

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD IN PUBLIC HELD ON THURSDAY, 3 SEPTEMBER 2009 AT 12:00 NOON IN WATERSIDE TOWER, BELFAST

PRESENT:

MEMBERS:

Mr Barry Gilligan (Chairman)
Mr Brian Rea (Vice Chairman)
Ms Martina Anderson
Mr Alex Attwood
Mr Alex Maskey
Mr Basil McCrea
Mr Daithí McKay
Mr Gearóid Ó hEára
Mr Ian Paisley Jnr
Mr Trevor Ringland
Mr David Rose
Mr Suneil Sharma
Mr Jimmy Spratt
Mr Peter Weir

POLICE SERVICE OF NORTHERN IRELAND IN ATTENDANCE:

Mrs Judith Gillespie (A/Chief Constable)
Mr Duncan McCausland (A/Deputy Chief Constable)
Mr Drew Harris (ACC Crime Operations)
Mr David Jones (ACC Rural Region)
Mr David Best (Director of Finance & Support Services)
Mr Joe Stewart (Director of Human Resources)
Ms Liz Young, Head of Media & Personnel
Superintendent Peter Loughins, Criminal Justice Department
Mr Tony Mathewson, Head of Statistics Department
2 PSNI Personnel, Command Secretariat

OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr Adrian Donaldson (Chief Executive)
Dr Debbie Donnelly (D/Chief Executive)
Mr David Jackson (Director of Community Engagement)
Mr Sam Hagen (Director of Corporate Services)
Mr David Wilson (Director of Planning)
Mr Peter Gilleece (Director of Policy)
2 Board Officials

APOLOGIES:

Mr Tom Buchanan
Mr Leslie Cree
Ms Mary McKee
Mrs Rosaleen Moore

Chairman, Mr Barry Gilligan:

..... said 3 months ago when I stepped into the chair that I would not keep you waiting and a stickler for timing, unfortunately we have overrun this morning. You will be aware that there was a lot of business on, so my apologies for that.

Could I make a particular welcome today to visitors we have here from West Yorkshire, from the West Yorkshire Police Authority who have sat in on our Board session today, you are particularly welcome.

Acting Chief Constable and your colleagues, you are also very welcome. You know we have a lot of business to get through today and your policing report will no doubt cover many of the major issues since our last meeting, and Members as you know have a number of questions tabled in respect of some of these issues.

Before that I would like to make some comment on the PSNI Strategic Review document that was very publicly leaked last week and one of the reasons we are late here is that we have just had a very lengthy discussion amongst Board Members in private first of all and then with the Acting Chief Constable and her colleagues on this. The report as I have said on the record, is challenging, it is also very honest. It is not a new issue for the Board and there are issues included within this report we have been challenging the PSNI on for a number of reasons, not least the current and potential future financial picture for policing, and we have been doing that for some time. But more so from the priority that this Board has given to ensuring that the police provide a good public service. I am on record since taking my position in this Chair that that is top of my priority list, service delivery in an effective and efficient way.

This report did present a very critical appraisal from a policing perspective, of the challenges facing policing over the next 5 - 10 years. It was a report necessary to refocus police attention following what has been a period of very significant and complex reform. Reforms which were necessary to build confidence in our policing

service and what has been achieved over the course of the last 8 years should not be forgotten.

But the time is right to take stock and for that reason the report is very timely. The report highlights in detail the priorities for policing, many of which mirror those that this Board have set for the PSNI to deliver upon. Board Members are unanimous that the strategic issues and recommendations contained in the report require significant further discussion by this Board and the PSNI Command Team, and a special meeting will be held with the new Chief Constable later this month when he takes up post to discuss and agree future options in respect of this review, and of course as I have said, funding will form an important part of those discussions.

In this time of economic pressure, funding and the use of resources has come into much sharper focus. Resources have been a prominent feature of discussion at this Board table over the past year and further efficiencies will be sought by Treasury, there are more coming down the line. But the Board were again unanimous that at this time a cut of £17m is not acceptable to this Board and to the Members of this Board and a meeting with PSNI and the Minister has now been scheduled for 15 September 2009 to discuss this proposed cut.

At the centre of all this debate is the need for service delivery to the public, to our community. There has been real progress made, but there is clearly more work to do in meeting community needs, and as I have said, that it is number 1 priority on the in-tray of Matt Baggott when he arrives here on 22 September 2009.

Earlier this month the costs associated with the serious disorder at Ardoyne were released £420k. £420k is money that could have been spent on community policing. We are also due to receive a report on the policing of the parading season and whilst it is fair to say that on the whole it has been relatively quiet and we must note the work of political and community representatives on the ground in achieving that quiet season, there have been a number of contentious parades that have required a significant policing operation. Of course, we saw earlier this week sectarian tensions surfacing

and resulting in some quite serious interface rioting. Again, police time taken away from dealing with the community, the issues that the community want dealt with.

We are also going to receive today a presentation on the PSNI approach to dealing with serious violent crime.

Acting Chief Constable, we also have a number of questions tabled around the incident at Meigh a couple of weeks back. This is the illegal roadblock. These officers were out patrolling in the community and I met with yourself, I met some of these officers on Tuesday down in Bessbrook. I know that their commitment to the community and their commitment to providing a service that the community want has not changed and that service has continued since that incident, and that is of course in very stark contrast to those who were intent on imposing their version of the rule of law on others on that particular evening.

I think it is also worth noting and I was very pleased to see the very strong turnout from the community at a meeting organised by the District Policing Partnership (DPP) in Crossmaglen on Tuesday evening. People in that instance voted with their feet and made it quite clear through their attendance at that meeting that they want a policing service that works for their community and that works with their community.

Acting Chief Constable, it is over to you for your report and then we will take questions on it.

A/Chief Constable, Mrs Judith Gillespie:

Thank you Chairman and Members of the Board. In a way this is very much a crossroads meeting, because we are marking the departure of our respected Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde and we are looking forward with much expectation to his successor Matt Baggott. Now much as been said about Hugh Orde over the last couple of weeks and indeed in the last months, but just to add a few words on behalf of the Senior Command Team of this organisation about his legacy.

We are now a Service that in the past was in November 2001, 8% from the catholic community, we are now sitting with almost a quarter of the Service, 27.31% is Catholic. Almost a quarter of officers, 24.34% are female. We are seen as an employer of choice

for many, many people and whilst there is still some way to go, we are certainly moving in the right direction and we are pushing forward in our efforts to recruit from minority ethnic groups.

On public confidence, it is hard to keep and it is hard to win but despite major, major challenges public confidence in policing is growing. Your own independent Omnibus Survey is showing 87% of people have some, a lot or total confidence in the ability of the police to provide a day to day service to everyone in Northern Ireland.

On crime figures, although Sir Hugh had his own approach and difficulties with a target driven culture, over the last years the trends in overall crime have remained downwards and we are determined to work hard with our partners, with the Board to continue to reduce that and as you referred to Chairman, we are going to have a presentation on serious violent crime in a few minutes.

On the issue of military support, it is no surprise that during Sir Hugh's tenure we saw the end of the army's Operation Banner and the phasing out of soldiers from the streets in support of the civil power. The Chief Constable was completely unambiguous about the primacy of the police and that remains our position except obviously where specialist skills like bomb disposal and high risk search are required. You will have heard speculation in the media regarding the reintroduction of military resources in South Armagh. The police alone will continue to police South Armagh as in all other areas of Northern Ireland and as the Area Commander so eloquently put it, 'end of story'.

In fact the real story as you highlighted Chairman was the public meeting of the DPP attended by 100 in Crossmaglen, a clear indication of how the world has moved on in this area in the last few years. That of course leads me to the central tenet of all of our policing strategies which is 'policing with the community' and Sir Hugh saw community policing and its delivery through neighbourhood policing as the bedrock on which we build all our other services and we have no intention of changing that.

On finance, as you highlighted Chairman, one of the recurring pressures both for the Service and for the Board, has been on finance and we have a duty to deliver a service within a balanced budget.

Over the last CSR period we have delivered on cuts of £71m up to the period of 2007/08 and going forward for the next 3 years, we have cuts to deliver of £74m, so a request to deliver a further £17m cuts has to be taken within that context, we have not stood still and we have delivered a balanced budget for the last 10 years. Obviously this will be challenging and you referred to meetings between the Board, Minister and the police to discuss the current funding situation.

Just finally on Sir Hugh, he was never behind the door about anything but he certainly was not behind the door in reminding people that all of us, in particular those in positions of civic responsibility and leadership have a role to play in the shared future for Northern Ireland.

Sir Hugh was very proud of this Service and it was a privilege to serve with him and we wish him well at ACPO. But looking forward in relation to Matt Baggott. Of course we are looking to the future and his arrival and the Board made it very clear that he was a unanimous choice of the Selection Committee and that is a very powerful basis from which to move forward. We are looking forward to him coming, not least because of his support for neighbourhood policing which for many years this organisation has been progressing, and I have no doubt that Matt Baggott will bring added value to our Service. He is an officer of wisdom and experience and we do look forward to his leadership.

That brings me to the Strategic Review which you have already referred to Chairman which was carried out earlier this year by Dave Jones. We have briefed the Board on the Review and we have shared the report with Members and I personally am overseeing its progress and will ensure that it is at the top of the new Chief's in-tray. Indeed, he is absolutely right behind the Strategic Review. He is already familiar with the report and he is very keen on its concept of building from the neighbourhood back.

It is an important piece of work and it does not shrink from difficult or uncomfortable proposals and we are not afraid to shine a strong light into all corners of our business. I am pleased that during the extensive media coverage last week based on a leaked copy of the report, a number of Board Members recognised the serious intent behind the Review and I believe it has put us in a good position to negotiate with the Board and the NIO on our funding. It is always going to be a 'work in progress', it does not stand

still but we have proven that we are prepared to take an honest hard look at ourselves and act on our findings. We know for example, that too many of our officers are spending too much time in police stations filling in forms. Some of these forms are absolutely necessary but some are not. We know that we need to have officers available for duty at times when things are happening, when the public expect to see us and we know that anti social behaviour needs to be given bigger priorities with our partner agencies and that broad focus was the Strategic Review's main value.

