

Minutes of the North Belfast District Policing and Community Safety Partnership

Policing Committee Meeting

Conor Room, City Hall
Wednesday, 31st August, 2016

Political Members

Councillor Mary Ellen Campbell
Councillor Mary Clarke
Alderman Patrick Convery
Alderman Guy Spence

Independent Members

Jennifer Cornell (Vice-Chair)
Michael Murray
Gerard O'Reilly
Catherine Patrick

PSNI Representatives

Inspector Kelly Moore

NIPB Representatives

Wendy Osborne

Staff Present

Richard McLernon, Safer City Coordinator
Katharine McCrum, Partnership Support Officer

Apologies

Councillor Nuala McAllister (Chair)
Alderman Gareth McKee
Gerald Solinas
Chief Inspector Steven Burns

1. Welcome and Routine Matters

- i. The newly appointed Vice-Chair welcomed Members to the meeting and noted the apologies provided. She advised that the Chair was not in attendance due to the recent birth of her son and it was agreed that the Partnership would write to Councillor McAllister to congratulate her on the new arrival.

2. Declarations of Interest

- i. Members were asked to declare any material interests which they may have in relation to any item of business to be considered during the meeting. No declarations of interest were noted.

3. Policing Committee Awareness Session

(Mrs Amanda Mulholland, NIPB, attended in relation to this item)

- i. Mrs Amanda Mulholland, the NI Policing Board Officer responsible for PCSPs, provided Members with information on the roles and responsibilities of Policing Committee Members, the areas for improvement identified by the Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJINI) Report, and asked Members for their views on how the Committees could be most effective.
- ii. Members were reminded that the Policing Committee has statutory authority for monitoring police performance, providing views to the PSNI Commander and NI Policing Board, as well as gaining the cooperation and enhancing public confidence in policing.

- iii. Members were also advised that the legislation governing Policing Committees did not preclude the attendance of Statutory Designated Organisations however this it was for Partnerships to discuss how engagement between the two was achieved.
- iv. With regards to the monitoring function of the Policing Committee, Mrs Mulholland advised that this must be carried out on a quarterly basis and that additional thematic reports could be requested from the PSNI if required.
- v. Members were advised that the Code of Practice recommended that the Policing Committee facilitate 2 public meetings per year on specific policing issues, 1 of which should focus on police performance.
- vi. In closing, Mrs Mulholland stated that the NI Policing Board was aiming to reinvigorate the relationships between the Board and PCSP Policing Committees through various means as they believed the structures were currently being underutilised. She added that Policing Committees needed to be fit for purpose to run alongside the Community Planning Framework.
- vii. Referencing the recommendations from the Fresh Start and CJINI Reports, Members were asked to advise the Board of any support or capacity needs, and to provide any suggestions for improved working.

Attendance of Designated Organisations

- viii. In response to the question of whether the Board wished to standardise the attendance of Designated Bodies at Policing Committee Meetings, Mrs Mulholland advised that while they would recommend attendance, the legislation only required Political and Independent Members to attend.
- ix. A Member suggested that following a successful summer period, relationships between the PSNI and communities had strengthened however the issue of confidence in policing was much larger and the involvement of the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) would go some way to addressing this. The PPS's lack of accountability was also raised.
- x. Following the suggestion that the PCSP could invite the PPS to meetings, a Member advised that this had been done however this had not developed into a longer term interaction. It was suggested that the NI Policing Board should ask the PPS to appear quarterly. Wendy Osborne agreed to pass this feedback onto the Board.

Confidence in Policing

- xi. Members discussed the loss of visible policing as a result of reduced budgets and new Neighbourhood Policing Team structures. It was noted that there had been a breakdown in relationships both with local officers and with stations as opening hours had been shortened. A Member suggested that this lack of connect needed to be countered to ensure that those not supportive of the PSNI were not able to take advantage of the vacuum.
- xii. A course run between community workers and the police, Connect, was discussed and it was agreed that the linkages made were important in building and maintaining relationships.

