



Northern Ireland Audit Office

MEDIA RELEASE

Continuous improvement arrangements in policing

Mr Kieran Donnelly, the Comptroller and Auditor General, today issued his report to the Assembly on continuous improvement arrangements in policing. The report examines the performance summary of the Policing Board and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) in 2015-16 and the Policing Plan for 2016-17.

Mr Donnelly said, *“Long-standing issues remain around the need for shared leadership between the Policing Board and the PSNI and the need for effective programme and project management arrangements to drive continuous improvement... The legislation that underpins the audit of continuous improvement has been in place since 2000. Since then there have been significant changes in policing in Northern Ireland and in Great Britain. It is essential that the legislation continues to be relevant and linked to current initiatives in the criminal justice system. In my view, it is now time for the Department of Justice to consider changes to the legislation governing continuous improvement.”*

Background

As the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) for Northern Ireland, he is required under section 29 of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000 to audit the Policing Plan and performance summary and to send a report to the Policing Board, the Chief Constable and the Department of Justice for Northern Ireland (the Department). This report from the C&AG reviews the systems underpinning the plan and performance summary. It is not an audit of PSNI's performance.

Main Findings

The C&AG has given an unqualified audit opinion on the Policing Plan for 2016-17 and the performance summary for 2015-16.

- The Board's Business Plan for 2015-16 included 48 targets, spread across four main objectives. Overall, the Board reported that 37 of its targets for the year (77 per cent) had been fully achieved (79 per cent in 2014-15), 8 were partially achieved (17 per cent), and the remaining three (6 per cent) were not achieved.
- The PSNI's annual report 2015-16 sets out its performance against the Policing Plan. However, the annual report does not set out measures in the same order or format, making comparison difficult and reported performance incomplete.
- In his 2016 report, the C&AG recommended reducing the number of performance indicators in order to focus on the most important aspects of policing performance. While there has been some progress, there remains scope for further reductions.

THIS STATEMENT IS ISSUED ON THE STRICT UNDERSTANDING THAT IT IS NOT FOR PUBLICATION OR BROADCAST BEFORE 00.01 hrs ON 04 April 2017

- Many of the strategic outcomes included in the Policing Plan for 2016-17 are not measureable and are not outcomes; rather, they describe activities that may lead to a desired outcome. The Board and the PSNI need to give more consideration to how objectives are framed to ensure that they focus on strategic outcomes and to how success will be measured.
- Previous reports have identified slippage in the delivery of continuous improvement projects. This issue persists.

Notes for Editors

1. The Comptroller and Auditor General is Head of the Northern Ireland Audit Office (the Audit Office). He and the NIAO are totally independent of Government. He certifies the accounts of Government Departments and a range of other public sector bodies. He has statutory authority to report to the Assembly on the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which departments and public bodies use their resources. His reports are published as Assembly papers.
2. Section 28 of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000 requires the Policing Board to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions, and those of the Chief Constable, are exercised, having regard to economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The Policing Board is required to prepare and publish a performance plan for each financial year, detailing how continuous improvement arrangements are to be implemented. Under the Act, the Board must also prepare and publish a performance summary.
3. The Policing Plan for 2016-17 reflects the Board's 2016-20 strategic outcomes document, and comprises the five overarching themes and 12 strategic outcomes underpinned by 26 high level performance measures and 13 lower level quantitative and qualitative targets
4. The report is available on the Audit Office website at www.niauditoffice.gov.uk. The report is embargoed until 00.01 hrs on 4 April 2017.
5. Background briefing can be obtained from the Audit Office by contacting Neil Gray (028 9025 4345) or Sean Beattie (028 9025 1091).