Moving forward then onto the dissident republican threat and while we drive forward with the principles of policing with the community and local neighbourhood policing, the threat from terrorist criminals is still very real. That remains a major policing challenge but it is one that we are tackling and will continue to tackle, but it is a challenge for everyone, for every citizen. The rest of us want to move forward but these people either do not want to or seem incapable of doing that. We must continue to isolate them and with the help of the community, with information from the community and the community's support, bring them to justice.

Chairman, you referred to the incident in Meigh in South Armagh where a local police patrol delivering a local policing service, came across armed terrorist criminals and it has received enormous media coverage both inside and outside the Service and it has caused considerable debate. I just want to make our position absolutely crystal clear. Those officers involved who were on routine patrol in the area took completely the right course of action, and we will defend that decision to all comers. I know Meigh, I was down there last week and I visited the officers involved with you Chairman. Physically it is a compact community. At that crossroads there was a late opening shop which was open at the time, a convenience store, a pub and a chip shop. If police had been drawn into any type of armed confrontation with those terrorists in such a restricted area, there would undoubtedly have been civilian casualties and the Board would quite rightly have held me to account on that outcome.

Meigh was a potentially lethal situation and we have launched a serious crime investigation into that and we must not lose sight of that, but the officers were out there doing their job delivering a service to the community and they took the right course of action, and the following day they were back delivering a service to a victim of domestic abuse in the Meigh area.

On the marching session which you highlighted Chairman, it is important that Members are kept abreast of how the season has gone and that will take a little time to evaluate in detail. I would suggest Chairman that we will put together a report on the various aspects of the marching season and bring it to a future Board meeting to brief the Board in detail, but in general terms, it passed off peacefully. There was completely unacceptable violence and disorder in a few areas over the twelfth including Rasharkin, North Belfast and Londonderry but I think everyone realises the contribution that community representatives have made and we have worked together to achieve a relatively peaceful outcome.

On the disorder in East Belfast, Board Members will no doubt be aware of the disorder on the evening of the bank holiday, and unfortunately, we were forced to deploy and use AEPs to protect officers and property and the community after police came under heavy attack. There was serious damage to police vehicles and a police officer was injured. We have referred this investigation to the Police Ombudsman, but once again, the country was caught in a spotlight of reckless public disorder and community hatred, and as often happens, the police were caught in the middle between 2 opposing groups. Three people have been charged already and there have been further arrests last night and we will certainly be seeking to gather all the evidence we can to bring those involved to justice.

Finally Chairman, on some of the proactive initiatives that we have been working on in the last month. In Fermanagh West, we now have Chief Superintendent Michael Skuce recently launched his Fermanagh West Neighbourhood Team and this is what the job is all about, named police officers out there in their local communities getting their faces, names and telephone numbers known, talking to people and dealing with the problems as they arise.

Since the beginning of the financial year on 1 April 2009, there have been 11 homicides in Northern Ireland and this figure includes 10 murders and 1 case of manslaughter. Detectives have been working around the clock and have achieved a 100% clearance rate to date, a total of 26 people have been charged.

Of course policing is not just done on 2 legs. In Fermanagh, one of our dogs, a Belgian Shepherd named 'Tack' and his handler of course, located an 80 year old man who had been missing from his home in Newtownbutler. We used our helicopter and officers on foot but it was down to 'Tack' to save the day. He located the man at around midnight where he had fallen in fields and he was taken to hospital and has survived we are happy to say. Of course, if our dogs are worth their dog food then the helicopter continues to make a major contribution. In July it was used to help to evacuate casualties after a light aircraft crash in Fermanagh and last month, following a road traffic collision near Carnlough, we evacuated a man with serious head injuries to hospital because other agencies were unable to make the scene.

There are many other initiatives Chairman I could speak about. If I could also mention our officers who are always willing to have a go when peoples lives are at risk. Recently 2 officers in Carrickfergus jumped into the sea after a man and women got into difficulties in the water at Marine Highway, both were brought to safety by the officers.

A very important campaign that was launched this week was "Unite against Hate" and we all know that hate crime is a real poison in our society and I am pleased that earlier this week the police were able to join with OFMDFM, the Community Safety Unit and the NIO, the Equality Commission and Community Relations Council in the launch of the "Unite against Hate" campaign and as A/DCC McCausland has said at the launch, hate crime is unacceptable, no-one deserves it and no-one deserves to get away with it.

Finally Chairman to finish, I had the privilege of attending the Mela festival in Botanic Gardens on Sunday representing the Service and whilst the Mela's roots are firmly planted in our Indian community, it was a real pleasure to see that it has now broadened out as a celebration as all things diverse within the community in Northern Ireland and as a Police Service, we were delighted to contribute to that. It was a pleasure to take part in such a positive event which portrayed Belfast as a vibrant, diverse city.

Chairman, those are my remarks. Thank you.

Chairman, Mr Barry Gilligan:

Thank you very much A/Chief Constable. Do Members have any questions on the A/Chief Constable's opening remarks that are not otherwise covered by the tabled questions? Mr Maskey.

Mr Alex Maskey:

Thank you Chairman. If I could make a few comments Chairman if you do not mind. I would thank the A/Chief Constable for giving her report and congratulate you as the first woman to be in the position of A/Chief Constable, so good luck in your role. Obviously the report you have given us covers a whole range of issues and I would want to draw attention to the courage of the officers who did rescue the people in Carrickfergus. I think it is important to recognise where people are rising to the occasion and in fact, who are going above and beyond the call of duty.

Could I make a couple of points? Obviously the Strategic Review has been discussed and has got widespread media coverage and I just want to say that certainly following on from our discussions, I look forward to our dedicated discussion if you like in the weeks ahead as to how we move all of that forward. There has been a number of very important issues drawn to our attention.

In terms of the finances which has in a way has been dealt with within that, I think it is just fair to say that most Members if not all Members of the Board are quite prepared to root out where there is a financial wastage or maybe a failure to properly utilise the personnel resource we have at our disposal, but at the same token we are not prepared to do that on the basis of depriving people of the professional police service that they are entitled to have, and also to make sure that the officers themselves have the necessary resources to carry out their duties. I think both of those principles are very, very important.

I want to deal with and it would be remiss of me if I did not deal with this issue of public confidence, and you have outlined a number of the recent public disturbances. I just want to put on record that the public confidence that we all work for and which some of your officers again even upstairs have alluded to, which is something which has been building, will not be secured certainly in sections of the community with the use of plastic bullets. I want very importantly to flag this matter up this afternoon because

certainly for many of the people that we represent, and indeed others, the use of plastic bullets has been something which the Chief Constable who has just departed made a very public commitment both to families of victims of plastic bullets in the past and he made the public commitment that these weapons would not be used in public order situations. Now, all I want to say this afternoon is, that we did witness over the last number of years deaths of people like Paul Winters and Sean Downs, Nora McCabe, Carol Ann Kelly, Julie Livingstone and many others for the most part were not involved in anything and most of those people I have mentioned were all very young children.

Now, I just want to place on record that I understand that public order situations are difficult. I welcome the fact that yourself A/Chief Constable has made the point that a lot of people in the communities, including the republican community, are working very hard at those interface areas in particular with yourselves and with other colleagues across the communities to minimise these problems, but they will not be minimise by the firing of plastic bullets and I want a commitment that these weapons will not be used, because in my opinion firing these weapons at young children in particular is not the way to win public confidence. You will not get my public confidence and you will not get the people that we represent confidence if these plastic bullets continue to be fired as I am worried are now being deployed on a routine basis and inevitably somebody is going to be seriously hurt or killed and that is not the way that we can move forward in respect of building public confidence in policing.

Chairman, Mr Barry Gilligan:

A/Chief Constable, do you want to address that?

A/Chief Constable, Mrs Judith Gillespie:

Yes, first of all I certainly welcome the comments on the co-operation with the communities at interface areas and that is absolutely critical to solving this problem in the longer term.

You also mentioned Mr Maskey the importance that the frontend service delivery should not suffer as a result of cuts and that is exactly what the Strategic Review is about, about putting us on the front foot so as we know where we can delivery efficiencies. However, it is certainly going to be very challenging to deliver anything up

to £17m in cuts in the current financial context and given what we have already delivered in terms of savings.

In terms of the use of AEPs, you suggested that their use was becoming routine; that is absolutely not the case. Deployment of AEPs has very, very strict command protocols requiring authorisation right up to the level of Assistant Chief Constable and as it was on the night in question, it was an Assistant Chief Constable who had been asked to authorise their deployment and there are very, very clear protocols around that. If we had not deployed AEPs I am not sure what the choice would have been. It certainly would have been much more serious than the outcome of the incident as it was. No police officer particularly wants to use AEP nor indeed, use any other sort of force, but on the night in question, the rioting was of such an extent and such a severity that we had no choice and I said that in my opening remarks, there was no choice but to use AEP. Six rounds were fired, the matter has been referred to the Ombudsman and it will be investigated.

Chairman, Mr Barry Gilligan:

Mr Basil McCrea.

Mr Basil McCrea:

Thank you Chairman. On the issue of the proposed cuts of £17m, I do think it is important that we have this debate in an open and transparent way. There is sometimes a suggestion that we have to go away and fine tune things behind the scenes, but I do think it is important that the public are aware of the choices facing us as a society, and in that context I actually welcome the fact that the Strategic Review gives us food for thought and to have a discussion.

