

LISBURN AND CASTLEREAGH CITY COUNCIL

Public Meeting of the Policing and Community Safety Partnership, held in St. Patrick's Parish Centre, Lisburn, on Tuesday 15 October 2024 at 7.20 pm

PRESENT: Councillor S Lowry (Chairperson)

Mr D Cairns
Mrs Y Craig
Mr D Drysdale
Councillor B Higginson
Councillor J Laverty
Mr G McClory
Councillor M McKeever
Councillor A Martin
Mrs A Playford

**OTHER MEMBERS
IN ATTENDANCE:** The Right Worshipful the Mayor,
Councillor K Dickson

Councillors P Catney and N Parker

IN ATTENDANCE: Member Services/PCSP Manager (CA)
PCSP Support Officer (JB)
Member Services Officer (CH)
PCSP Administration Officer (EW)

Designated Organisations

Superintendent K Moore, PSNI
Chief Inspector K McMullan, PSNI
Inspector Danielle Burke
Sergeant Michael McManus
Mr D Marley, NIHE

Commencement of the Meeting

The Chairperson, Councillor S Lowry, welcomed those present to the meeting and extended appreciation to St. Patrick's Parish Centre and in particular to Mr D French for the use of their premises. She provided an overview of the evening's meeting, which was themed 'Food for Thought,' advising that PCSP had identified hate crime as a local priority for the Council area and included it in their annual Action Plan. The Chairperson explained that the intention of the meeting was to provoke people to think about the impact of hate crime on individuals, families, and communities.

The Chairperson explained that the meeting would commence with an engagement session facilitated by PCSP Independent Member Mrs A Playford, followed with presentations by Ms J Flett (Victim Support NI) and Sergeant M McManus (PSNI). It was further explained that twelve organisations were present at stalls around the room to provide information and support to victims of hate crime, and that the evening would finish with the opportunity to sample food from around the world.

1. Apologies

Apologies for non-attendance at the meeting were presented on behalf of Councillors P Burke, A Givan, C Kemp together with, Vice-Chairperson Mr B Corr (Independent Member) and Ms G McDonald (Independent Member).

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Engagement Session

Mrs Aisling Playford (Independent PCSP Member)

Mrs Playford gave an overview of her career working as a Hate Crime Advocacy Officer for Northern Ireland, supporting people from the LGBTQIA+ community, and as an activist in support of groups such as: anti-racism, supporting newcomers to Northern Ireland and the LGBTQIA+ community.

Mrs Playford explained how to use the app called Slido which enabled attendees to participate in the session using their mobile phones. She further explained that the answers provided would help in a number of ways, including:

- help the work of the PCSP going forward in terms of hate crime,
- inform the policing plan for the district, and
- identify ways as a community how people could better help one another.

Attendees were asked the undernoted five questions giving them an opportunity to share their experiences of living in the Lisburn and Castlereagh area. A number of responses were recorded, including:

1. What did you find most difficult when you moved to Lisburn and Castlereagh?

- difficulty making new connections/friends,
- heightened tensions during marching season,
- not knowing anybody,
- views and opinions of asylum seekers and refugees
- flags on lampposts, and
- did not find any difficulties.

2. What did you find helped you and your family settle in most?

An audience member gave information to attendees on services that were provided at St. Patricks Parish Centre, including:

- patchwork pals, meets each Thursday night, currently twenty-six members from Poland, South Africa, Syria and Spain, everyone welcome to join, and
- caring sharing, for anyone that is lonely, isolated, or vulnerable, meets every other Tuesday for lunch and a social activity.

3. What challenges do you face going forward?

- Cultural Differences - different customs, traditions, and languages can create misunderstandings and barriers to communication.
- Ethnic minorities may face prejudice or discrimination from local communities, which can hinder social integration.
- Limited English proficiency can affect access to services, employment opportunities, and social interactions.
- Balancing cultural heritage with the desire to integrate can create identity struggles for individuals within ethnic minority groups.

