

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD

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

PRESENT:

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

PSNI:

- (1) DCC Mark Hamilton
- (1) Mr Ryan Feeney

OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE: Mr Adrian McNamee, Director of Partnership
3 Board Officials

- (1) Present only for Item 7.6
- (2) Left the meeting at 10:52am returned at 10:57am
- (3) Left the meeting at 11:10am returned at 11:13am
- (4) Left the meeting at 11:13am returned at 11:15am

1. APOLOGIES

No apologies for the meeting were received.

The Chair welcomed new Independent Board Members Janet Gray, Carmel McKinney and Michael Atkinson to Partnership Committee.

The Committee agreed the agenda for the meeting and due to time constraints for DCC Hamilton, the Chair advised that the Committee would move directly to Agenda Item 7.6.

7.6 Draft PSNI Communication and Engagement Strategy 2020-2025

The Chair welcomed DCC Mark Hamilton and Mr Ryan Feeney and invited them to provide an update on the draft Communication and Engagement Strategy for PSNI 2020-2025.

DCC Hamilton advised members that the Head of Communications in PSNI has been tasked with managing a change project for community policing which would include consideration of branding, communication and engagement. He also advised that he has been the subject of abuse on social media which has been very disturbing for Mr Feeney and his family.

This project aligns to the Chief Constable's new transformation and vision programme and also responds to recommendations from the 2018 Local Policing Review of PSNI, to develop a new 5 year Strategic Communications and Engagement Plan. DCC Hamilton asked the Head of Communications to provide further details on the project.

The presentation provided by the Head of Communications included:

- PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) was commissioned in May 2019 to conduct a review of the PSNI's corporate business and a report was submitted to the Chief Constable in September 2019;

- Part of the work included a table top review of communications which resulted in very positive feedback on reactionary responses but concerns on proactive approaches;
- The review also highlighted a lack of consistency in relation to social media presence and in relation to areas such as internal and external signage and livery; and
- The Service has a lack of consistency in relation to branding, (use of the crest, PSNI acronym is intermixed with Police Service and/or The Police in media reports).

In taking recommendations forward, the following are under consideration:

- The PSNI crest cannot be changed but may be enhanced to allow flexibility for its use on all signage and messaging;
- The acronym PSNI cannot be changed, however, draft branding has been developed to bring more prominence to Police Service with a proposed change from PSNI to Police Service NI;
- A programme is under development to move from the use of PSNI to Police Service NI;
- Following consultation with the Board strict brand guidelines will be developed to ensure consistency across all Police Service NI operations; and
- All proposals will be developed in-house and be cost neutral.

The Head of Communications advised that the next step would be a public consultation, scheduled to take place from mid-August to October on the proposed re-branding. Following this, a new Creative hub will be created within the Communications Department to implement the new branding proposals and guidelines with a branding project group established to manage the implementation of the project across all materials.

DCC Hamilton advised Members that they are currently trialling new uniform designs which would retain the colour, but would be more practical for day to day policing. He provided the Committee with samples of the

new style of uniform and informed Members that they propose to pilot the new uniform across 5 sites.

The Chair thanked Mr Feeney and DCC Hamilton and wished to record the condemnation of recent social media abuse to Mr Feeney and his family.

Members discussed:

- How we manage social media communication across all 11 districts;
- The use of unmarked cars alongside the liveried vehicles and feel there is still a need for these to allow officers to carry out surveillance;
- The safety of officers remains a priority;
- Uniforms which have more flexibility for day to day operations is appreciated but it is important that the uniform still commands respect of the public;
- The use of the yellow Police branding wrap on vehicle bonnets can look like a medical vehicle, may require the addition of a colour, for example, blue to distinguish them; and
- Concerns that greater visibility in communities may require greater security measures for officers.

DCC Hamilton said that security will be difficult and confidence/perceptions of Police Officers will always be varied but he believes that more investment in communication and engagement of Police Service NI will build upon this, with the safety of officers remaining the priority.