The issue about AEPs which has just been raised. Yesterday A/Deputy Chief Constable McCausland presented to my Committee, the Human Rights and Professional Standards, talking about the number of deployments of all uses of force by the PSNI over a year, including the use of batons, CS Spray, AEPs and TASERs. One of the issues that came forward was that actually the use of AEPs and TASERs was very, very limited and it might be useful A/Chief Constable if you could actually explain to people when AEPs are used, that they are not used for general crowd control, they

are not used in a public order sense and it would just be for the clarity exactly in what circumstances you can bring them forward.

Finally, we will talk about other issues when it comes forward but it is important I think when we look about the future of policing that we actually tackle some of the hard situations that are out there, not the least of which is Meigh or the rioting in the Ardoyne or others and we as a society need to decided where we are going to deploy our resources for the benefit of all of the people in Northern Ireland.

Chairman, Mr Barry Gilligan:

A/Chief Constable.

A/Chief Constable, Mrs Judith Gillespie:

Well A/DCC McCausland will cover the specifics of the AEPs, but you are quite right Mr McCrea, in terms of the £17m there will be an open and transparent conversation between the Board, the police and the Minister and we have given that undertaking in the private session and I give it again here in the public session.

A/Deputy Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

Thank you Chairman. We did reproduce a report on the request from the Human Rights and Professional Standards Committee in relation to the use of force by the Police Service of Northern Ireland, and we will produce that on an annual basis as a human rights compliant issue in terms of one of the recommendations that came forward. What we have undertaken to do, particularly in relation to the 13 July and in relation to last Monday's bank holiday, is to give a special report to the Board's Human Rights and Professional Standards Committee and to allow them to examine the use of the AEP systems relevant to the decisions that were made.

The Human Rights Advisor to the Board will, in effect, take forward those reports and we will work in conjunction with her, so those will be brought back to that Committee and then I would assume, if they wish then to bring them to the full Board from that point of view. The use of force document is in the public domain and it is available and we have undertaken to provide additional details to the Human Rights and Professional Standards Committee as to the use of TASER, as to the use of AEPs and we also talked about comparisons between the use of batons to other similar like forces in the

rest of the United Kingdom, so we have been extremely open and transparent in relation to this.

In terms of the specific question about AEPs, they are legitimate in our sense, in terms of an appropriate and proportionate response at occasions to the very serious end of violence where death or very serious injury is likely to occur or very serious damage. They are not deployed in any fashion or routine basis. For your reassurance Chairman, there were 16 deployment uses last year and they were all around the use of less lethal force in firearm situations, they were not deployed at all in public disorder. So, the Board has established a very strong and I feel a very clear monitoring process and we are being held accountable in relation to these. But again I emphasise, they are a last resort in many instances for Senior Commanders to decide, not by any sense routine.

Chairman, Mr Barry Gilligan:

Thank you A/Deputy Chief Constable. Mr McCrea you might invite all Members to that particular Committee meeting when it comes up.

I have 2 more questions for the A/Chief Constable in this session from Mr Alex Attwood and Mr Peter Weir.

Mr Alex Attwood:

Thank you for that presentation. This issue of the leaked report A/Chief Constable has become very messy and all of us need to get a grip on it and deal with some of the issues in that document and otherwise. In particular, in my view the police have not demonstrated over the years that they can get their heads around some of the human resource issues, including back office jobs. In my view you simply do not lack the capacity, you lack the capacity to deal with it, and we need for once and for all to now deal with it. But my concern is this. I think that the Board is getting squeezed, certainly by the NIO and possibly by the PSNI when it comes to future funding issues. You have said publicly A/Chief Constable that the Security Minister was “very, very supportive in principle of the proposals in this internal review”. What he was talking about was your recommendation 2 which basically is a remodelling of the financing of the PSNI which would see less police officers even if they were deployed differently, and the PSNI are advocating essentially that position.

I see the Board getting squeezed in all of that by a very, very supportive Security Minister and by the PSNI making recommendation 2 that goes in that direction. That is the PSNI and that is the NIO getting ahead of the Board and that is not good for the authority of the Board or for accountability and oversight when it comes to what the police do in the north and I think you need to take that on board.

One final comment is this, I think the police need to learn some lessons about the summer and that is that whilst there has been very responsible policing in most circumstances, there is a sense that the police revert to force options somewhat prematurely, that they over policed one or two instants and that there are people out there who are just waiting to exploit that sense of things. Now, the police in the general do not go in that direction but there have been one or 2 examples where I think the community are watching very closely and are saying, the police have to prove themselves a bit more.

Chairman, Mr Barry Gilligan:

A/Chief Constable.

A/Chief Constable, Mrs Judith Gillespie:

Well, the report was leaked and it was not certainly myself who leaked it but we deal with the consequences of that leak. It is now in the public domain and there is a lot of public debate about it and do you know what, we welcome that debate because we are talking about the right things.

In terms of the back office jobs, obviously that is very much linked into our fixed budget, the budget that is not flexible. 82% of our budget is covering police and staff salaries and when the Northern Ireland Office come to us seeking cuts, in the past we have gone into our non-fixed costs and we have come to a point where we firmly believe that our non-fixed costs cannot be cut any further. The only way to go is to have a conversation, a debate which is what recommendation 2 is saying, that we should negotiate between the Northern Ireland Office, the Board and the police a flexible budget. That does not mean less police officers on the street, in fact it could actually mean more police officers on the street, but without that flexibility the Strategic Review is going nowhere and will not be able to achieve a lot of the recommendations which the Board would welcome and would want us to be implementing. It is a

recommendation, I have said already publicly and in the private session of the Board, that it will be a tripartite discussion, a conversation between the Board, the Minister and the police and that remains the case.

In terms of lessons learned from the summer serious rioting, I think we need to make sure that the spotlight is shone on those who committed the serious crimes. There was serious damage to police vehicles, there was a police officer injured, there was damage to other people's property, that is where the focus needs to be and if there are lessons that need to be learned from the Ombudsman's report, well we have shown in the past we are willing to learn those lessons and will take them on board.

Chairman, Mr Peter Weir:

Mr Peter Weir.

Mr Peter Weir:

Thank you Chairman, could I also add my congratulations to the A/Chief Constable and I think it is good to see a woman up there in that position, I think A/Chief Constable you do, apart from anything else, provide a very positive role model within the organisation.

But in terms of some of the issues that have been raised, certainly I welcome the assurances that have been given in terms of the Strategic Review and indeed I think we look forward, certainly from our party's point of view and across the Board, to working in partnership with you on these key strategic issues. I think with regards to the Strategic Review, again without getting into any degree of detail, there is an awful lot that is very sensible and stuff that we would welcome within it. There will be aspects of it, I think as we have highlighted, indeed concerns over budgetary and over the police complement that we do have very major concerns over but I do not want to get into the detail, that will be a debate for another day in relation to it.

I would simply say in terms of the £17m, I mean government on the one hand seems very keen to make progress in Northern Ireland and I think they need to at times wise up as regards their position, and indeed, if they are looking to make progress making threats to slash police budgets further is not one that is going to be in anybody's interest and I think going to move things forward.

Could I ask you just in relation to some of the activities and I appreciate we are going to come into the details of Meigh and other areas at a later stage, but in terms of some of the riots and I think I have to say that I think when people are brought out onto the streets at times, people who are doing so have got to take a degree of responsibility for that. Mention has been made of AEPs of TASERs, of plastic bullets, can you confirm that any use of any of these instruments of force, weapons of force are proportionate in terms of the circumstances that indeed, in many ways, these are weapons of last resort it is indeed driven by necessity.

Could I also ask you to comment because obviously as a Police Board, we are holding the police to account on a range of issues be it Meigh or whatever in terms of what the police strategy in dealing with those is, but there is also a very strong responsibility on the community as a whole to step up to the mark as well and be it on paramilitary activity, be it on rioting, be it on other criminal activity, there has got to be a pivotal role but for leaders of the community and members of the community to come forward with that information and to give you the vital assistance. I think at times obviously our focus is on the police, but there is a very major responsibility on the community and I wonder if you want to say a few words on that as well.

Acting Chief Constable, Mrs Judith Gillespie:

Yes, absolutely, I welcome the opportunity to appeal to all parts of the community but in particular given the serious crime investigation which is ongoing in Meigh in relation to the illegal roadblock, I am sure the decent people of Meigh do not want to see that sort of activity on their roads and, therefore, I take this opportunity to appeal to anyone who has any information about that incident to please come forward to the police or ring the confidential telephone line. The same insofar as the serious rioting is concerned, we already have 3 people charged. We have made a number of arrests and that is a serious crime investigation which is also ongoing and again I would appeal. Nobody wants this sort of activity on their streets, nobody wants it anywhere in Northern Ireland and I just would appeal to all parts of the community and those community representatives who know who was involved, please come forward and tell us because that is the way we will deal with it, with the help of the community, we will not deal with it any other way. But Acting DCC McCausland will deal with the specific issue about use of force.

Acting Deputy Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

I mean very clearly Chairman we are very heavily scrutinised and rightly so, both by this Board and by the Ombudsman in relation to the use of any force, and Peter Weir is right in what he says in relation to these particular weapons. They are in many instances, weapons that are deployed as a last resort where the situation has deteriorated beyond the control of the police or in many times, the community representatives who have tried and tried significantly to stop the disorder breaking out. We do look and we do review even ourselves independently of how we tackle that particular policing operation to see if there are any things that we can learn from that. We have shared that learning, not just with colleagues here in Northern Ireland but right across these islands in terms of helping them learn from our experiences and we in turn learn from them, so please be assured there is a very clear control as to the use of these and a very clear accountability process, but they are only deployed when we feel it really serious to protect our officers and members of the public from potentially life threatening situations.

Chairman, Mr Barry Gillian:

Thank you Acting DCC McCausland.

