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Sinn Fein to meet Orde next week

Sinn Féin is to hold its first meeting with Northern Ireland Chief Constable Sir Hugh Orde since its decision to publicly support his police service, the party announced today.

Policing spokesperson Gerry Kelly confirmed the meeting next week would focus on Northern Ireland Police Ombudsman Nuala O'Loan's devastating report last month into allegations that members of the RUC Special Branch colluded with loyalist paramilitaries.

As members of the Northern Ireland Policing Board met in Belfast, Mr Kelly said the recent controversy over the SDLP's claims that they ensured Sir Hugh was appointed Chief Constable had deflected attention away from the findings of the report.

"The real issue for republicans and nationalists is the tip of the collusion iceberg beginning to be exposed," he said.

"We will not allow our focus to shift onto side issues or distractions created by others.

More than 90 per cent of Sinn Féin members at a special conference in Dublin two weeks ago backed Gerry Adams' call on the party to end its 86-year boycott of policing structures in Northern Ireland.

The party's motion, which also publicly backed the PSNI and the Garda Síochána, said Sinn Féin would only be involved in policing bodies in the event of either power sharing returning or acceptable joint partnership arrangements for advancing the Belfast Agreement from Taoiseach Bertie Ahern and Prime Minister Tony Blair.

Gerry Adams subsequently urged republicans to co-operate with the police by giving information they have on the murder two years ago of Belfast father-of-two Robert McCartney as well as crimes such as aggravated burglary, rape, assaults on the elderly and car theft.

The West Belfast MP also surprised unionists by insisting his party would not discourage a republican who wished to join the police from applying.

Mr Blair and Mr Ahern hope Sinn Féin's policy shift will be enough to persuade the Rev Ian Paisley's DUP to form a power sharing government featuring republicans by March 26th.

PA

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TODAY



0-5 °C

TOMORROW



3-6 °C

SATURDAY



3-6 °C

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