- xiii. Mrs Osborne welcomed the comments regarding local policing and suggested that it was for each District to ascertain how they would deal with the resources available. She suggested that if similar issues were raised by each DPCSP, this should be raised to the PCSP and then to the Board.
- xiv. Inspector Moore agreed with the statements regarding the cuts to Neighbourhood Policing Teams but noted that North Belfast had been one of the luckier areas in terms of reduced numbers. She added that good work was continuing to be carried out and that the teams were recovering from the changes. She also welcomed the comments regarding the Connect Programme and advised that Neighbourhood Officers would attend meetings where possible.
- xv. It was agreed that the DPCSP would discuss possible financial support for the delivery of Connect Courses between community groups and the PSNI.
- xvi. A Member advised that calls placed by Officers to the parents of young people involved in Anti-Social Behaviour had been useful and asked that this was re-established.
- xvii. The excellent work undertaken by the PSNI at Tigers Bay PACT meetings was noted.

PSNI Officer Exams

- xviii. In response to community concern over police recruits who had been found to have cheated on exams, Mrs Osborne advised that this was an operational issue for the PSNI. She advised that those responsible had been required to redo their training and would be required to complete the usual probationary period. She added that a review into how and why the issues arose is ongoing.

4. Minutes and Matters Arising

- i. With regards to actions from the previous meeting, Inspector Moore advised that analysts were not in a position to plot incidents of violent crime onto a map of North Belfast and that it was too early to say if the Brexit vote would have an impact on incidents of hate crime, however there were currently no changes locally.
- ii. The Safer City Coordinator advised that a proposal had been sent to the Greater Shankill Community Safety Forum regarding their request for administrative support with a response due. A Member added that the Forum had turned to the Springfield Interagency Group for tips on how the meetings could be coordinated.
- iii. The minutes of the North Belfast DPCSP Policing Committee held on 29th June, copies of which had previously been circulated, were taken as read and agreed as correct.

5. Update on Policing

- i. Members were provided with an update report on policing in North Belfast including a breakdown of call types received by Tennent Street Police Station over a 24 hour period and some 'good news' stories.

- ii. With regards to performance against the Local Policing Plan, Members were advised that the number of incidents of burglary had fallen by 34.7% while offences committed against the older people had fallen by 13.9%. Inspector Moore also reported positive trends with regards to the outcome rate for crimes with a sectarian motivation, up 10%.
- iii. It was noted that incidents of Anti-Social Behaviour had increased slightly, by 3.2% and that while the service wide statistics relating to allegations of incivility were down by 21.6%, in Belfast there were up by 12% and it was not possible to break this down by area. Inspector Moore reported that the number of victim updates was up by 34.3% across the service however again these could not be reported on at an area level.
- iv. Members were provided with an update on key incidents relating to drugs, domestic abuse, hate crime, burglary, crimes against over 60's, anti-social behaviour, vehicle crime, and significant policing operations. Inspector Moore noted that the summer period had passed off peacefully and that planning for Halloween was underway.
- v. She also reminded Members that a presentation on the use of Body Worn Cameras would be provided at the October meeting of the Policing Committee.

6. Questions from Members

Confidence in Policing

- i. In reference to the Fresh Start Panel report on the Disbandment of Paramilitary Groups in Northern Ireland, a Member welcomed interventions from the PSNI and warned against escalating Anti-Social Behaviour leading to increase criminality.

Breathalysers

- ii. In response to a query regarding the availability of breathalysers, Inspector Moore confirmed that 8 were available in North Belfast however she was unaware of the number in use across the City. With the regards to a specific incident reported earlier in the day, Inspector Moore advised that she was concerned with what had been reported and following investigation, a file was being prepared for the Public Prosecution Service (PPS).

Victim Updates

- iii. A Member questioned whether updating a victim via Twitter was an acceptable or usual method of communication. Inspector Moore advised that it would not be a standard form of communication however would be used if the victim had requested it. She asked to speak to the Member regarding the issue following the meeting.

Clifton Street

- iv. Inspector Moore agreed to obtain information about the decision to lock gates at Clifton Street during a parade at the request of a Member.

- v. She was advised that locks in the area had been replaced resulting in people being unable to get access the Cemetery during parades. Inspector Moore also agreed to look into this issue.

7. Members Written Questions

- i. No written questions had been submitted.

8. Policing Committee Application(s) for Funding

- i. The Safer City Coordinator advised that no applications had been received.