Acting Chief Constable, could we move you on to the presentation on the most serious violent crime please?

Acting Chief Constable, Mrs Judith Gillespie:

Yes Chairman, this is obviously an issue of serious concern to us and to the Board and hence we have Tony Mathewson and Superintendent Peter Loughins who will do a brief presentation in relation to the figures and what we are going to do about it, and what the Board can do to assist.

Mr Tony Mathewson, PSNI:

Good afternoon Chairman, ladies and gentleman. My name is Tony Mathewson, I head up the PSNI Statistics Branch and my colleague here is Superintendent Peter Loughins from the Criminal Justice Department and we are going to talk to you for a period of about 10 or 15 minutes about more serious violence.

I am firstly going to cover the definition of 'more serious violence' and then after that Superintendent Loughins is going to talk a bit more about the factors that are associated with more serious violence and some of the initiatives that PSNI have adopted to address the problem.

Firstly, in terms of the definition of 'more serious violence' you will see on this slide we tried to highlight and describe it in terms of the types of offences that are included in more serious violence. Violent crime we take to include, offences against the person, robbery offences and sexual offences and you will see from the diagram that offences of more serious violence are a subset of offences against the person. So, we have about 30,000 violent crimes a year and about 29,000 offences against the person and the more serious violence is a subset of the offences against the person.

The offences that it includes, you can see on the list, it is obviously the more serious injury type of assaults, murder, manslaughter and dangerous driving, aggravated vehicle taking, attempted murder, wounding with intent, GBH those sort of offences.

To put more serious violence in context, in 2008/09 we had 2,001 offences of more serious violence, that equates to about 1.8% of all crime. We had 110,000 crimes last year, it is about 6.1% of all violent crime which is sexual offences, robbery offences and offences against the person and about 6.8% of offences against the person.

In terms of the component offences within more serious violence, you will see the list of offences and the numbers that were recorded in 2008/09 and the main point to make here is that the top 2 offences – wounding, grievous bodily harm and wounding with intent and grievous bodily harm with intent, accounted for the vast majority of more serious violence, they accounted for 86% in total, so it is those 2 offences that make up the majority of more serious violence.

Looking at trends and more serious violence over the last few years, this chart shows the levels of more serious violence recorded each year from 2002/03 up to 2008/09. 2003/04 through to 2007/08 you can see was quite relatively consistent, with about 1,500 offences of more serious violence per annum. Then we had an increase last year of about 27% which took us up to our 2,001 offences and financial year to date this

year, it looks like we have about a 28% or 29% increase again, something similar to last year.

When we look at offences of more serious violence on a monthly basis in more detail, the yellow line is the trend of more serious violence, going from April 2007 on a monthly basis up to July 2009. You can see there has been quite a bit of variation, but it really has increased, the more serious violence increased really since January 2008. The 2 main component offences are plotted below and you can see there was an increase in one of those component offences from April this year. That we feel is very much due to a technical issue where the Home Office issued clarification on how specific offences within this group should be recorded. Now we had those guidelines last year and we got more detail from the Home Office and we issued them to Districts in April and we assume that this is because that technicality is now kicking in in terms of Districts. We reckon it accounts for about 30 to 40 additional offences of more serious violence per month.

That technical issue that we encountered that caused that increase from April this year, it is not just specific to PSNI. Our colleagues in England and Wales experienced the same problem and official figures released for the whole of England and Wales, the 44 forces for 2008/09 show that 35 of the 44 forces, 80% had a similar problem that specific offence type increased quite significantly for them. Some forces it increased more than twofold. As a result in England and Wales, the Home Office are now focusing on a wider definition of assault with injury to try and get around that problem. This slide really just highlights the trend again with more serious violence at the bottom and in PSNI if we adopted or looked at that wider definition of assault with injury you can see that the circled areas on the right hand side are the financial year to date figures and you will see that more serious violence, financial year to date has increased about 29% which is up 192 offences but the wider definition of assault with injury which includes the increase in level of more serious violence is actually down financial year to date, so there is just a slightly different way of looking at it and it certainly puts things into context.

I will now hand over to Superintendent Peter Loughins.

Superintendent Peter Loughins, Criminal Justice Department:

Thank you. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen.

I just want to cover what some of the major factors are in relation to more serious violent crime and some of the initiatives that we are taking forward in relation to it. There is no doubt and it will be no surprise that alcohol is a major factor. Most more serious violent crime again occurs at weekends and particularly between midnight and 3am. Offenders are typically males aged between 18 and 30. If a female is a victim, it is more likely to be in a domestic type setting and males are more likely to be victims if it is in a social aspect.

Knives and glasses and bottles would be the most common type of weapon used but I would again emphasise, that in the vast majority of assaults, no weapons are used, however in those where a weapon is used it is usually a knife or a glass bottle.

When we look at knife crime in particular over the last couple of years, it has been fairly static and indeed last year there was a decrease of almost 2% with a decrease of 50 in assaults and that was almost a decrease of 9%. There was a slight increase in robberies where a knife had been used, but again it is a very serious issue because anybody who has suffered from a knife injury, the impact on the victim and their families, is extremely serious.

In relation to knife crime, some of the things that we have been doing. There has been a republication and circulation of the poster campaign and we have included knife crime in the circulation for Campus Watch where we are looking at each of the universities coming into the new year with the Freshers Week.

Last year along with the Northern Ireland Office and the Department of Education and Crimestoppers, we ran an education programme for post primary school year 9 pupils and we had over 4,000 attended a knife crime drama and knife crime packs were provided to all post primary schools and a copy of the drama as well and that complements the ongoing work that we are doing in the CASE programme, which is our citizenship and safety education. Wands are also on issue to each of the police Districts and they can use those on routine patrolling or indeed at major events, and last year the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) changed its code for prosecutors for a
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new public interest consideration which supports prosecution in instances where a knife as been used in a crime.

We have just carried out some research recently in relation to alcohol in relation to arrests and this year, the first 8 months of this year, there have been almost 20,000 arrests in Northern Ireland. 46% of those arrests alcohol has been shown to be a contributory factor and in a quarter of those, almost 2,400 were for assaults, and about one sixth of those are for public order type of offences as well.

Then when we look at the day and time of arrest which ties into everything we are doing about how we use our resources, looking again at the Strategic Review and having that visible police presence. When we look at the screen, the red offences are alcohol related offences and on the left, that is the time of the arrests and on the right, the days of the arrests and it is no surprise that 70% of arrests between 10 o'clock at night and 6 o'clock in the morning are alcohol related, and when we look particularly at weekends, about 77% of arrests are for alcohol related offences, so that has a huge impact on our resources and when we deploy them.

Again looking at some service wide initiatives on alcohol, we have helped with the Department of Health Action Plan addressing young peoples drinking in Northern Ireland, and we have been working in partnership with them. It looks at young peoples drinking in 2 contexts, both under age drinking and 18 to 25 year olds and that is a multi agency cross departmental action plan. PSNI have specific actions on it and we have a working party taking those forward.

We are also working with the alcohol industry and indeed, there was a meeting this morning at 11 o'clock about developing a code of conduct or quality standards for the whole of the alcohol industry, for the off licenses, for supermarkets, for pubs, for clubs, for hotels and together with that we are looking at an independent complaints body and that will hopefully be rolled out between now and the end of this year.

On our proactive tasking on Operation Snapper where we are tackling drinking in public places, that was launched about 14 months ago, and to date we have seized almost 40,000 items of alcohol through underage drinking or on-street drinking or drinking at parades. About 1,100 young people have been referred to the Youth Diversion and
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about 541 to counsels for prosecution. Along with the Board, and it is still running at the minute, we are running the "You, Your Child and Alcohol" campaign and there have been adverts on the television about parental responsibility and alcohol. There are leaflets which are available through Tesco stores and all Department of Health outlets. Again, we are looking to develop now information sharing protocols with A&E Departments and there are a lot of people admitted to A&E Departments on Friday and Saturday nights and police do not get to hear about it, if we could find some mechanism to share the information on that, it may again help us to target our resources better.

In relation to more serious violent crime, it is fair to say that every District tackles the issue through the National Intelligence Model processes, through prevention, intelligence, enforcement and reassurance. Each of them has a separate problem profile and control strategy that they are trying to target. Every District has high visibility patrolling and will have either an on "Night Life" or a "Get Home Safe" like they have in Belfast where they are trying to tackle the issues around the night time economy. Again, there is focus on the licensed premises and in Belfast, there is a License Premises Group which is multi agency. Officers maximise use of CCTV and handheld camcorders and there is a pro-charging policy for serious violent crime, and again we use robust bail conditions. Looking at the domestic violence, the public protection teams focus on repeat victims and offenders.

Some forthcoming legislation that we have will be introducing test purchasing for alcohol, where people underage will be able to go in and buy alcohol. The Department of Social Development is bringing in a Proof of Age standards scheme, where only specified types of identification can be used for young people when they go into an off licence. Closure powers will be introduced for licensed premises where the police will have the ability to close premises if we have information to suggest that there is going to be disorder or indeed, a police officer on a night on duty, an Inspector will have the power to close the premises and again, further down the line, penalty notices for disorder where we have the power to issue fixed penalties for disorderly conduct.

Other potential legislation which they have in England and Wales which is not here are, Violent Offender Orders. Anyone who has served 12 months for a serious violent crime must be registered with the police. They can be banned from attending certain places and certain events and they must register with the police if they have changed their address and intend to go out of the country, or similar to that.

Similarly, Restraining Orders for domestic violence offenders which can be added on conviction and indeed, on acquittal putting certain conditions on offenders. I think only yesterday, ASBOs (Anti Social Behaviour Orders) for alcohol, whether putting Drinking Banning Orders which we call BDOs in place for habitual offenders again to prevent them from reoffending in certain places.