It was:-

AGREED

- Members will note the Draft PSNI Communication and Engagement Strategy 2020-2025.

DCC Hamilton and Mr Feeney left 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. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

The Director of Partnership briefed Members on the process governing the election of a new Vice Chair for Partnership Committee and recorded his thanks to Colm McKenna for holding the position of Vice Chair since February 2019.

The Director of Partnership asked for nominations for Vice Chair, Sean Lynch nominated Michael Atkinson for the role and the proposal was seconded by Mervyn Storey. Mr Atkinson accepted the role of Vice Chair.

4. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Committee considered the draft minutes of the Partnership Committee meeting held on 19 March 2020.

It was:-

RESOLVED:-

That the draft minutes of Partnership Committee meetings held on the 19 March 2020 be approved.

5. UPDATE ON ACTION LOG:

The Director of Partnership provided Members with an update on the Committee's rolling action log. Members noted the current open actions and expected timeframes for these matters to be brought back to the Partnership Committee. **NOTED**

Action points 9.10, 11.2, 11.6, 11.7, 12.3 and 12.4 have all been affected by the impact of COVID-19 and will be actioned in due course and Actions 13.1, 13.2 are now available on Decision Time.

Actions 13.3 and 13.4 are included on the Agenda for today's meeting.

6. CHAIRPERSON'S BUSINESS

6.1 Letter from the Chief Constable re: IAG – Covid-19

The Director of Partnership informed Members that the Chief Constable has written to the Chair of the Board informing him that the PSNI are proceeding to establish an Independent Advisory Group (IAG) in relation to the Coronavirus Pandemic. The purpose of the letter is to provide Members with further details on this development and to note the reference to PCSPs in the final paragraph. Members are asked to note the letter.

Members discussed:

- The represented areas included in the letter regarding membership of the IAGs; and
- Breakdown of the members involved in IAGs specifically around minority group representation and urban and rural involvement and an absence of community representation.

It was:-

AGREED

- Letter to be issued to the Chief Constable from the Committee Chair to seek clarification on how members of PSNI IAGs are appointed and report back to Committee at the June meeting **(AP1)**.

7. ITEMS FOR COMMITTEE BUSINESS

7.1 Impact of COVID-19 crisis

The Director of Partnership informed Members on how the COVID-19 crisis has impacted on the work of Partnership Directorate and provided information on PCSP initiatives which have been operational in response to the crisis.

Update on PCSP Activity:

- Despite the major implications that COVID-19 has had on the work of PCSP's the secretariat for each PCSP has continued to function, however, meetings of PCSP Members have been severely curtailed;
- Board and DoJ officials have agreed all the 2020/21 action plans and to date ten Letters of Offer have been issued to Councils;
- It is envisaged that whilst some work can be progressed, the planned quarter one activity for most PCSP's will be interrupted by responding to the pandemic locally;
- The Joint Committee, therefore, has issued two communiques to PCSP Managers to introduce a level of flexibility to current activities to provide support to significant emerging community issues;
- Virtual meetings have been trialled by one PCSP and is being explored by others, however, most are governed by Council on the use of virtual meetings;
- Regular contact with PCSP Members is being maintained through emails and individual tele-conferencing by PCSP secretariat;
- It was recognised that the requirements for societal social isolation has resulted in a significant increase in domestic violence incidents and PCSPs have increased their focus on victim violence and in particular, potential or actual victims of domestic violence. Examples of the many ongoing PCSP lead programmes and initiatives were listed; and
- Whilst a number of PCSP staff have been diverted to work in the Community Hubs, the majority of PCSPs still have operational Community Wardens/Street Angels to provide patrols and support to communities who may feel more vulnerable and isolated than before.

Impact on the Board's Communications Plan:

- The Communications Branch continues to provide a proactive and reactive service in communications activity to ensure awareness of the Board's responsibilities and decisions relating to the COVID-19

situation in support of openness, transparency and public accountability;

- Monthly public Board meetings with the Chief Constable are being livestreamed;
- Communications support has continued to be provided for Board business and has included responses on a range of media issues; and
- The Board's social media scheduling has been focused on support for the Executive and PSNI around #StayHomeSaveLives and signposting to support service available.

