



Minutes

Title of meeting	Police Covenant Oversight Board
Date	14 July 2021
Time	9.45 – 10.45
Venue	2 Marsham Street / Virtual Meeting
Attendees	Priti Patel - Home Secretary - Chair Kit Malthouse – Minister of State for Crime and Policing Rachel Watson – Director General, Home Office Peter Spreadbury – Deputy Director, Home Office Iain Barton – Home Office, PCOB Secretariat John Apter – National Chair of the Police Federation England and Wales Cat Dowling – Welsh Government Ian Drysdale – Chief Police Officers’ Staff Association Paul Griffiths – President of the Police Superintendents’ Association Kim McGuinness – Association of Police and Crime Commissioners Bernie O’Reilly – CEO, College of Policing Ben Priestley – Unison Andy Rhodes – College of Policing/National Police Chiefs’ Council
Apologies	Martin Hewitt – NPCC John Robbins – CPOSA

Welcome and introductory remarks

PRITI PATEL MP, THE HOME SECRETARY, welcomed the attendees to the meeting and outlined her key observations on the importance of the Police Covenant. She spoke about how vital it is to ensure officers, staff and their families are supported and made it clear that the Police Covenant was a priority for the Government. She emphasised that it is a shared obligation for Government and members of the Board to get this right.

THE HOME SECRETARY particularly welcomed the contributions of the staff associations in advocating for a Covenant and the fact that officials and stakeholders had all worked

well together to push for the collective goal of getting the Covenant up and running. This reflects the shared passion for policing.

THE HOME SECRETARY stressed that the Oversight Board will be crucial to getting the foundations of the Police Covenant right, as well as providing a key role in ensuring the annual report is scrutinised prior to being laid in parliament, helping address issues as they arise. She also made it clear that the Covenant should not be notional; it would need to work in practice for officers, staff and their families with very clear outcomes.

THE HOME SECRETARY reiterated her excitement about what the Covenant could achieve under the stewardship of this Oversight Board and how she was looking forward to seeing the tangible progress that will be made before the next meeting.

1) Police Covenant Clause Update

RACHEL WATSON, DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR THE PUBLIC SAFETY GROUP, gave attendees an update on the progress of the Police Covenant clause in the [Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill](#), reminding the Board what has been included and the duty on the Home Secretary to provide an annual report to parliament on the Police Covenant covering key priority areas; the health and wellbeing of current and former staff and officers, their physical protection, support required by members of their family, and any other matters that the Home Secretary deems appropriate.

She outlined the government amendment that had been made to the Bill to include explicitly the British Transport Police, the Civil Nuclear Constabulary, the Ministry of Defence Police and the National Crime Agency in the legislation. Noting that it was always intended that officers, staff and families from these forces would be included in considerations relating to the Covenant, the Home Office had listened to calls for this to be made more explicit in the Bill. This amendment, which enjoys cross party support, would now be considered by the House of Lords alongside the rest of the Bill.

She explained that, due to the plan to include these forces in the work already, the amendment should have limited impact on the work of the Board, but highlighted that it did change the geographical extent of the work, and made more explicit the need to work with the relevant organisations. She confirmed that the Home Office would be engaging with these forces and their relevant government departments noting there was a need for all attendees to continue to include them in the work.

2) Terms of Reference

THE HOME SECRETARY asked members of the Board for comments on the Terms of Reference (ToR) drafted for the Oversight Board and shared in advance, before being formally adopted. She said that she was keen to hear and include the views of members.

KIT MALTHOUSE MP, MINISTER OF STATE FOR CRIME AND POLICING, welcomed the ToR. He emphasised the importance of officer and staff safety and the need to ensure this was reflected in all relevant areas of the Covenant work.

JOHN APTER, NATIONAL CHAIR OF THE POLICE FEDERATION ENGLAND AND WALES, also welcomed the ToR and felt they were suitably flexible. He emphasised that the ToR and the Board will need to be dynamic as the Covenant develops. He also

suggested, having spoken to counterparts in their federations, the voice of the non-Home Office forces should be heard and there was a need to make that clear.

BERNIE O'REILLY, CEO OF THE COLLEGE, voiced his support and felt that the ToR, coupled with the action plan, will be well regarded within policing. He was keen to match the passion the Home Secretary had shown for this. He felt it was positive that there was a long-term focus to ensure the Covenant continued to deliver for policing.

IAN DRYSDALE, CHIEF POLICE OFFICERS' STAFF ASSOCIATION, said that his organisation would like to thank the government for bringing the Covenant forward and recognised their role in bringing leaders in policing along.