Lastly, I will talk about some of things that are ongoing and what we could really do with support. An alcohol conference that is being held around the start of December 2009, again the Department of Health are leading in that but it is going to be a multi agency event. In November 2009, the Youth Justice Agency are hosting a "Restoring Respect" conference and again it is looking at violent crime and young people.

Again, looking at the more serious violent crime, it is something that perhaps the DPPs could have themed events for, and again we will be producing a tool kit which will be launched at the alcohol conference, and again, working with DPPs and CSPs to see if locally we could set up some community alcohol projects. But when we look in the long term, and we need to look at a community planning model in relation to violent crime because the approach taken in Scotland is certainly a public health approach. Within the Scottish police they have a Violent Crime Reduction Unit which works again with the Scottish Government Violence Reduction Team and it is all about having a collective approach to violent crime and it is not something, an issue that the police can do ourselves. A lot of people have different information, a different part of a process and I think that it is only by coming together that you can make any meaningful impact on it, but again that is something that certainly will be on the long term, but I think the way forward.

Chairman, Mr Barry Gilligan:

Thank you very much Superintendent Loughins and Mr Mathewson. Certainly from a Board point of view I think we can help by encouraging DPPs and Mr Maskey maybe that is something that you could bring to your Committee.

Could I just ask, in terms of knife crime, what sort of sanction could someone found carrying a knife, what sanction can they expect?

Superintendent Peter Loughins, Criminal Justice Department:

Again, that will depend on the circumstances at the time and why they were carrying it, what offence they have been convicted for and again I suppose it is down to the sentencing of the court, but the PPS have guidance in that they will certainly push for heavier sentencing. I do not have any details about the sanction. It could be a jail term, it could be community service, again it would depend on the nature of the offence, the age of the person, the circumstances it was being carried in, it is hard to be definitive about it Chairman.

Acting Deputy Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

All those are very clear points Superintendent Loughins makes Chairman. You know there was new legislation brought in in relation to the penalties for selling knives to young people and those are enforced. They can carry a very heavy monetary penalty and/or prison sentence and there are specific penalties of prison for carrying knives in certain circumstances, but the protocol with the PPS is to emphasise that the carrying of a knife is an aggravating factor in determining the sentence that any judge would in effect allocate and I think that is important to remember.

Chairman, Mr Barry Gilligan:

Have Members any questions? Ian Paisley Jnr.

Mr Ian Paisley Jnr:

Thank you Chairman. One of your statistics says that in excess of 20,000 people have been arrested in the first 7 months of this year, is that accurate, 20,000?

Superintendent Peter Loughins, Criminal Justice Department:

Yes, the first 8 months.

Mr Ian Paisley Jnr:

So, if we take it there are approximately 100,000 crimes in Northern Ireland, that accounts for 20% of our crime rates? If each of them represent a crime, that is 20% so 10% - 9,557 people are associated with the consumption of alcohol, so our crime rates could be reduced if we could address this issue by 10% if we were to really seriously approach this issue of addressing alcohol abuse in Northern Ireland.

Acting Deputy Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

You could probably reduce it significantly more Mr Chairman. The reality is, the 20,000 people that are being arrested are being arrested for some of the more serious crimes. A lot of other crimes we deal with without actually arresting people, but I think the biggest statistic is, nearly half of the people that require to be arrested have had or consumed alcohol that is the big issue, and alcohol seems to be one of the major factors which is actually in effect, driving and can be a causation factor of crime and that is what we are getting at.

Mr Ian Paisley Jnr:

It is just that it is an amazing statistic which says what lies at the bottom and maybe it is the straw that breaks the camel's back that pushes a person from threatening a crime to actually being involved in crime, if that can be addressed.

Acting Chief Constable, Mrs Judith Gillespie:

It illustrates how important it is to have a joined up partnership approach to all of this. As Superintendent Loughins has quite rightly said, the police cannot solve this alone and it absolutely needs Health, Education and everyone signed up and behind us and that is where the Board and the DPPs can definitely help.

Acting Deputy Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

That is why we are pushing the Scottish model, where it is education, health enforcement which we have delivered for this Board over the last 14 months together, and reoffending which is critically important. The Probation Service will tell us 61% of the people on their books have alcohol problems.

Mr Ian Paisley Jnr:

Do you get any support from the drinks industry?

Acting Deputy Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

Very much so. They have been very forward thinking in bringing forward their own voluntary Code of Practice and there are other things that they are prepared to introduce here which has required statutory powers in other parts of the country to bring forward.

Chairman, Mr Barry Gilligan:

Have you a point on that Mr Ringland?

Mr Trevor Ringland:

It is one of those things that you are constantly made aware of, the effects of alcohol especially with our young people. We do take action, and yet we also do not seem to take action because it constantly comes through as a problem. I have some experience talking to some young people involved in the more serious of crimes, including manslaughter, was alcohol, but you go through driving and all sorts of other problems and it is a real issue for our society to take on board. You do not mind people taking alcohol but it is taking alcohol in excess and it is something our politicians here could certainly help drive the partnership approach to it because it involves education, it involves sport, it involves those who can identify the problem and those who can actually provide some solutions to the problem and I certainly welcome the presentation on it.

Chairman, Mr Barry Gilligan:

Mr McCrea.

Mr Basil McCrea:

Thank you Chairman. I am very pleased to see the presentation come forward. As you know it was raised at the last Board meeting about our concern that the figures appear to show an upturn and really the question is, what is the strategy to actually deal with this? So the work, very useful to be brought out as Mr Ringland said, we have got to do it.

There is a question that comes back up in the figures. I do recall reading in the Strategic Review that the Scottish study that you refer to found that only 30% of serious violent crime was actually recorded, so I am wondering about that statistic. Does that come from the fact that if you went to the A&E Departments and you match them up, that you can discover there is a huge amount of information?

Acting Deputy Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

That is why we are developing the protocols with the Department of Health and Social Services to ensure that when people are brought into Accident and Emergency that we are informed and the issue is reported to us, because we do believe that there is a significant number of under-reporting for these particular incidents going on.

Chairman, Mr Barry Gilligan:

Just a few more questions on this report, sorry I have got to move on Mr McCrea. Mr Alex Maskey.

Mr Alex Maskey:

Thank you Chairman. Just very briefly. Acting DCC McCausland had previously reported about the initiative they had against young people abusing alcohol I think up and around Lisburn, and you had lessons learned from that and I am just wondering if you have a very brief update on that because that was some very good work and good lessons being learned.

Acting Deputy Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

That is what Superintendent Loughins refers to in Operation Snapper which is being rolled out across the province and we are approaching over 40,000 items that have been removed from young people. In many instances we try to remove and keep them out of the criminal justice system by being preventive rather than actually having to deal with a crime that causes as a result of that.

Chairman will also note that the first official function you attended as the Chairman of this Board was actually to the joint meeting of the 2 Ministers in terms of the alcohol strategy to try and join this up, and I think it is very important that this was a very strong statement by the Board. Plus, if we examine our anti social behaviour figures, the reductions over the last 2 years I believe correlate very significantly to the work that has

been done in relation to alcohol and young people, because we have tried to ensure that they are not involved or exposed to the greater risks that go on from getting drunk and getting involved in potential types of crimes that Superintendent Loughins and Mr Mathewson have referred to.

Chairman, Mr Barry Gilligan:

Martina Anderson.

Ms Martina Anderson:

Thank you. I am hearing what you say about the A&E but I am wondering and I know we have already identified and the Strategic Review confirmed about the 9 to 5 culture and I am wondering about the personnel then that you would have on in the evening time, particularly between 12 o'clock to 3 o'clock. Because, whilst these statistics that you are presently us with today are almost frightening when you look at the numbers and the figures. How many more people would be added to that if you had the personnel there on time because that whole issue of frontline delivery is very important for people. I know in my constituency and I know it is the same for many, many other MLAs and other elected representatives who are trying to get the PSNI out on the scene when someone is there being violent towards someone and when arrests could be made. But usually at those times of the evening when the PSNI turn up, the person has gone. So, I am wondering do you monitor and have you got maybe an estimation of how worse this could be in terms of statistics if you were there on the scene at the time?

Acting Deputy Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

We actually would hope, the simple thing that we are looking at is about matching the Service with the demand and that is what those figures show, that there is a greater demand between midnight and 3 o'clock in the morning as you highlight, and after than it drops away. But the reality is, if we actually generate more police officers onto the ground, we can prevent in effect people being assaulted in the first instance. So, rather than actually having to make arrests and in effect deal with crime, by being there and being there in sufficient resource and numbers to deal with it. We can prevent the crime in the first instance which in effect then makes the community safer overall and I think that is what this Board have been part of on some many occasions to try and do

Chairman, Mr Barry Gilligan:

Acting Chief Constable.

Acting Chief Constable, Mrs Judith Gillespie:

Could I also just add to that, I am absolutely behind what Acting DCC McCausland has said, but remember this is 1.8% of overall crime. The majority of incidents of anti social behaviour and volume crime are happening in the evening and it is important, you are quite right to point to the Strategic Review and it is important to get officers on the ground when the public need them most and the Strategic Review points to the time between 6pm and 10pm at the time when most anti social behaviour and volume crime is happening. This series violent crime, whilst it is very important, it is of concern and we need to have officers out there in the street policing it. It is 1.8% of overall crime and many of these serious violent offences are happening in domestic settings where police officers are not going to necessarily be in the best place to influence. Hence the need to work in partnership with health and other agencies.

Chairman, Mr Barry Gilligan:

Final question on this from Suneil Sharma.

Mr Suneil Sharma:

Thank you Chairman. Just a couple of questions. It was pointed out there is 2,001 most serious violent crimes, Acting Chief Constable, what are the sort of sanction clearance rates for that level of crime?

