People's Strategy and Right Care Right Person update respectively).

During discussion on agenda item 6.1 it was **AGREED** to engage with Board & PSNI statisticians when determining how data should be captured for the next policing plan. **(AP2)**

### **6.1 Policing Plan Indicator – 1.3 – People in all Communities Feel Safe**

The Committee welcomed Assistant Chief Constable (ACC) Bobby Singleton and Inspector Hawkins to the meeting. On behalf of the Committee, the Vice-Chair congratulated ACC Singleton on his recent appointment to PSNI Deputy Chief Constable.

ACC Singleton presented the PSNI report card in relation to Policing Plan Indicator 1.3 – People in all Communities Feel Safe which incorporates data on Policing Plan Measures 1.3.1 (Number of People who Feel Safe) and 1.3.2 (Number of Places Repeatedly Victimised). ACC Singleton noted the statistics gathered via the NI Policing Plan Survey (NIPPS) throughout 2022 and 2023 are encouraging, with high levels of people reporting feeling safe in their communities and commented that a key statistic is that NI is one of the safest places to live in the UK when compared with other areas.

ACC Singleton noted that due to budgetary constraints, a 2024 Policing Plan Survey was not carried out in early 2024 to make a further comparison to,

however it is planned to conduct a new survey from November 2024 to March 2025 with a view to publishing the results by June 2025.

ACC Singleton acknowledged however, that whilst the statistics are encouraging, there are some sections of communities who don't feel safe and PSNI recognise that some sections of communities have concerns and are not satisfied with the policing response in their area. ACC Singleton advised ethnic minorities has been a focus for PSNI over recent months since the public disorder seen at the beginning of August 2024, as has Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) in light of the number of women murdered recently in NI. ACC Singleton stated these areas are a continued focus of PSNI outreach and engagement.

ACC Singleton noted as the Christmas period approaches there will be a highly visible police presence in communities across the province. Operation "Seasons Greetings" will run from 27 November 2024 to 2 January 2025 and has three key themes designed to keep people safe – Safer Shopping, Safer Roads and Safer Socialising.

Inspector Hawkins then provided Members with an overview of the Complex Lives project – a multi-agency model that has been created to provide joined up support for vulnerable people in Belfast who have fallen into a cycle of sleeping rough, addiction, poor mental/physical health and offending. Inspector Hawkins advised the project was established two years ago and outlined to Members the core partners currently engaged in the project, the type of individual the project is designed to support and the number of individuals it has helped to date, the governance structures in place around the project, staffing levels and the effectiveness of the project from a criminal justice perspective.

Inspector Hawkins noted that other areas, for example Derry City & Strabane have expressed an interest in implementing a similar project in

their area, however have highlighted funding constraints and limitations as a key concern and barrier to progress.

Following the briefing Members raised the following with PSNI:

- The interpretation of two sets of figures relating to the percentage of respondents who feel unsafe in the local community and those who have reported feeling safe in their local community;
- In relation to Complex Lives, what level of engagement and outreach has taken place with Sports Groups as a supporting mechanism for those vulnerable individuals;
- Any change in PSNI attitudes or behaviours in relation to how these vulnerable individuals are treated;
- The increasing levels of homelessness in the Derry City & Strabane area and what communication/engagement has taken place with local statutory partners to address the issue;
- Any correlation between the types of crime recorded in the electoral wards with above average levels of crime and ASB;
- Further information on the two above average wards in the Mid & East Antrim area as outlined in the table on the report card; (PSNI to revert to the Member in writing)
- The PSNI position on the current Department of Justice (DoJ) consultation on the Decriminalisation of Vagrancy and Begging;
- The definition of the five year average referred to in the narrative alongside the graph on the PSNI report card (PSNI to revert to the member in writing); and
- The roll out of the schools project in partnership with Victim Support, aimed at educating children on hate crime and Violence Against Women & Girls.

The Vice-Chair thanked ACC Singleton and Inspector Hawkins for their briefing and they left the meeting.

Members **NOTED** the update provided.

## **6.2 PSNI Update on Children & Young People's Strategy**

The Vice-Chair welcomed Chief Superintendent Gary McDonald to the meeting and invited him to present PSNI's update on the Children and Young People Strategy, noting that as agreed at the June 2024 Committee meeting, the quarterly updates would be thematic in nature and as such the focus of today's briefing was the latest updates in Custody Policy.