THE HOME SECRETARY thanked the Board for their observations and welcomed the universal support for the ToR. She echoed the view that this needed to be dynamic, noting that there are other linked areas of work, such as recruitment, which will need to be taken into consideration. She recognised the need to keep this Board and its ToR agile but also with a long term focus, using good examples from international partners to further the work of the Covenant.

The Board formally adopted the Terms of Reference, with a review to be undertaken in 6 months' time to ensure they remained fit for purpose.

3) Police Covenant Priorities and Actions

THE HOME SECRETARY began by reminding the Board of the initial areas of work for the Covenant. These were:

- Ensuring occupational health standards are embedded in all forces
- Consideration of a new Chief Medical Officer for policing
- Developing a support model for families based on international examples of best practice
- GP training on policing, similar to the model already in place for military veterans
- Mental health support for officers and staff, particularly for pre-deployment

She noted that the priorities had been produced in collaboration with Board members. There was agreement from the Board to this work plan and that the correct leads had been identified to develop the work at this stage.

JOHN APTER made clear that the Federation fully supported this work, describing it as truly innovative, and was proud to see it beginning to take shape in the action plan. For the staff associations in particular the creation of a Covenant has been a key aim, noting that the actions needs to be meaningful and tangible, with strong links to how each action would impact on front line officers.

PAUL GRIFFITHS, PRESIDENT OF THE POLICE SUPERINTENDENTS' ASSOCIATION, echoed the support of the plan expressed by John Apter. Paul Griffiths also highlighted the need to measure what had been successful in a year's time in order to ensure progress against these goals. He also mentioned that the Home Office would be able to help drive work with other government departments.

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR CRIME AND POLICING noted that work on the family support model needed further development in order to provide a solid basis for discussion at the next meeting.

ACTION: the APCC and NPCC to bring a paper on the family support model to the next meeting of the Oversight Board.

ANDY RHODES, NATIONAL POLICE CHIEFS' COUNCIL AND THE COLLEGE OF POLICING, noted that there were some good examples from the US, Canada and other countries on what support for families could look like. He also said that there were some examples of good practice in individual forces, although different forces had different infrastructure and levels of support. He emphasised the need for there to be a strong core support model, but retaining some flexibility to allow for local circumstances.

KIM MCGUINNESS, ASSOCIATION OF POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONERS, noted that PCCs of all parties supported the Covenant and the ongoing work. She confirmed that the APCC would be happy to chair a group to drive action on support for families and would work with the NPCC and the College of Policing on this. She noted that this was a new area of policy engagement for the Home Office and was keen to ensure they developed a clear view of what support families need through further evidence gathering.

THE HOME SECRETARY, emphasised the need to take into account the increasing diversity of the police workforce that had been seen in the uplift programme and the specific needs that different groups may have, particularly when engaging with families.

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR CRIME AND POLICING agreed that family support would be challenging to get right with a fully top down approach. He noted that all forces tended to be good in a crisis, but the offer outside of those crises was less consistent.

THE HOME SECRETARY suggested that action on communicating what the Covenant would do is vital to ensuring that a range of officers, staff and families will take up what it would offer. **THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR CRIME AND POLICING** raised the need for the members of Board to work together on the communications action, co-ordinated by the Home Office. It was important to ensure any communications worked for the people who would be affected by it, and it would need to highlight how it makes a difference to people's lives. He suggested that the Delivery Group pull together some specific cases relating to what the Covenant would provide, once the actions have been further developed.

THE HOME SECRETARY suggested these communications would have to reach beyond those individuals targeted by previous Home Office campaigns and would require the Home Office to design a bespoke communications campaign with the support of the Board.

ACTION: The Home Office to design a bespoke communications plan in advance of the next Oversight Board.

BEN PRIESTLEY, UNISON, welcomed this meeting as an historic occasion in improving the lives of police officers and staff, and applauded the work of the Home Office in ensuring staff were adequately captured in the wording of the Bill. He also highlighted the key learnings from the Front Line Review, including barriers to meaningful work, which he felt could still offer a great deal to the work on the Covenant. He confirmed that Unison would like to contribute at the Delivery Group to discussion around potential areas for additional work. He also echoed the need to make the offer of the Covenant very clear to the police and the public.

JOHN APTER commented that it was important that pre-deployment mental health support would need to be implemented throughout an individual's service to ensure it was truly effective.

In relation to the consideration of the benefits of a Chief Medical Officer (CMO) for policing, **ANDY RHODES** noted that the College of Policing had already been developing a business case for the role to define a potential model and what benefits could be derived. He had also engaged with Public Health England on the potential strategic requirements for the CMO role. **THE HOME SECRETARY** expressed her gratitude to Andy Rhodes and his team for their work in this area, suggesting that the CMO could be a powerful advocate for the police and could make a real difference to the lives of the workforce.