Acting Chief Constable, Mrs Judith Gillespie:

It is fairly high. I am just going to see if my colleagues can assist on the actual specifics of it.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr David Jones:

Usually you find in these sort of incidents you have got around a 50% to 60% probably higher detection rate for these kind of offences because these sorts of offences are related to people having contact with other each which provides forensic opportunities. There is usually possibly in city centres, CCTV etc and witnesses tend to engage and being there with other people then subject to violence.

Acting Deputy Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

The Acting Chief Constable has given an example of this, for example under murder, we have a 100% clearance this year. Now, that is no solace to the victim and the victims family, but it shows how we can and do actively be able to take a major effect and bring people before the courts in relation to this.

Mr Suneil Sharma:

Could I just ask one last question on one of the initiatives? It was talked about the alcohol ASBOs another New Labour one. How effective do you think these are going to be considering how you actually deal with it? Do you ban somebody from an area, how do you inform all the pubs about somebody's behaviour, it sounds one of those mad ideas that come out of No 10 now and then.

Acting Deputy Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

Well, you would not want me from a career point of view to comment on that. However, these are legislation issues that obviously the devolved administration will have to consider, because they may be measures that could be introduced in Northern Ireland. But we have the benefit of assessing how effective they are in the rest of the country before we rush to in effect ask for them. ASBOs have always been looked at by this Service as a last resort, as very much a last resort. We have not relied, as has some colleagues in other services heavily on ASBOs, because we believe there are other means of diverting and dealing with the problem before it comes out. But the reality is, some of these persistent offenders, there may be no other option and if you breach your ASBO then it is a direct criminal offence which brings you straight back to court and that potentially speeds up the justice system.

Chairman, Mr Barry Gilligan:

Thank you Acting DCC McCausland. Could I thank Superintendent Loughins and Tony Mathewson for your presentation.

That brings us to the general questions and we have quite a few of these. For the benefit of the members of the public and the media, they will be up on the screen, I will not ask Members to read them out and that hopefully will cut out the speeches that accompany the question. So, if I could bring you to question 6 is a question from Jimmy Spratt around pressures on the police budget.

Mr Jimmy Spratt:

Q6 - To ask the Chief Constable if the pressures on the policing budget will force the Chief Constable to reduce the number of officers in the PSNI, and to ask the Chief Constable if this occurs, will it have an adverse affect on the PSNI's ability to fight crime; secure convictions and deal with the ever increasing visibility gap which exists?

Acting Chief Constable, Mrs Judith Gillespie:

Thank you Chairman, I will take this. I go back to the comments I made in my opening remarks. In the context of the previous cuts we have already delivered £71m savings over the last CSR period and are planning to deliver a further £74m over this CSR period, so it is very important to put this £17m pressure in context. This is not the first cut that this organisation has had to take and it is clearly going to be the subject of debate as I have already said between the Northern Ireland Office, the Minister, the Board and the Police Service. But if I could just put this again into context in terms of the pressure over the last few years, overtime within this organisation has reduced by around 70% since 2002, that is a very significant reduction. Bear in mind also, as the Strategic Review has also highlighted, 82% of our current costs are fixed, in other words there are salary costs made up of police and staff. Much of the remaining 18% of our budget is already also committed, so whilst we talk about fixed costs and non-fixed costs, a lot of that 18% is also already committed, so we are right down to the wire in terms of what we can actually cut into. Hence, the real necessity to have a mature debate at a high level on a tripartite basis between the 3 parties concerned to make sure that going forward we have an adequate budget.

It is also important to state that this is not just about police head count; it is about police visibility on the ground. That is the key issue here and that is what the Strategic Review is certainly pointing to and if we do not have flexibility in our budget, we are going to have great difficulty in moving forward.

Finally, just by way of comment, realigning our resources is not exclusively dependent on flexible funding. We have already begun the process of a managed service of civilian detention officers which will certainly release police officers currently tied up in custody duties. There is a lot of ongoing work in relation to the review of criminal justice processes which I know there is a specific question on which Acting DCC McCausland will come to later and we do expect significant progress on that over the weeks and months ahead, which again will release police officers back out onto the street.

Chairman, Mr Barry Gilligan:

Mr Spratt, do you have a question?

Mr Jimmy Spratt:

Thank you Chairman, I guess the question is around any further reduction. Given that 5 of the officers in the Meigh situation were Full Time Reserve officers who will have to be replaced by regular officers. If you have to reduce numbers further in relation to the £17m and in relation to other cuts that Government are asking, well that surely must have a detrimental effect on securing convictions and fighting crime, and given reassurance and given resource allocations to support police officers who are dealing in difficult situations like Meigh and other areas where they are dealing with the specific threat of dissident republican paramilitary incidents at this minute in time.

Acting Chief Constable, Mrs Judith Gillespie:

Officers safety is the key priority and that is not going to be compromised in any of this. ACC Jones might want to talk in a little more detail about the Full Time Reserve and the plans to manage that particular issue, but I can tell you, that we are absolutely determined that frontline service delivery should be the last part of the business that sees any cuts, and if there have to be cuts made, it will be to other parts of the business. As I re-emphasise, we are not going to compromise on officers safety, that is a number one priority.

ACC Jones, do you want to talk on the Full Time Reserve?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr David Jones:

Yes, only to say, that on Tuesday of this week I met with all the District Commanders where we were actually looking at the likely impact of the withdrawal of the Full Time Reserve. That not only includes obviously identifying people who can replace the key roles that our colleagues have performed over the last few years, but also leads into other methods that we particularly would not want to discuss at this moment in time.

Chairman, Mr Barry Gilligan:

Thank you. Question No 11 in the name of Alex Attwood and is about the level of paramilitary involvement in band parades.

Q11 - To ask the Chief Constable, the assessment of the PSNI about the level of paramilitary involvement and membership of certain bands participating in band parades and if paramilitary organisations are using bands as a means to develop influence and recruit members?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Drew Harris:

Thank you. In respect of paramilitary involvement with band parades, there is some link between paramilitary organisations, on both sides of the divide, and certain bands, not all bands and there are instances where band members are also members of paramilitary organisations. However, the extent of which paramilitaries exploit these relationships is not particularly clear. There is no specific intelligence that they use this actively as a recruiting ground, nor that they use this to develop, influence and then recruit further members through the bands. So, some relationship but actually the extent to which that relationship is corrupted for their own purpose, remains unclear and does not seem to be a ready method of recruitment into paramilitary organisations.

Chairman, Mr Barry Gilligan:

Mr Attwood.

Mr Alex Attwood:

I thank the Assistant Chief Constable for that, and the question could equally apply to republican influence around bands. But could I urge the police, the Parades Commission and other authorities to investigate this matter further, given the anxieties that are deepening around the activities of bands generally. But in particular, could I

ask you to comment on this. I have been informed that, in respect of one loyalist paramilitary organisation, the UVF, that one of its dedicated departments is known as its Bands Department. Now a paramilitary organisation has gone to the level of structuring itself so that one of its activities relates to that of bands. Now, can you comment on that? But if that is the case, would that not be an alarming development that other illegal organisations, be they republican or loyalist, might adopt?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Drew Harris:

I have to say I have not heard of a Bands Department in the UVF, but I can enquire into it and obviously if that is correct and if it is a method with which they wish to target individuals, then that would be a worrying trend. But we do spend a lot of time and effort monitoring how these organisations wish to expand or recruit and I would say overall, that both UDA and UVF certainly their leadership seem entirely intent upon actually reducing their terrorist, military or whatever capability you might style this as, and move away from violence and criminality. But I can enquire specifically, but I have not heard of a Band Department.

Chairman, Mr Barry Gilligan:

Thank you ACC Harris. Question 1 from Basil McCrea, it is about the PSNI Communication Strategy.

Q1 - To ask the Chief Constable to outline the current Communication Strategy in order to reassure the public as to the effectiveness of the PSNI?

Head of Media & Personnel, Ms Liz Young:

Reassurance is a key priority for PSNI and it is a key strand of our Communication Strategy, but I also need to stress, it is not only our responsibility. It is also the responsibility of our key stakeholders, including Board Members, political representatives and other opinion formers, to support and build public confidence in the work that we do, and I would actively encourage people to come forward and engage in dialogue with us before maybe they engage with the media.

Our Reassurance Strategy is both reactive and proactive. Proactively in particular, through the Media Department. We are operational 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and we are one of the only Police Services in the UK that offer that service. We have 13 press officers working full time and we provide clear and updated information on investigations, we issue appeals, we brief the media regularly and we facilitate write ups and other opportunities to view first hand policing operations, whether it is on Roads Policing and Operation Heartbreak are just a couple of examples.

We also try to facilitate media interviews and requests no matter where they come from and even, dare I say it, with Mr Nolan, we still try to engage with that programme whilst a lot of other outlets have discontinued doing that.

We do provide briefings and dialogue with community representatives as well on any issues that happen on the ground, so that they are properly briefed and maybe are given more information that can help reassure their communities.

From a Public Affairs perspective, we do provide regular briefings for our key stakeholders. We have produced a monthly briefing which goes out to all of our MLAs and elected representatives. We also provide a local area briefing that goes out from the District Commanders to key stakeholders within their District, providing information at a District level. We also produce a quarterly e-brief which goes out to our business communities and we provide regular briefings to the political parties. So, part of our strategy is in reassuring our public on the work that we do, is actually in engaging and educating people on exactly what we do.

We have produced the Annual Report and it does go out to every household in Northern Ireland and provides us with a platform to detail some of the work of PSNI.

We are also responsible for working with our partners in Public Awareness campaigns and we have run a number of high profile campaigns this year. In particular, with the issues around burglary, domestic abuse, underage drinking, Roads Policing and hate crime. We also engage actively at District level with the DPPs and at meetings and we show attendance and support at all of those and at the public meetings held by the Board.

On a reactive basis we do rebut any statements that are in the press that we think are inaccurate or unfair, and we also do provide media facilities in relation to major incidents.