Chief Superintendent McDonald advised the PSNI's Children and Young People Strategy is based on five key themes namely:

1. Engagement
2. Safety + Protection
3. Suspected Offending
4. Victims + Witnesses
5. Stop + Search

and noted the thematic update for this meeting on Custody Policy relates to Theme 5 of the Strategy. Chief Superintendent McDonald highlighted the year to date figure of under 18s in custody and noted the reduction of 19.5% in the rolling 365 day period as compared to the same period last year. Chief Superintendent McDonald also presented the figures for the number of strip searches carried out over the past 3 years, including the age and gender of the young person and again highlighted the year on year reduction in the total of young persons searched per year.

Chief Superintendent McDonald noted PSNI have been working with the Board's Human Rights Advisor in recent years on the strip searching of children and in June 2023 the Board published their Human Rights Review

“Children and Young People: Strip Searching in Police Custody” which outlined ten recommendations for improvements and updates to legislation which were subsequently accepted by PSNI. Chief Superintendent McDonald noted that to date, six recommendations have been fully achieved and four recommendations are partially achieved and provided Members with an overview of the work that is being done to implement these in full.

During discussion Members raised the following with PSNI:

- If Stop and Search cards are operational and being issued yet; (PSNI to check and revert to the Member in writing)
- If PSNI are seeing any general “themes” in relation to those children being arrested and brought into custody;
- The reason for the decline in the number of young people being strip searched, noting that it this is believed to be in part due to taking on board learning derived from scrutiny panels and the introduction of a new threshold for strip searches; and
- In relation to the proposed legislative amendment regarding Custody Staff determining the maturity/understanding levels of a child - if there is a training plan in place for Custody Staff to make this determination, given this is subjective and open to interpretation.

Members **NOTED** the update provided.

### **6.3 Right Care Right Person Update**

The Vice-Chair welcomed T/Assistant Chief Constable (ACC) Ryan Henderson to the meeting. The Vice-Chair invited T/ACC Henderson to present PSNI’s update on progress towards implementation of the Right Care Right Person initiative - an operational model that is designed to ensure the right agency deals with health-related calls, instead of PSNI being the default first responder where there is a concern about a person’s



physical or mental health.

T/ACC Henderson advised that following the previous presentation to the Committee in June 2024, PSNI undertook a data collection exercise with the call handling teams over a four week period from June – July 2024 to demonstrate current demand related to incidents which will fall under RCRP and to more fully understand the impact.

T/ACC Henderson reported that in the four week period of the recent data collection exercise, 8,142 officer hours were spent responding to calls for safety, which on a pro-rata annual basis amounts to over 100,000 hours or over £4 million pounds worth of officer time. T/ACC Henderson also noted during the same period, the average waiting time for officers with a member of the public in Emergency Departments was almost 14 hours.

T/ACC Henderson advised the RCRP principles were applied to the data and he highlighted in the presentation the revised processes that PSNI will follow post implementation in relation to Calls For Safety received directly from members of the public and also from NI Ambulance Service. Of the calls PSNI would no longer attend, the alternative pathways where it is proposed demand should be diverted based on the nature and needs of the person involved are highlighted in the infographic.

T/ACC Henderson advised that since the previous meeting in June 2024 both the Health and Justice Ministers have pledged their support for the project and there have been extensive discussions with partners across both Departments, including a Joint Meeting with the Justice and Health Committees on 7 November 2024. T/ACC Henderson noted that a Strategic Oversight Group, co-chaired by the Department of Health (DoH) and Department of Justice (DoJ) has been established and with partners, will develop the collaborative operational way forward.

During discussion Members raised the following with PSNI:

- Concerns Members have regarding a recent letter from the project's Mental Health champion to the Health Committee noting concerns she had on the impact to the Health Service;
- If the model used by the Kent police force referred to during earlier discussion is a pilot or an established operational model and if there is any learning that can be derived from it;
- Clarification on when the RCRP Service Instruction will be issued to all officers, noting that this will only be done when the process concludes and the operational practice is agreed and embedded;
- When the anticipated "Go Live" date is, noting that at this stage a definitive date cannot be confirmed but is likely to be at least several months away;
- How any savings gained from not having police officers carrying out non policing duties can be used to invest in promoting the project's key messages; and
- Plans for the dissemination of the training plan in relation to the decision making model for call handlers; noting that PSNI currently have a draft decision making model, however this cannot be finalised until Department of Health officials provide confirmation of the alternative pathway referrals.

The Chair thanked T/ACC Henderson and Chief Superintendent McDonald for their briefing and they left the meeting.

Members **NOTED** the update provided.

