

MINISTER'S PRE-BRIEF AND MEETING NOTE



Department of
Justice

An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt

Máinnystrie O tha Laa

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☐ PRE-BRIEF

☒ MEETING

TIME AND DATE OF MEETING:		Meeting – 30 September 2024 @5.30pm		
TITLE/ORGANISATION: (Include INV number where possible and ensure title on pre-brief and meeting notes are the same)		Minister's meeting with NIPSA and the PSNI to discuss the Revised Environmental Allowance (REA) for PSNI civilian staff.		
VENUE:	☐ e.g. Parliament Buildings	☒ e.g. Castle Buildings	☐ Other – please specify	
LIST OF ATTENDEES:				
☒ Minister	☐ SpAd	☒ XX Redacted Section 40 (2)XX		
OFFICIALS:	Hugh Widdis Mark Goodfellow XX Redacted Section 40 (2)XX XX Redacted Section 40 (2)XX XX Redacted Section 40 (2)XX			
OTHERS: [Include Pdf Copies of any Presentations Delivered]	Jon Boutcher, Chief Constable Pamela McCreedy, COO Mark McNaughten, ACO T/Chief Supt Mervyn Seffen Sinead Simpson, Chief Executive, NIPB			

XX Redacted Section 40 (2)XX, NIPSA

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MEETING KEY POINTS DISCUSSED:

Minister

- Thanked the NIPSA reps for attending – re-affirmed her commitment and that of the Chief Constable for delivering the uplift to the REA allowance.
- Advised that there are two separate elements – the uplift to the allowance and the annual review. The detail of how this will be structured needs to be worked through.
- Confirmed that the uplift element had gone to DoF – the business cases had been submitted on 27 September.
- Confirmed that she had spoken to the Finance Minister yesterday and again today – she has confirmed that her officials will prioritise the review of the business case with a view to approval.
- Added that she cannot give a definitive timescale for this but was hopeful that this would be well within the standard 20 working days that DoF would routinely commit to.
- Noted that we have received legal advice from DSO that confirms the approach we are adopting will not lead to repercusiveness.
- Commented that hopefully approval of the business case will be forthcoming and that this will give re-assurance to the PSNI civilian staff.

Chief Constable

- Stated that he echoed everything the Minister had said.
- Commented that the annual review has been de-coupled from the uplift of REA as this has enabled us to move forward with the payment.
- Stated that he believes there should be an annual review as this safeguards NIPSA members.
- Noted that he intended to join NIPSA members online tomorrow (Tuesday) to provide re-assurance and to confirm to members that we are a million miles away from the starting point in relation to the uplift and confident we can deliver on our commitment.

Minister

- Advised that she had explained the rationale for the annual review to the Finance Minister who accepted the logic.

- Noted that the key thing to determine is the structure and mechanism for this – added that Sinead is here from NIPB, as the employer, and advised that they will want to be satisfied with the review mechanism proposed.

XX Redacted Section 40 (2)XX

- Stated that the expectation amongst members was that the allowance amount would increase every year in line with any uplift in terms of the pay award.

Minister

- Stated that we cannot guarantee an annual uplift and explained why – this is always dependent on a recommendation from a pay review body.

XX Redacted Section 40 (2)XX

- Commented that NIPSA members voted for an annual uplift so selling anything short of this to members would be difficult.
- Referred to the calculation they carried out, with no expectation of back pay, on the basis that going forward this would be offset by an annual uplift. Added that this will be a snagging point that they will need to work through.

Chief Constable

- Suggested that he can perhaps assist when he speaks to members tomorrow to provide some clarity. Noted that the interim payment had been made, which will hopefully be followed by the uplift and also a review mechanism.
- Noted that pay review bodies like SSRB or PRRB cannot mandate uplifts – they make a recommendation but implementation is based on affordability.

Minister

- Agreed that we cannot commit to an annual uplift - expressed a degree of sympathy that it has taken some time to get to this point but stated that it is better to have the potential for small increments every one or two years.
- Referred to the evolution of the legal advice and it was agreed that there was no suggestion that the DoJ or PSNI have mislead NIPSA at any stage.

XX Redacted Section 40 (2)XX

- Referred to one branch that has been bitten by a review mechanism that did not work – in light of their bad experience of the review mechanism they had voted overwhelmingly against the offer proposed in the summer.

There was a wider discussion on the need for a business case for a review that might lead to a future uplift. NIPSA reps stated that members need to be clear what they are buying into and will base their decision on what they can see in writing. PSNI and DoJ officials confirmed that a business case is required for every pay/allowance uplift. NIPSA members rehearsed the affordability considerations that they need to make clear

to their members. The discussion also touched on rates of pay in the public sector vs the private sector and the Minister's stated her desire to lift the pay for low paid workers so that they feel the benefit.

Minister

- Advised that no industrial dispute in the NICS can ever be resolved with the certainty that NIPSA are seeking but stated that the Department and the PSNI has shown goodwill against a tight financial backdrop to progress this.
- Added that she always prioritises any pay related submissions that she receives – these are treated as desk immediate and turned round very quickly.

Mark

- Endorsed the Minister's comments and highlighted the desire to agree a process with NIPSA but cannot offer a pre-determined outcome.

Chief Constable

- Confirmed that he will prioritise this on an annual basis as part of his budgetary spend – added that an annual review will mean that in affordability terms this should not be prohibitively expensive.

Minister

- Agreed that a review every 3-5 years could mean that a further uplift is too expensive - this is why we want to put in place a mechanism that is transparent.

Sinead

- Stated that from a Board perspective she sees a lot of goodwill on both sides and advised that NIPSA, through their negotiations, have achieved a lot for their Members in recent months.

XX Redacted Section 40 (2)XX

- Posed a few questions – whether any of the PRRB recommendations in relation to NITA have ever been refused; whether we have any idea what the review mechanism will look like? - Pamela emphasised that the key word is “independent”.

Minister

- Commented that the more independent the review is and the credibility of those carrying it out means that the case to DoF is all the stronger.

In closing the Minister advised that as soon as we hear from DoF re: business case approval we will inform NIPSA immediately. She re-assured NIPSA that she wants this matter sorted and stated that she believes this is a good example of how all parties have worked collaboratively to find a solution and deliver an outcome.

ISSUES AGREED (must be completed):

- It was agreed that the Chief Constable will join the NIPSA meeting on Tuesday (remotely) and seek to provide re-assurance to members.
- It was agreed that NIPSA would be consulted on the proposed mechanism for the annual review.

ACTION POINTS / OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE:

- Minister will ensure that NIPSA are informed immediately once DoF have considered and approved the business case for the REA uplift [XX Redacted Section 40 (2)XX and PPSD colleagues]

NOTE WRITTEN BY: XX Redacted Section 40 (2)XX

DATE: 1 October 2024

Signed and Dated by Private Secretary:

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1 October 2024