I would say, like any other organisation and any other department, we do not always get it right. There are situations where we might have handled things better, but sometimes facts are not immediately available to allow us to put information into the public domain quickly and sometimes we are criticised for that. But we are committed to learn from any of the mistakes that we make and we do welcome feedback to allow us to do that.

Mr Basil McCrea:

A very comprehensive reply. In terms of all of that, that is fine but there are some specific areas that I do think there is a problem with that you need to address.

A number of issues come up to do events happening in Larne, in Newtownbutler, in the Ardoyne where people do not understand the use of CCTV and the operational way that you operate with things. I do think that there is a missing link here where we hear all about the bad things that are happening but we do not hear that prosecutions take place sometime in the future. There is this time lag that goes on and in particular, you do have to explain to the public I think, that this is your strategy.

Ms Liz Young, Head of Media and Personnel:

I can respond to that and I actually agree with you to a certain extent. There is more that we can do. In particular situations, as I have said, sometimes the facts are not always immediately available or they are not as obvious as what they might seem, and we do have to be careful in how we respond to things, and also we have to be very aware of instances where OPONI have been involved and the Ombudsman have been brought in by another party. Again we have to be very careful about what we comment around any particular incident. But, in relation to it at a later date coming back and saying what the prosecutions are, unfortunately, it is of no interest to the media and I am saying that in relation sometimes to what has happened and the good news stories, because the event has gone and is well passed and it is very, very difficult to get that out. But there is more work that we can be doing proactively and that is something that I want to focus on going forward, and part of that is again, engaging and educating the

communities on what we do, why we do it the way we do it, and sometimes why we sometimes do not do things.

Chairman, Mr Barry Gilligan:

Thank you Ms Young. I bring you to question 14 from Alex Maskey and it is around the HET and families involved in the Ballymurphy massacre campaign.

Q14 - Will the HET respect the wishes of the families involved in the Ballymurphy Massacre Campaign who are seeking the establishment of a fully independent inquiry into the deaths of their loved ones and desist from making any further enquiries?

Acting Chief Constable, Mrs Judith Gillespie:

Thank you Chairman. In compliance with our absolute responsibilities under Article 2, we do look through the HET at every single death that occurred between 1969 and 1998 as a result of a security situation. That is with the aim of taking forward any new or remaining evidential possibilities and opportunities, and in every single case, the HET will invite the family to engage in that process, and the team put a great deal of effort into that into trying to answer the specific and personal questions they ask. Quite often very personal questions about the investigation and not necessarily what you might expect families to ask.

The HET is family focused in its work and it very much respects the wishes of all the families, whether or not they would like to engage with the team as the investigation progresses, they will take that view on board. We will write out to each family at the beginning of every review, and bear in mind, families are often disparate groups and different members of the family will have different views, so it is important that we engage will all of those close family members, and some may want to engage and some may not. Likewise, in a series of incidents such as Ballymurphy, one family may choose to engage and another family may not and that is entirely a matter for the family, but whatever happens whether they choose to engage or not, we will fulfil our Article 2 responsibilities and we will automatically review all cases and there is very sound operational reasons for that. Legally and ethically, there is the requirement to look at the evidential opportunities in every case. It allows us to look at intelligence links, at similar fact evidence, at cases that might be linked that we did not realised

were linked before and to give better, quicker answers to other families down the line and that is very importantly. Perhaps most importantly of all, to allow an 'opt out' where there is no family engagement on a case would perhaps place families at risk of pressure from individuals, paramilitary groups or people with a personal or vested interest in not having a case investigated. Therefore the policy from the outset for all HET cases, is that whether the family engages or not, we will review the case and we will fulfil our Article 2 responsibilities.

Just finally, families often change their minds on these cases and those who chose at the outset not to engage, when the review is finished around a third of them will come back and choose to engage when the review is complete.

Mr Alex Maskey:

Thank you. But as I understand it, the families themselves and this is quite a specific case, the families are saying that all of the families concerned have declined an offer from the HET to co-operate with them in this particular instance. What they are basically saying to the HET, as I understood from the last Chief Constable, is that the HET will only be involved if the families wish them to be, if the families do not wish them to be, then they will not do that. Obviously the police will have a responsibility to investigate crime and killings and so on and so forth, but in this case I understand that all of the families have asked the HET not to be involved in an enquiry because they are pursuing other lines of enquiry they hope. They may or may not get that, but they are asking the HET not to involve themselves at this point in time and I understood the HET could not and will not impose themselves on a family, but in this case they seem to be doing that.

Acting Chief Constable, Mrs Judith Gillespie:

It is entirely a matter for the families whether they want to pursue other avenues, that is entirely their prerogative. What is the responsibility of the police service is to complete an Article 2 compliant investigation in every single case whether a family engages, co-operates or not and we will continue to do that and the HET will continue to do that. Obviously ideally, we would want the engagement and support of families. If families choose not to engage that is not a reason for us not to fulfil our statutory responsibilities.

Chairman, Mr Barry Gilligan:

Thank you Acting Chief Constable.

Peter Weir has a question, question 2 dealing with the cost of external oversight into the PSNI and the effect on officers' morale.

Q2 - To ask the Chief Constable to detail how much it costs both in fiscal resources and manpower to deal with the ever increasing internal and external oversight investigations on the PSNI; and to ask the Chief Constable if such extensive oversight is having an adverse effect on officer's morale?

Acting Chief Constable, Mrs Judith Gillespie:

Again, this is quite a difficult question to give a specific response to. We all understand and accept the reason for independent oversight and the PSNI has been frequently described as the most accountable police service in the world, and that is for very sound reasons. We all understand the benefit of independent oversight when it comes to community confidence, which is one of the issues we have been talking about earlier on in this meeting.

But of course, we believe that there must be a balance struck between feeding the oversight machine and delivering a high quality effective police service. That balance is quite a fine balance and at the moment, as identified in the Strategic Review, perhaps the balance has tipped a little bit too much towards the independent oversight and we need to redress that. So, one way of doing that is by co-ordinating a lot of the work that our various oversight bodies do on us. For example, there are currently 14 oversight bodies with statutory responsibility to inspect the PSNI for one reason or another, and at the moment, just by way of example, there are 3 inspections ongoing by the Criminal Justice Inspectorate and 6 planned for this year, so that is 9 inspections by the Criminal Justice Inspectorate alone this year. There are lots of other bodies that also inspect us but the key to all of this is making sure that there is as little overlap and duplication and repeat investigations and inspections as possible, and I know the Board would support us on that and the Chairman and previous Chairman has worked very closely to make sure that those inspections were co-ordinated. The more co-ordination that can happen the better and we would ask for your support in that.

Chairman, Mr Barry Gilligan:

Thank you Acting Chief Constable. Mr Peter Weir.

Mr Peter Weir:

Just briefly, I think that everyone would accept a need and indeed there is benefit on having proper oversight. I think the concern is that we have seen very much over the last 7 or 8 years, an exponential growth in terms of the thing, I think that the figures we now have would suggest it has gone to a couple of independent reviews in about 2001/02 to I think the figure for 2008, was 42 reviews and I think there has got to be an acceptance that things are focused and indeed, that there is not duplication.

Just as regards the cost side of it, and I appreciate that it is difficult to give a ball park figure. If there is a bit more time given, would there be an opportunity at least to get an estimate of the ball park cost, because I think we do need to look and drill down in terms of the efficiency and actually ensure that there is not that duplication, and I think the cost element of it I think is not insignificant in that regard.

Acting Chief Constable, Mrs Judith Gillespie:

Well, there are certain specific areas where we could give you detailed costs. For example, in responding to Freedom of Information and there are certain parts of the organisation that work full time on dealing with inspection bodies and we can cost that. But ironically, in order to cost this, it is almost in the area of disproportionate cost because it would take a long time and quite a lot of effort to bottom this out accurately. But what I can say, probably the most difficult bit to cost is the opportunity cost, because whilst we are feeding the inspection machine, we are not doing other things and it is very, very difficult to cost that. But we must not lose sight of the fact that independent oversight does help in terms of community confidence.

Chairman, Mr Barry Gilligan:

Alex Attwood has a question, question 15 in respect of the evidence given by ACC Harris to the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee in respect of the sharing of intelligence around the Omagh bombing.

Q15 - To ask the Chief Constable, further to the evidence of ACC Drew Harris at the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee in July 2009, to confirm if, at the time of the Omagh bombing, GCHQ dissemination policy on the sharing of intelligence acquired by GCHQ further to a request from the RUC meant that RUC Special Branch had the authority to share this intelligence with RUC CID, and if not, did Special Branch request GCHQ to permit the sharing of this intelligence with CID?

Mr Alex Attwood:

Mr Alex Attwood:

Could I first of all acknowledge that the evidence given by ACC Harris to the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee did help clarify some issues, but there is still a need for some more clarity. Now, I am prepared to give the police a little more time to identify if and how they could shed more light on the critical issue of information that was in the hands of Special Branch shortly after the Omagh bombing, was not given to CID and why that situation arose. Given that it was not given to CID, how it is possible for Sir Peter Kelly who conducted the review of these matters after the Panorama programme, can claim “without any equivocation at all, that there was nothing (to use his words) in that material that could have assisted CID in terms of its investigation”. I am prepared to give the police some more space and time, to identify how the welcome evidence of ACC Harris to the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee can be further developed and further shared so that those critical issues can once and for all be answered. Because in my view, Sir Peter Kelly could not have made that claim if it is the case that intelligence in the hands of Special Branch was not shared, especially if it was not shared by Special Branch because they were not allowed to do so.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Drew Harris:

The evidence that I gave to the Northern Ireland Select Committee was probably as far we are able to go in the public domain, but the specific point that is being raised I will consider and consider how best we can advance briefing the Board. At the private session, I did make the suggestion that we could facilitate this through a confidential briefing to the Board Chairman and Vice Chairman, and that may be a route we wish to go. One of the frustrations for me in all of this is, that a lot of the information still around this, involves matters of national security or information which is properly regarded as being secret, and so there is very much a limit on what more I can say in the public domain, but I will consider specifically the question that has been put this afternoon.