#### **6.4 Joint Committee Update**

The Director of Partnership presented a paper which provided Members with an update on the work of the Joint Committee in relation to their statutory

obligation as the oversight body of Policing & Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs).

The Director of Partnership advised Members that the Joint Committee last met on 6 November 2024 and that these minutes will be made available subject to their agreement at the next meeting of the Joint Committee in April 2025. The Director of Partnership noted that the minutes of the meetings which took place in March and June 2024 are available for Members to view on Decisiontime.

The Director of Partnership provided an overview of items discussed at the recent meeting, which included discussion on the Designated Organisations (DO) workshop (which took place on 14 November 2024), PCSP Impartial Assessors report and Independent Member reserve process and the Business Improvement process including finalising the Graduated Resolution Process which related to the process to be invoked in cases where Joint Committee officials need to take action to resolve issues in advance of withholding funding to the PCSP.

The Director of Partnership also provided an update on engagement with the Causeway Coast and Glens (CCG) PCSP regarding the findings of the Conflict of Interest and Procurement Audit and noted that a follow-up audit is due to take place in quarter four of this financial year.

The Director of Partnership also provided Members with an update on the ongoing PCSP recruitment competition to appoint an Independent Member to one PCSP and Reserve Independent Members to three PCSPs. The Director of Partnership noted the appointment process had concluded in Fermanagh & Omagh PCSP and a reserve list of six candidates had been generated. In relation to Causeway Coast and Glens, Antrim and Newtownabbey and Belfast DPCSPs, interview panels still need to be convened and the panel members trained, therefore it is anticipated that it

will be the New Year before the process concludes and reserve lists are generated.

Members **NOTED** the update provided.

## **6.5 Police Property Fund Report on First Two Calls of the Small Grants Scheme**

The Partnership Manager presented a report celebrating the success of funded projects in relation to Calls 1 and 2 of the Police Property Fund (PPF) Small Grants Scheme.

The Partnership Manager noted that the Police Property Fund Programme was designed to support projects that will improve safety in local communities, promote engagement with the PSNI and support partnership building and relationships with local police. She advised that since the implementation of the programme in March 2021, The Board has now opened and completed two successful calls for the Police Property Fund Small Grants Scheme. Over the course of the two calls, 46 projects were approved for funding, with a combined funding allocation of £319,610.

The Partnership Manager advised the report contains an analysis of the projects delivered across both Calls for Small Grants and includes a number of case studies of the successful projects over both Calls. The Partnership Manager noted the report highlights the breadth and diversity of initiatives and activities that the Police Property Fund has managed to deliver across a varied range of themes including Children and Young People, Sport, Community Safety, Mental Health and Cyber Security to name a few.

During discussion, a Member suggested an amendment to the layout of the Project Case Studies to better highlight each project lead and proposed some additional wording to accompany this.

Subject to the minor amendments noted, Members **AGREED** to make a recommendation to the Board to approve the report for publication on the Board's website. **(AP3)**

## **6.6 VERBAL UPDATE ON ICV SCHEME – ACCESS TO CUSTODY RECORDS**

Further to the presentation and extensive briefing provided at last month's Committee meeting, the Engagement Manager provided Members with an update on the issue regarding Access to Custody Records currently being experienced by the Board's Independent Custody Visitors.

The Engagement Manager advised that since the previous meeting legal advice had been received which noted that in order to comply and adhere with the current legislative provisions detailed in the Police (NI) Act 2000, ICV's should only be given access to custody records for those detainees who have given them consent to do so.

The Engagement Manager advised that if the Committee was content it was proposed to draft a letter to the Minister of Justice requesting a change to this primary legislation.

Members confirmed they were content with this approach. Letter to be issued to Minister of Justice requesting legislative change. **(AP4)**

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

None.

## **8. COMMUNICATIONS ISSUES / OPPORTUNITIES**

The Communications Manager encouraged Members to send in photos of any Board Engagement events they are attending to the Communications Team for the Board's social media pages and advised Members to ensure consent to share the images is obtained when doing so.

**9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Engagement Manager thanked Members for their attendance at the recent Independent Custody Visitor conference on 15 November 2024 and the Partnership Manager provided Members with dates of upcoming regional Policing Committee training events and encouraged Members to attend. Dates for the next PSNI attestation and Children & Young People launch events were also noted and Members were encouraged to attend.

**10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting is scheduled for **Thursday 16 January 2024** at 9.30am in James House.

The meeting ended at 12.25pm

**CHAIR**

**PARTNERSHIP DIRECTORATE  
NOVEMBER 2024**