JOHN APTER also requested that action on specific training for GPs included some consideration of prioritisation of NHS treatment for officers injured on duty. **THE HOME SECRETARY** recognised that provision of appropriate health services needed to be a priority, not least to improve retention. There was a need to develop a better understanding around the severity of the impact and the best response and further information from the Police Federation would be welcome. **THE HOME SECRETARY** also suggested that the action owners could look at the feasibility of including specific modules on police wellbeing in standard medical training.

CAT DOWLING, WELSH GOVERNMENT, agreed with all the points above and offered to act as a conduit in the Welsh Government for any devolved matters, including on health, as they arise.

THE HOME SECRETARY then recapped the actions to be taken forward by the Board. The Home Secretary emphasised the need for the Board to look at international best practice. Overall, she said she was looking forward to seeing progress on each of the actions in advance of the next Oversight Board, and that programme management structures would need to be put in place to ensure delivery.

ACTION: The Home Office to work with the Delivery Group to scope out the programme management needs for the Covenant.

4) Delivery Group

THE HOME SECRETARY led the discussion on the formation of a Delivery Group for the Police Covenant, attended by the leads for each action and other relevant parties to drive and monitor progress at ground level. She emphasised that she was keen to see this set up quickly, with a focus on practical outcomes that would make a difference to people's lives.

ANDY RHODES highlighted the great progress which has already been made on many of the priority areas and agreed with the Home Secretary on the need to quickly finalise arrangements for coordination of these delivery efforts via the Delivery Group. This would ensure that it could begin reporting back into the Oversight Board immediately. He expected that all named leads for each action would sit on the Delivery Group. They had already taken steps to deconflict any further engagement with other oversight boards and structures. Given the support the Covenant had in the police and in the wider public, there should be real energy about getting this done and he felt the Delivery Group could be ready to drive the work on the actions. **BERNIE O'REILLY** echoed this point. He felt that the Delivery Group could take a targeted and strategic approach in order to complement

the work of the Oversight Board. A key role of the Delivery Group would be to set out a positive vision, dealing with any challenges raised by the police community, and to map out the governance structures and processes beneath the Oversight Board.

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR CRIME AND POLICING agreed adding that, as the chair of the Oversight Board, he would be responsible for reporting back on progress to Parliament and agreed that the Delivery Group would be critical in ensuring that progress was made. He also stressed the need to avoid duplication between the Oversight Board and the Delivery Group, with a certain degree of creative tension maintained between the two to make sure that the voice of the workforce was included throughout. He acknowledged the key role of Staff Associations and Unions in this shared endeavour.

PAUL GRIFFITHS welcomed this approach, though noted the need to find a balance between ensuring that a range of voices are represented on the Delivery Group and ensuring that it can operate in the most efficient and effective way possible. **THE HOME SECRETARY** agreed this was important, but also needed to make sure a diverse group are included. **PAUL GRIFFITHS** also mentioned that the chaplaincy could be a very helpful partner, given their role helping define some of the early work in this area.

THE HOME SECRETARY agreed with the points made by Board and stressed the need for it to be strong and effective, emphasising that governance should not slow down the pace of delivery for the front line. She reinforced the need to focus on getting this right on the ground.

ACTION: The NPCC and the College of Policing to ensure the Delivery Group is in place and ready to provide outputs for the next Oversight Board.

ACTION: The Home Office to work through the programme management needs for the Covenant in partnership with the Delivery Group, once it is in place.

5) AOB

JOHN APTER noted the need to scope out work on support for officers and staff transitioning out of policing. He requested that the Delivery Group look at this once it is in place and bring a recommendation to the Oversight Board about inclusion in the future workplan.

6) Agreed actions arising and closing remarks

- **The Home Office to develop a communications plan with the support and input of Board members** – The Home Office will look to provide a draft plan in advance of the next Oversight Board, with the potential for further discussion at the Board.
- **The NPCC and the APCC to produce a paper for the next Oversight Board on support for families** – This would include the nature of the support, the mechanism for delivery and the timescales for delivery.
- **The NPCC and the College of Policing to work together to set up the Delivery Group** – nominating a chair and meeting as needed before the next Oversight Board
- **The Home Office to work with the Delivery Group to scope out the programme management needs for the Covenant** – This will include defining project management documents and relevant progress monitoring.

THE HOME SECRETARY also asked that all action leads ensure that diversity was a key consideration through all work on the Covenant. She welcomed the contributions from each member of the Board and emphasised her desire for the work to continue at pace, with suitable programme management in place.

Next Oversight Board meeting: 12.30 - 13.30 on 13 October 2021 (subject to parliamentary business)