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**CHIEF CONSTABLE'S REPORT
NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD
4 APRIL 2019**

INTRODUCTION

I appreciate the opportunity to provide my monthly report on the high level issues and occurrences within policing during March 2019.

This month has been overshadowed by the tragic loss of three young lives in Cookstown, on 17 March 2019. Like many across Northern Ireland, these young people set off to celebrate Saint Patrick's Day with their friends and unfortunately never returned home to their families that evening. My report contains an update on this investigation; however I wish to put on public record the heartfelt condolences of the entire Police Service to the families and friends of Connor Currie, Lauren Bullock and Morgan Barnard and indeed everyone affected by this terrible tragedy.

OPERATIONAL UPDATE

Greenvale Hotel, Cookstown Incident – The ongoing investigation into the tragic events at the Greenvale Hotel is active and wide ranging. To date over 620 witnesses have been identified with over 290 interviews and statements recorded. Detectives utilised the Major Incident Public Portal to allow people to upload mobile phone footage and images of the evening. We also deployed a Cyber Support Vehicles in Cookstown to enable mobile phone footage from people at the scene to be downloaded. This is the first time such technology has been used in the PSNI. Detectives also opened a

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dedicated room at the Burnavon Arts Centre in Cookstown where children and parents could come and talk to Police in a setting less formal than a police station.

Part of the investigation has included a review of the initial police response. The timing and nature of police actions during this period require further investigation to fully establish the facts. I have decided to refer the circumstances and the nature of the actions of the first officers arriving at the scene to the Police Ombudsman. We will work with the Ombudsman to support whatever action he undertakes.

We will continue to carry out a rigorous investigation into the circumstances surrounding the deaths of Connor, Lauren and Morgan and we are deeply grateful for the huge assistance and support we have received from the community and elected representatives. We hope that people will continue to come forward and assist us with this investigation.

St Patrick's Day Parades Belfast – A complex multi-agency operation was developed and implemented in the run up to and during St Patrick's Day, to help ensure that the large number of events that took place across city passed off peacefully.

Police worked alongside colleagues from Belfast City Council, Queen's University Belfast and the Ulster University, the Belfast Met, local schools, street pastors, SOS Bus and Community Rescue volunteers to encourage young people, to celebrate the holiday away from the residential areas.

As part of our partnership approach, we increased police patrols across Belfast, with dedicated resources in the Holylands area to work alongside the Universities and Council to address any issues which arose from excess alcohol consumption and unruly behaviour.

Police made a total of ten arrests in the City Centre and Holylands areas during St Patrick's for a range of public order offences including disorderly behaviour, assault, and assaults on police which is a reduction of 41% in comparison to arrests made last year. The majority of those arrested were under the influence of alcohol.

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ATM Thefts – Whilst the removal of ATM machines from commercial premises by using stolen plant equipment is not a new criminal enterprise, we have witnessed an increase in this type of activity; with 15 incidents over the past six months.

A dedicated team of detectives from our Organised Crime Branch are actively investigating this recent upsurge of attacks on ATM machines. These incidents tend to occur in rural areas during the hours of darkness and we are working with the banking industry and retailers to both predict such attacks and prevent them occurring.

We are acutely aware of the huge loss to banks and businesses and the general disruption which these incidents cause to individuals and local communities. Our investigations are following a number of lines of enquiries including partnership working with An Garda Síochána.

Paramilitary Crime Task Force, East Belfast Operation - The pre-planned operation in East Belfast on Friday 22 March 2019 was the latest action by the Paramilitary Crime Task Force (PCTF) against criminal activities of the East Belfast UVF.

This was a major operation and the PCTF worked effectively with officers from Belfast City Policing District and Operations Support Department to conduct 14 searches in the Greater Belfast, Ards and Comber areas. Items seized included £15,000 of suspected Class 'A' drugs, a number of high value vehicles, expensive jewellery, clothing and accessories and a significant quantity of cash.

The operation resulted in 11 arrests and there has been a range of charges and reports to the Public Prosecution Service, largely relating to the supply of Class 'A' drugs.