Impact on Community Engagement:

- Members agreed a draft Engagement Strategy in March, which was to be sent to the Board for final approval and implementation. In the interim, the COVID-19 emergency has resulted in a delay in this process;
- As the strategy is a three year document, the objectives do not need to be re-assessed at this stage; and
- Given the assumption that social distancing will be required in the short to medium term, officials will review activities included in the programme of work for year one, taking into consideration the reduced ability to engage with identified key stakeholders and remote working across the majority of sectors.

Impact on Independent Custody Visiting:

- The Board took the decision to suspend the Custody Visiting Scheme on 19 March 2020, in order to ease pressures on PSNI resources at the request of the Chief Constable;
- In line with practice across the UK and the Board's recognition of the importance of independent scrutiny by the Scheme, the Board agreed for it to be re-instated at its meeting on 7th May 2020;
- During the suspension of the Custody Visiting Scheme, officials have had ongoing, frequent collaboration with stakeholders including the

National Preventative Mechanism (NPM), the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA), the National Effective Forum (NEF) and the Terrorist Network via video conferencing and emails; and

- Board officials are in weekly contact with PSNI to obtain information and provide some remote monitoring where any major key concerns can be raised.

Impact on the Police Property Fund (PPF):

- The Police Property Fund was due to be launched with the application process commencing May 2020;
- The COVID-19 crisis has intervened in this timeframe;
- Officials have been considering the most appropriate time in which to progress this, bearing in mind the issues around a focus on critical services, the aim of the Programme, the current focus in dealing with the local demands of the pandemic and community hubs and duplication of Central Government funding towards COVID-19 activities; and
- Officials would recommend to the Committee that the opening of the PPF is deferred in the short term and reviewed by the Committee to agree the most opportune time to launch the fund.

Development of the Preventing Harm Working Group:

- PSNI has led a multi-agency meeting on Collectively Preventing Harm for the past 6 weeks focusing on bringing a co-ordinated approach to dealing with those most vulnerable at a local level during COVID-19;
- The meeting is chaired by ACC Mark McEwan and attended by PSNI, DoJ, NIPB, Department for Communities, the Education Authority, Health and Social Care Trust and the Safeguarding Board NI;
- The group recognised the role of Support Hubs and the need for them to remain operational during this critical time via virtual meeting forums.

Development of the Community Safety Board:

- The DoJ has established a Community Safety Board to provide a forum for a multi-agency Partnership model to link the strategic and operational response to community safety issues;
- The Terms of Reference were agreed at the second meeting of the Board on 29 April 2020 and the Policing Board is represented by the Chief Executive and the Director of Partnership.

The Director of Partnership asked Members to agree to defer the opening of the PPF and review monthly; and note all other updates around the work of the Partnership Directorate.

Members discussed:

- Not all PCSP Members will have access to IT and therefore virtual meetings could be an issue;
- Encouraged to see overview working groups have been set up but would encourage community involvement on such groups;
- Minutes from Joint Committee being available on Decision Time;
- There is a need to have a Community Safety Strategy progressed by the Department of Justice as the Chief Constable is keen that this is moved on;
- Concerns around PCSP activity and reaching the vulnerable during the pandemic;
- The amount of grants already available via Government funding and the need for accountability around these;
- The need to ensure that agreed objectives for the PPF are met and that the PPF funding does not become subsumed into the overall emergency funding; and
- The availability of staffing resources for the PPF by Board officials.

It was:-

AGREED

- Board officials will monitor the situation and bring a proposed timetable for implementation of the Police Property Fund to the next meeting **(AP2)**;
- Letter to go to SOLACE from Committee to reinforce the need for PCSP continued implementation at this time **(AP3)**;
- Board officials will upload Joint Committee minutes onto Decision Time and provide an update on the work of Joint Committee at the June meeting of Partnership Committee **(AP4)**.