4. How can the Police and PCSP assist in moving forward?

- issues finding spaces available in local schools,
- English language barrier – provision of English language course,
- British Citizenship, applicants required to pass B1 exam,
- more PSNI visible presence in local areas,
- information sharing,
- take reports of racist incidents seriously, and
- education and awareness required.

5. How can the community better help new residents to settle into the community?

- support to integrate into community,
- be friendly, and
- smile.

4. Hate Crime – Presentations

4.1 Victim Support Northern Ireland Ms J Flett

Ms J Flett delivered a presentation representing Victim Support Northern Ireland. She explained that the organisation supported all victims of crime, and when a crime was reported to Police, Victim Support received referrals within 24 hours. She advised that people could also contact the service directly via telephone and their website.

Ms Flett highlighted that since 2022, the organisation provided a service across Northern Ireland called 'The Hate Crime Advocacy Service'. It was explained that to successfully deliver the service, they worked in partnership with a number of organisations, to ensure that they connected with all communities.

Attendees noted that the Hate Crime Advocacy Service had advocates located in external groups, such as: The Migrant Centre, The Rainbow Project, and Disability Action.

Ms Flett explained that partner groups offered a wide range of advice and support services, including the following:

- advice on housing,
- support in becoming more involved in the community,
- support in getting to know what is going on in the community, and
- Migrant Centre currently running an education programme about Northern Ireland for newcomers.

Attendees noted that the Hate Crime Advocacy Service ensured that victims understood their rights and were supported fully throughout the process, by providing emotional support, assistance with completion of compensation forms and support making victim impact statements. It was reported that over three hundred referrals had been made to the service for the 2024/2025 year to date, 1000 referrals were made the previous year and that 45% were repeat victims of a hate crime or a hate incident.

4.2 An Overview of Hate Crime & Incidents Sergeant M McManus (PSNI)

Sergeant M McManus provided a presentation in respect hate crime and the role the Police had in tackling the issue. He outlined the differences between a hate crime and a hate incident and explained that:

- a hate crime was when someone was attacked or abused in any way because of who they are, where they come from, what they believe or who they choose to love, and
- if any person believed that an occurrence was motivated by hate or hostility towards a particular protected characteristic, then it would be recorded by the PSNI as a hate motivated occurrence.

Attendees noted that the protected characteristics were:

- race,
- religion,
- sexual orientation,
- disability,
- transgender identity, and
- sectarian.

Sergeant McManus gave details of the current legislation available to the Police in respect of hate crimes, explaining that all hate incidents were recorded and monitored as a means to prevent crime by early identification of vulnerable groups or individuals, early identification of concerning community sentiment, or any threats or tensions.

Attendees noted that the main barrier faced by the PSNI was under reporting of hate incidents due to a number of factors, including fear/mistrust of the PSNI, not thinking the incident was serious enough to report, or victims did not think it would be taken seriously.

Sergeant McManus urged people to report all incidents of hate crime, either through the PSNI or via other partners, including the Hate Crime Advocacy Service, Rainbow Project, Migrate Centre, Leonard Cheshire, and Victim Support NI. He also highlighted that there was a hate crime section on the PSNI website which provided details of what a hate crime was, how to report a hate crime, details of partner agencies, information leaflets on all types of hate crime, and an alternative way to report hate incidents via true vision.

He concluded his presentation with information in respect of an upcoming REAL event, due to take place on Thursday 17 October 2024, at Lisburn Civic Centre. He encouraged those from ethnic minorities to attend the event and speak to the Police directly about any ongoing concerns.

Conclusion of the Meeting

The Chairperson, Councillor S Lowry, notified attendees that the PCSP had launched their community survey which was available online, and that hard copies were available at that evening's meeting. She concluded by thanking those present for attending, particularly those who had provided very informative presentations, and invited everyone to sample food from around the world, and to network with the hate crime support organisations in attendance.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 8.15 pm.

Chairperson