Chairman, Mr Barry Gilligan:

Question 7 by Ian Paisley Jnr is around the illegal roadblock in Meigh last Friday week.

Q7 - To ask the Chief Constable to report on the circumstances surrounding the roadblock set up by dissident republicans in South Armagh, and the follow up action taken by the PSNI; to advise if such activities are on the rise and which areas of the province are most affected; to report on the apparent inadequate resources which are available in border areas, including backup/additional resources; to ask the Chief Constable what actions the PSNI have taken to ensure that such another situation will not arise again; to confirm what measures will be taken to ensure that effective community policing will not be diminished and the safety and security of neighbourhoods and the business community will not be compromised or endangered by the discontinuation of the PSNI Full Time Reserve?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr David Jones:

I will take that Chairman.

In the first instance can I just reiterate what the Acting Chief Constable said, which is the overwhelming opinion of the Senior Command Team, that the officers during this incident, which was a life threatening incident to those officers, did absolutely the right thing. It should not also be forgotten that they were there actually delivering a policing service, not only before the event and subsequent to the event, and there are a list of incidents in Meigh where officers have attended previously in the past and delivered a policing service.

If I can just point out the fact that there is an ongoing major criminal investigation into this matter and, therefore, I am limited into the level of detail that I can go in the public domain. What I will say is, that on Friday, 21 August 2009, police were conducting a routine patrol in the South Armagh area. They were conducting routine enquiries in the areas of Crossmaglen, Forkhill and Jonesborough.

On that evening they approached Meigh village and the officers observed several males at the crossroads in the village carrying out an illegal vehicle checkpoint. The men were wearing dark clothing and balaclavas and 2 of them appeared to be armed with long arm type weapons, the third individual was engaged in stopping traffic.

On seeing the illegal vehicle checkpoint, the police driver slowed his vehicle, reversed a short distance before turning away from the village, and it has to be said that that officer in particular should be commended for his actions at this time in relation to the activities he subsequently took.

As I have said, a major cross border investigation is ongoing and there are a number of lines of enquiry and are actively being pursued by detectives investigating the incident. Again, we would appeal to anybody who has information in relation to this incident to come forward to the police.

I think it has to be said that there is a degree of reassurance that needs to be done in relation to our own officers. We have met with the Federation, we will continue to meet with the Federation to reassure our own officers about the activities this organisation is doing to meet one of its number one priorities, which is the protection of its own officers.

I think the thing we have to reiterate as well is the fact, that only this week 100 people voted with their feet and went to the DPP at Crossmaglen where they engaged in neighbourhood policing with local Commanders, local officers about policing in that area.

Mr Ian Paisley Jnr:

Thank you. I am the first to accept very, very difficult situations that police officers come about and their reaction to split second, can either be the right reaction or catastrophically the wrong reaction and I am prepared to accept that. In your answer you have indicated that these people, I will use the word casually, but these people decided to have long arms on the streets of Northern Ireland. If that is the case, why was the helicopter not deployed to go into that area, to follow those people from a safer distance? I understand the helicopter was available. We spend £4m on this helicopter, why was it not used?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr David Jones:

I think and I need to be clear that I am not going to engage in discussions around operational tactics for obvious reasons. But on the evening in question, we were dealing with incidents over in Rasharkin in relation to the incident there and the helicopter was deployed there at the parade incident.

Mr Ian Paisley Jnr:

Are you saying the helicopter was not available because of that?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr David Jones:

I am saying at the time the helicopter was not requested.

Mr Ian Paisley Jnr:

Was not requested? If it had of been requested, would it have been deployed?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr David Jones:

Yes.

Chairman, Mr Barry Gilligan:

David Rose, you have a question on that?

Mr David Rose:

Well it is a very quick one. I remember about 10 years travelling along between Holywood and Bangor during the height of the Drumcree protest and a few kids had set up a roadblock and one turned out to be a pupil of mine at the school, and as I stopped she asked me "what is your name Mr Rose" but the point is any clown can appear at the side of the road and the actual thing does really come back to something that was said earlier on. The sooner we move towards some sort of shared future, the sooner where we get to the point where police will not have to get involved in things that operate around divisions within society and perhaps the more money we will be able to save on policing divisions within society and thus these clowns will become even more irrelevant.

That is a comment more than a question.

Chairman, Mr Barry Gilligan:

Basil McCrea has a question related to dissident activity, question 8.

Q8 - To ask the Chief Constable to update the Board on the recent level of activity associated with dissident republican groups and to report to the Board on the suggestions that dissident republicans have recently purchased some £90,000 worth of weaponry; and if there are areas in Northern Ireland not currently patrolled by his officers due to the increased dissident republican threat; and how PSNI will reassure the public that the PSNI are in control of all parts of Northern Ireland whilst providing adequate security and protection for police officers?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Drew Harris:

The first part of this question, suggestions that dissident republicans have recently purchased £90,000 worth of weaponry, as far as we know and our intelligence investigations lead us, are entirely unfounded.

Mr Basil McCrea:

Are you going to deal with the other part of the question ACC Harris?

Acting Chief Constable, Mrs Judith Gillespie:

Just very briefly I will deal with it. The question is about whether we are in control of all parts of Northern Ireland and I can say categorically, that there are no 'no go' areas. We patrol every part of Northern Ireland and provide a service to every citizen of Northern Ireland and that will continue in the future.

Chairman, Mr Barry Gilligan:

I did make the point Mr McCrea upstairs, for the benefit of the media and the public, that I met with the Acting Chief Constable with 2 of the officers involved in the incident in Meigh, and they confirmed that normal community policing was continuing right throughout South Armagh.

Mr Basil McCrea:

Can I just say Chairman, that I am very grateful for that update and obviously we got a bit more expansive answer in the private session, but the question does arise, if there is another Meigh, how are we going to respond? We cannot have a situation where armed vigilantes are able to come out onto the streets of Northern Ireland without having some effective response and I just wonder what it is we are going to do if it were to happen again.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr David Jones:

Mr McCrea, as I said I am not going to get into a debate about operational tactics, that is just a very difficult place to go and I do not want to give any value to any of the comments that have got to people that we are actively seeking to find.

The issue for us is, there is significant resources at the disposal of officers on the ground, through the District Command and through other parts of the organisation, both overt and covert to ensure that this kind of activity, as best we can, is tackled and dealt with.

Chairman, Mr Barry Gilligan:

Final question from Jimmy Spratt is question 13 and it relates to the Stevens Inquiry Team.

Q13 - Assistant Chief Constable Dave Jones has been working with the Stevens Inquiry Team with a view to:

- ***Ensuring all the material held by the Stevens Team is returned back to the control of the Chief Constable; and***
- ***Ending any contractual arrangements with all members of the Stevens Team.***

Could the Chief Constable please outline progress on these 2 issues and advise when he anticipates the Stevens Inquiry Team might be disbanded?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr David Jones:

The Board will be aware there has been written responses in relation to this. The Stevens investigation consisted of investigations that lasted nearly 20 years. One of the most complex of investigations dealing with various allegations over an extended period of time.

During the last 12 months or so, negotiations have taken place between the Ex Chief Constable and Lord Stevens and agreement was made that all the material in relation to the Stevens investigation, which is the material gathered on behalf of the Chief Constable should be returned to Northern Ireland. It is intended to bring about a planned, orderly and secure transfer of this material to a suitable location in Northern Ireland, where the material can be retained for future use. That transfer will effectively bring to close the Stevens investigation.

As we speak, Lord Stevens and his staff are working with us to ensure that we can stand over the transfer of that delicate and sensitive information so it is readily available in due course for future, either civil or ongoing investigations, including those involving the Historical Enquiry Team.

Mr Jimmy Spratt:

I welcome the ACC's answer, but can I say and it is already in the public domain in a Freedom of Information answer, that £700,000 yearly is paid out of the police budget in relation to this. It has been an ongoing situation for 30 years with some £130,000 being paid to Lord Stevens and his Deputy, Vince McFadden and also, there are the other ongoing costs, so I welcome the fact. But could I ask the ACC if we could have regular updates at the Board that that will be brought to a conclusion within months, I think was the indication and can the Board be clearly told, because £700,000 quite frankly after an ongoing inquiry for over 30 years would be better spent on frontline policing than being spent the way it is being spent at this moment in time. After all, HET documents and all the rest of it our secure over here, so there is no reason why these documents have to be in London, they can be in Northern Ireland.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr David Jones:

I am perfectly happy to come back to the Board as I have done previously in relation to this. As you know Chairman, I have been actively involved in ensuring that we get to an end game in relation to this and I am quite happy to come back to the Board.

Chairman, Mr Barry Gilligan:

A final comment by Alex Maskey.

Mr Alex Maskey:

I am just wondering Chairman would it be churlish to ask the question, notwithstanding all the money spent and the years spent, that people like myself and many other families affected by the investigation and the collusion, would actually get sight of some of those Stevens Inquiry reports, it would actually be quite helpful.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr David Jones:

There are certain documentations that are actually in the public domain. I accept what has been said and I think certain classifications of that documentation precludes it from coming into the public domain.

Chairman, Mr Barry Gilligan:

Thank you ACC Jones.

Acting Chief Constable and Acting Deputy Chief Constable, could I thank you very much for standing in. Members will be aware that Matt Baggott will be joining the PSNI on the 22 September 2009, so will be here for the next meeting.

Thank you very much for your contribution and your colleagues, and thanks to the media and the public, and again, apologies for the delay in starting the meeting.