7.2 Appointment of PCSP Independent Members

The Partnership Manager provided an update on the Recruitment of PCSP Independent Members, which is progressing well with all interviews having been completed in March 2020 resulting in 118 appointable candidates. The Committee was asked to approve appointments in advance of seeking Board final approval and to approve a revised formal date for reconstitution as 15 June 2020.

The Partnership Manager advised that all Access NI checks have now been completed and only two came back with conviction information. She advised that in both cases the convictions had been spent beyond the 5 year legislative eligibility period and therefore both candidates would be deemed eligible.

Members discussed:

- The breakdown of applicants with the percentage of over 40 age group being dominant and that there is a need to target young people and groups in future recruitment campaigns; and
- It was encouraging that 75% are new Members.

It was:-

AGREED

- Members recommend to the Board, approval of the 118 candidates and the proposed reconstitution date of 15th June 2020.

7.3 Approval of End of Year Committee Report 2019/20

The Director of Partnership provided Members with information on the work of Partnership Committee during 2019/20 and sought approval for the report to be included in the Board's Annual Report and Accounts for 2019/20.

It was:-

AGREED

- Members are content to approve the report for inclusion in the Board's Annual Report and Accounts for 2019/20.

7.4 Draft Consultation Response to DoJ Consultation on Custody

The T/Engagement Manager provided Members with information on the Department of Justice consultation on "The Use of Live Links for Police Detention/Interviews" and draft responses prepared to be approved by the Board for submission. In providing context, the Engagement Manager advised;

- Delivery of a faster, fairer justice system is a core aim of the Department and working to provide an efficient and effective justice system remains a key priority;
- The use of technology is important in delivering these and the Department is keen to facilitate the use of video-conferencing technology in the form of live links in as wide a range of circumstances as is possible;
- Live links are being used across Courts for preliminary hearings, certain sentencing and appeal hearings, for the giving of evidence by

vulnerable witnesses, defendants and appellants and between Courts and Hospitals in certain types of cases; and

- Prisons and Courts also use live links for remand hearings.

The Board's Human Rights Advisor has expressed concerns around the use of live links in custody suites and his feedback has been provided in the paper in Annex C.

Members discussed:

- Concerns regarding safeguarding provisions for those with disabilities, or those regarded as vulnerable and agreed that a recommendation to carry out a full EQIA is included in the response.

It was:-

AGREED

- That Partnership Committee would request that the Board approve the consultation response including the Human Rights recommendations and include their recommendation for a full EQIA **(AP5)**.

7.5 Review of Committee Business/Policing Plan 2020-2025

The Director of Partnership provided Members with a draft update on work for Partnership Committee over the next six months (June 2020 to January 2021) in line with the Boards Corporate Plan 2020-2023, and requested that Members provide feedback. There is an outstanding action from the previous work plan regarding PSNI Roads Policing Report and consideration will be given to including this report on the June agenda for Partnership Committee subject to the availability of PSNI representatives.

7. QUESTIONS FOR THE CHIEF CONSTABLE

NONE

8. COMMUNICATION ISSUES
NONE

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Director of Partnership raised a query received from PCSP Members around them being eligible to claim expenses during the COVID-19 pandemic for attending virtual meetings. Currently Members can claim £60 per meeting based on attendance at the full meeting intended to cover reasonable out-of-pocket expenses such as childcare or parking. Following discussion

It was:-

AGREED

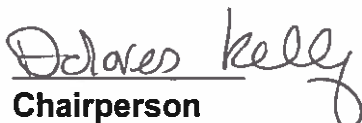
- That Partnership Committee would agree for the payment to continue being paid for those attending virtual meetings of PCSPs in light of the current circumstances.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was agreed as 18 June 2020.

(Meeting closed at 1.30 PM).

PARTNERSHIP DIRECTORATE
MAY 2020


Chairperson