Murder Conviction - On 15 March 2019, Nathan Ward (20 years old) was sentenced for the murder of Jayne Toal Reat, the attempted murder of her daughter Charlotte and the malicious wounding of his own father, Joseph Tweedie. This occurred at the Lisburn home of Ms Reat on Christmas Day 2017. Upon imposing a life sentence on Mr Ward, the judge stated that he would serve a minimum of 17 years in prison.

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Attempted Murder Conviction - On 8 March 2019, Sean McVeigh was sentenced to 25 years imprisonment following his conviction for attempted murder of a police officer and possession of explosives with intent to endanger life. This conviction relates to the discovery of an under car bomb at the home of a serving Police Officer in Eglinton on 18 June 2015. Two other suspects are still the subject of ongoing European Arrest Warrant processes.

Terrorist Related Offences Conviction - On 28 February 2019, Kevin McLaughlin was convicted of possession of explosives in suspicious circumstances, possession of firearm and ammunition in suspicious circumstances, and other related offences. The conviction related to the discovery of 695 rounds of ammunition, an AK-47 magazine and bomb making components at an address in Broom Close, Dunmurry on 22 November 2015. Mr McLaughlin was sentenced to 5½ years in prison.

Project Servator Launch - On 13 March 2019, the PSNI commenced a trial phase of highly visible police deployments to reassure the public and assist in disrupting a wide range of criminality including serious crimes and terrorism.

Project Servator was developed, tested and refined over a five year period by experts at the Centre for Protection of National Infrastructure (CPNI) in partnership with the City of London Police in 2014. It has since been adopted by 16 Police Services.

The entire project was reviewed through the governance of our Service Executive Board to ensure that it was complimentary to our Policing with Community style and ethos.

Examples of the type of tactics that the PSNI are using for Project Servator are as follows:-

- Unpredictable deployments of uniformed officers and specialist resources, including police dogs, supported by plain clothed officers
- Officers specially trained in the latest techniques to spot the tell-tale signs that an individual may be gathering information to help them plan or prepare to commit a crime

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- Use of the network of CCTV cameras and working with operators to identify suspicious activity or criminality
- Vehicle checkpoints supported by Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR)
- Engaging with staff and businesses at partner agencies and businesses to build a network of vigilance and raise awareness of how to report suspicious activity
- Speaking to the public to raise awareness of their role in helping to keep the area safe and reporting suspicious activity
- Highly visible communications tactics to raise awareness, including leaflets given to members of the public, posters on display, social media posts using #ProjectServator, traditional media and online coverage

Project Servator is designed to make the environment as uncomfortable as possible for criminals to plan or carry out their activities and increase their fear of detection. It relies on local people and businesses to be the eyes and ears for the police and encourages residents and staff to be vigilant to ensure safety and security.

LEGACY

Since my last update to the Board, Legacy Investigation Branch (LIB) has completed the review of two deaths and reports have been delivered to two families. As a result of further information coming to light, a case involving one death has been added to the LIB Case Sequencing Model.

LIB currently has a caseload of 1133 incidents resulting in 1424 deaths:

- 9 cases are currently under review; and
- 14 cases are currently under investigation (three as a result of Section 35/5 referrals).

On 14 March 2019 the PPS announced their decision to prosecute Soldier 'F' arising from the investigation into the events of Bloody Sunday.

A trial of facts in respect of the murder of Jean McConville is due to commence on 29 April 2019.

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I am conscious of the recent judgements handed down in the Finucane and McQuillan cases and we are currently working through these judgements to understand the implications for ongoing legacy investigations.

Work continues to review incidents related to what is known as the 'On the Runs' scheme. Whilst significant progress has been made, the reviews are time consuming, complex and voluminous.

Legacy Inquests - Legacy Support Unit (LSU) continues to assist the Coroner in providing disclosure for the ongoing Kingsmill and Ballymurphy Inquests in addition to a number of other inquests. Work is continuing to assist the Coroner with Counsel queries in respect of a number of inquests, including but not limited to, the Stalker/Sampson series of inquests.

The multi-agency bid for funding for Legacy Inquests through DoJ has been approved by HM Treasury. Work has now commenced to expand and restructure our existing resources to manage disclosure in respect of Legacy Inquests.

