



policebeat

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June 2022

The News Magazine of The Police Federation for Northern Ireland

Inside, full coverage of the 50th PFNI Annual Conference.

Police Federation for Northern Ireland

... and Efficiency



*A smooth handover as new
PFNI Chair, Liam Kelly, takes over
from Mark Lindsay MBE.*

Also inside this issue

In My View - Liam Kelly • In Memoriam - Michael Malone • Athletics Club Triumph • Lottery Results

EDITORIAL

A call to end political inaction

This is a time of transition at the Police Federation for Northern Ireland. Occasionally, in organisations both large and small, new-look teams can sometimes have knowledge gaps with discernible shortcomings. Not so in the PFNI.

There's no shortage of expertise or experience as officials take on new responsibilities. The hand-over has been seamless with no interruption or delay in dealing with a burgeoning agenda.

The myriad issues that have dominated the agenda in recent months - officer pay, budgets, cuts in numbers, assaults, pension changes and welfare issues - continue to feature high in work priorities.

Policing, generally, faces challenges that will define the way the service is delivered and dictate how officers go about their work. Doing things differently, specifically how officers respond to rising demand from the public, will become a noticeable feature of the service over the next five years, if not longer.

In England, Wales, Scotland and the Republic of Ireland, policing is being given higher priority with significantly increased financial resources and an expansion in officer numbers.

In Northern Ireland, incredibly, the opposite is the case. The budget is being slashed and the very real and worrying prospect is there will be approximately 1,000 fewer officers over the next three years.

The outgoing Chair, in his last keynote address to Annual Conference, asked if our politicians realised the damage they were about to inflict or if they cared. It seems odd, to say the least, that political parties that trumpet support for police are the very ones who are abjectly failing to award realistic and necessary allocations.

We were reminded that right now, the PSNI doesn't have a budget and that in April alone, there was an overspend of some £800,000 on fuel and utilities. Cost-of-living pressures apply just as much to the police as they do to officers who struggle to make ends meet. Extrapolate that across the year, and it's clear we are heading into uncharted waters with drastic impacts on services.

Of course, without a functioning Executive or Assembly, no intervention by devolved institutions is possible, but this Federation argues that the drift we are seeing must be halted if we are to avert a crisis. Should this political paralysis continue unchecked, we would call on the Secretary of State and the NIO to step in.

Policing is competing for scarce resources and this Federation is not making the case to overtake other cash-starved departments in the queue; that would be a fruitless and unproductive approach to take. The protocol hiatus, a divisive Assembly election followed by a failure to make Ministerial appointments, have left all public sector services in dire straits.

We need direction and political leadership to address all demands for realistic departmental budgets if we are to progress. Hand-to-mouth funding will not do and will only lead to uncertainty and erosion of services.

From a high point in New Decade, New Approach where there was a commitment to expand the service to 7,500 officers, we are now looking at a drastic depletion. This is a retrograde and frightening development and one that will adversely affect police morale, wellbeing and service provision to this entire community.

And it is to the MLAs elected by this community that we say: 'think long and hard about the consequences of what you are doing; consider the damage you are about to cause by inaction and re-commit to fixing systemic and worsening situations in Health, Education, Infrastructure, the Economy and please ensure you don't forget policing.

