



Northern Ireland Audit Office

MEDIA RELEASE

Continuous improvement arrangements in policing

Mr Kieran Donnelly CB, the Comptroller and Auditor General, today (3 March 2020) 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 2017-18 and 2018-19 and the Policing Plan for 2018-19 and 2019-20.

Mr Donnelly said “The consultation and engagement between stakeholders, the Board and the PSNI on the Policing Plan should identify clear and appropriate outcomes, indicators and baselines which will demonstrate positive impacts for citizens and communities. Measures and indicators should be based on timely and accurate data, and appropriate baselines should be used to demonstrate the delivery of strategic outcomes.”

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 Plans for 2018-19 and 2019-20 and the performance summaries for 2017-18 and 2018-19.

- In the absence of a legally constituted Board, following legal advice and as a pragmatic solution, the Department recommended that the 2017-18 Policing plan (which was agreed by the full Board before the last election) should be rolled forward to 2018-19. As the Board was not restored until 1 December 2018 it was agreed to roll forward the plan again into 2019-20 while work to develop a new plan for 2020-21 was undertaken.
- The Board's Business Plan for 2017-18 included 45 measures, spread across three main outcomes. Of the total measures, 29 are reported as fully achieved (64 per cent), five are reported as partially achieved (11 per cent) and 11 are reported as not achieved (25 per cent).
- The Board's performance in 2018-19 improved when compared to 2017-18. The Board's Business Plan for 2018-19 included 53 measures, spread across three main outcomes. Of the total measures, 34 are reported as fully achieved (64 per

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cent), 12 are reported as partially achieved (23 per cent) and seven are reported as not achieved (13 per cent).

- The PSNI's annual report for 2017-18 sets out its performance against the Policing Plan and shows the status of each measure – Achieved, Partially Achieved or Not Achieved. Out of a total of 25 measures, only one relating to increasing the number of officers and staff available for full duties, was reported as not having been met. However for 2018-19, while it is clear that work has been ongoing in each area, there is no assessment made of the status achieved for each measure.

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 Board's responsibilities for progressing the development, consultation and publication of a Policing Plan and Performance Plan are core functions of a properly constituted Policing Board. As a pragmatic solution the Department has recommended that the 2017-18 Policing Plan (which was agreed by the full Board before the last election) should be rolled forward to 2018-19. As the Board was not restored until December 2018 it was agreed to roll forward the plan again into 2019-20 while work to develop a new plan for 2020-21 was undertaken.
4. The report is available on the Audit Office website at www.niauditoffice.gov.uk. The report is embargoed until 00.01 hrs on 3 March 2020.
5. Background briefing can be obtained from the Audit Office by contacting Neil Gray (028 9025 4345) or Garry Currie (028 9025 1126).