Legacy Litigation - Discovery is ongoing in response to a number of matters of civil litigation. The element of the multi-agency business case relating to funding in support of legacy litigation has not yet been directed upon. As members will be aware PSNI currently have carriage of over 850 civil litigation matters, this continues to place considerable pressure on the Police Service and work is continuing with the DoJ to progress the bid.

Operation Turnel - this is the PSNI response regarding the Sean Graham Bookmakers atrocity which identified a number of failings around PSNI disclosure.

A significant amount of work has taken place in respect of Operation Turnel. Engagement is ongoing with PONI, and Senior Crown Counsel have been instructed to advise on legal matters arising from this critical incident.

ACC Legacy & Legal provided an outline briefing to CJINI on 8 March 2019 and supplied various documents and reports to assist in informing their work. An IT and systems

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briefing was given on 21 March 2019 to further enhance their understanding of our systems and processes. Further briefings are to be arranged over the coming weeks with other relevant business areas.

We have provided a separate update to the Policing Board on the progress of our short term actions taken around the implementation of the PSNI Disclosure Improvement plan for Operation Turnel.

FINANCE UPDATE

As reported last month, PSNI are aiming to deliver a breakeven budget position for 2018-19 on both Resource and Capital. This has only been possible due to significant additional funding received during the year from the DoJ. The actual outturn figures will be confirmed in the next few days, before being subject to audit.

PSNI's budget for 2019-20 has now been confirmed by the DoJ and provides for an £11m increase on the previous year's opening resource budget to assist with pressures. Although this additional funding is welcome, it falls short of what is required simply to maintain existing service levels.

A Resource Plan for 2019-20 has been prepared and shared with the Board. The Plan outlines that the Service will be commencing the financial year over committed by £5.2m and also facing significant cost pressures in the coming year including rising Injury on Duty Awards, Legacy related costs and other inflationary pressures. PSNI will continue to work with the Board and the DoJ during coming months to ensure a joint understanding of the pressures and to agree a way forward.

HUMAN RESOURCE UPDATE

In my previous report, I stated that urgent remedial actions were being taken to address the significant risks posed by sickness and duty restrictions. Absence from duty currently costs our organisation £26.5m per year and the number of officers on duty restrictions currently totals 839.

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In an effort to address this, I can advise that new Attendance Management Triggers and more automated and sophisticated processes for managing sickness were introduced on 1 February 2019. These new triggers significantly reduce the length of time that an individual can be off on sickness absence before the line manager is prompted to take action. The increased automation also enhances the process by which line managers upload information onto a central system, thus enabling more effective monitoring.

There is also a supportive decision making framework to ensure that line managers are reaching fair but consistent decisions. This also enables decisions to be more closely monitored and reviewed, with early action being taken to address areas of concern. Steps have also been taken to introduce attendance management eligibility criteria into selection and promotion competitions.

Going forward, the criteria for the entitlement to Competency Related Threshold Payment will be revised to link to an individual being able to demonstrate that they are providing an efficient and effective service. Part of the revised criteria will take into consideration the extent to which an individual, at work, is undertaking the full range of duties.

Whilst the revised Attendance Management Triggers have only very recently been implemented, early indications appear to show a reduction in the number of individuals absent compared to the same period in the previous year. We will continue to monitor this closely.

There is also a review of the management of duty adjustments to ensure that existing and future duty adjustments are more closely monitored and managed in a way that aligns the need for supportive recuperative or longer term adjustments to business priorities and demand. An update from the project team is due in April 2019.

We have developed a comprehensive action plan under the governance of the Employee Engagement and Wellbeing Group to focus on progressive ways to prevent ill health and promote positive engagement and improved wellbeing.

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CONCLUSION

As we look ahead into another demanding month, we are still no clearer on the likely outcome of the political decisions on EU Exit. We have spent many months developing various contingencies with our partners and our plans remain agile and adaptable to deal with every eventuality.

We are very grateful for the opportunity provided by the Policing Board in their “Policing the EU Exit” seminar on 28 March 2019. This provided a very welcome platform for us to discuss the operational implications for policing and we trust that this has provided the Policing Board and the public some reassurance on our preparations.