

**PSNI Written Submission to the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.**

Police last gave oral evidence to the AERA Committee on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2021. Following this session evidence was given by the Chief Executive and Mayor of Mid and East Antrim Council on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2021. PSNI welcome the opportunity to provide clarification to the committee on a number of matters and are happy to address any further questions Committee members may have.

**Contact between Mid and East Antrim Council and the Police**

In our evidence session on the 15<sup>th</sup> April 2021 Assistant Chief Constable Singleton was asked by Clare Bailey ‘*Did the Minister or Mid and East Antrim Borough Council report any threats that they had received or were aware of to the PSNI?*’. ACC Singleton replied ‘*No, not to people at border posts*’. This was not the case. It has subsequently been established that the District Commander for Mid and East Antrim Superintendent Michael Simpson was contacted by the Chief Executive about a reputed threat to staff on Saturday the 30<sup>th</sup> of January. The Chief Executive told Superintendent Simpson that she had been made aware that ‘*staff were under threat and that vehicle registrations were being recorded at the port*’. Superintendent Simpson liaised with police Intelligence branch and established that police had, that same day, received the same information anonymously. Police assessed this information/intelligence to be uncorroborated and unsubstantiated. The police assessment of this information was conveyed and advice provided during a number of contacts between the local District Commander and MEA council between 30<sup>th</sup> January and 1<sup>st</sup> February 2021.

**Delay in PSNI providing a written threat assessment**

The formal threat assessment process takes time and involves other partners. It is not always within the PSNI’s power to complete to the timescales we would like. In

fast moving operational situations verbal threat assessments are frequently used as an interim measure to allow action to be taken.

Our assessment of the threat was we felt consistently made clear to our partners; there was no information to substantiate or corroborate claims of paramilitary involvement in making anonymous threats. This remains the case.

### **PSNI Partners meetings / PSNI Gold Structures**

Throughout this period we have been consistent in our commitment to work closely with partner agencies to support them and their staff. As our collective understanding of the emergent challenges has developed we have increased the membership of the 'Partners Group' we chair to include the relevant councils.

For clarification a Police Gold Command structure had been in place since late 2020 to coordinate the PSNI response to the end of the EU Exit transition period.

### **Operational Policing - Mixed Messaging**

Our assessment of the threat was consistently made clear to our partners; there was no information to substantiate or corroborate claims of paramilitary involvement in making anonymous threats. This was kept under constant review in light of all information available to us. We did however increase the number of high visibility patrols across Larne and at all other points of entry to provide reassurance to staff and the local community, this was explained to partners in order to reduce unnecessary anxiety.

Where we have any credible information about a threat we will of course share that with our partners at the earliest opportunity and take appropriate action.

It is disappointing that our efforts to provide reassurance may have increased the concern of some MEA officials and that is something we will consider going forward.