

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD HELD ON THURSDAY, 3 MARCH 2011 AT 10:30AM IN WATERSIDE TOWER, BELFAST

PRESENT:

MEMBERS:

Mr Brian Rea (Acting Chairman)
Mr Gearóid Ó hEára (Acting Vice Chairman)
Ms Martina Anderson
Mr Jonathan Bell
Mr Dominic Bradley
Mr Leslie Cree
Mr Alex Maskey
Mr Basil McCrea
Mr Ian McCrea
Mr Daithí McKay
Ms Mary McKee
Professor Sir Desmond Rea
Mr Trevor Ringland
Mr David Rose
Mr Alastair Ross
Mr Jimmy Spratt

POLICE SERVICE OF NORTHERN IRELAND IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr Matt Baggott (Chief Constable)
Mrs Judith Gillespie (Deputy Chief Constable)
Mr Drew Harris (ACC Crime Operations)
Mr Dave Jones (ACC Rural Region)
Mr Will Kerr (ACC Criminal Justice)
Mr Duncan McCausland (ACC Operational Support)
Mr Joe Stewart, Director of Human Resources
Mr David Best, Director of Finance & Support Services
Ms Liz Young, Head of Media & PR
2 Command Secretariat

OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE:

Dr Debbie Donnelly (Acting Chief Executive)
Mr David Jackson (Director of Community Engagement)
2 Board Officials

APOLOGIES:

Professor Sir Desmond Rea
Mrs Rosaleen Moore
Mr Suneil Sharma

Acting Chairman, Mr Brian Rea:

Good morning everyone and welcome to this Policing Board meeting in public.

Chief Constable, we have a series of questions to get through today and thankfully some of these have been committed to written answers, but some of these we have already touched on in private session.

The big issue today of course is funding and the funding debate and discussion will take place later because we will meet to finalise the PSNI budget for the year ahead. Something we ought to say is this, that it is very welcome that additional money has been made available from the Treasury and indeed, from the Northern Ireland Executive to support the bid made, but like all other public sector bodies, efficiencies still have to be made in this next 4 year period and it is a fact that there will have to be savings within the PSNI amounting to £135m over the 4 year period. That will be difficult to do, nevertheless, it is a challenge that you and your staff will be up to.

Chief Constable, you are already aware that questions have been tabled today on the Police Ombudsman's Report into the McGurk's Bar Bombing; and it is widely known now that you have met with some of the families earlier this week and you may take the opportunity to say something about that, no matter how brief, and indeed we must respect the families requests on aspects of that meeting.

Last night there was yet another attempt to kill police officers in the North West in Londonderry, while they were carrying out their duties in the community. The Board condemns this, condemns it unreservedly, a cowardly attack and it is very fortunate that no-one was injured or killed. Acts like this have got no support from society and I would encourage anyone with information about the incident to contact the police, so that those responsible can be brought to justice.

That is all I want to say at the moment Chief Constable, I will hand over to you to make your comments. Thank you.

Chief Constable, Mr Matt Baggott:

Chairman, thank you for those words, particularly about the events of last night. I wanted to start with that today in terms of my address.

Last night events do bring home again the courage and risks taken by colleagues in the Police Service of Northern Ireland on behalf of all communities in keeping people safe. I was very minded this morning of the statement made by local politicians in the New Year which was I think a reflection of the growing relationship and confidence within which policing is held across every part of Northern Ireland and that statement was *“any attack against any part of the city and region or against any person or people in or of the area, is an attack against the interest of everyone and against the future wellbeing of this city and its people”*. There will be times when we have controversial discussions regarding the future of policing and the nature of policing and some of our decisions, but there is a reality in every community, across the whole of Northern Ireland, that good things are being done with policing, policing is held accountable for progress, for things that are being made better, and I wanted to just state that today. Last night’s events again are a reminder of how difficult that is, but a reminder of just how far things have come and how optimistic we should be collectively about the future because of the growing consensus and growing relationship.

Chairman, I am very much aware you will be having a briefing this afternoon with regard to the budget and the next 4 years. I just want to take this opportunity in the weeks that have followed our budget settlement, just to outline some of the implications of that.

The budgetary settlement for policing remains a challenging one, in line with that elsewhere. We are in a recession, but for the first time we do now have a 4 year Main Grant budget that allows us to plan with a degree of certainty and to put the necessary things in place to keep people safe and take forward policing with the community.

The Main Grant settlement will be very challenging. £135m worth of efficiencies are required of us in the next 4 years. We have a plan to deal with that and we will be working very closely with the Board, but I am confident we can do that without reducing any of the main capabilities that we need to carry on our policing with the community ambitions and tackle serious harm. It is our intention to have those 4 year efficiencies before the Board in September 2011.

Since we last met, the Government has confirmed the ring-fenced security funding that reflects the unique and challenging position within Northern Ireland. I have to say this is most welcome and I am very grateful for all the support that we have had from the Policing Board in relation to that and the cross party support to make that happen. The availability of this funding will make sure that we have the operational capability to protect people from harm and also, as I have said before, more importantly to protect our ambitions of having the most visible, accessible police service we can and taking forward our policing with the community plans.

I am particularly grateful for the support given to us by the Minister of Justice, the Northern Ireland Executive, the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State and all the local politicians who have backed us in that and their acknowledgement of our unique position. This is a very positive development and added to the fact that since June 2009, we now have an additional 600 police officers working in response and neighbourhood. I think we are very well positioned to take forward the reductions in road deaths, the encouraging direction in travel in relation to crime and the great partnerships that have been developed. That is good policing, doing good things with good people and nothing must compromise that, and we will continue to do that.

Our work with the Garda continues to progress at pace and we clearly respect each others jurisdiction, but we are dealing with the same problems together and seamlessly.

So, thank you very much to everybody that is involved in that budget. I think it is a unique achievement to negotiate and to make the case for a quarter of a billion pounds (£250m) to come to Northern Ireland in a time of recession and that would not have been achieved without the great consensus that I very much enjoy.

Chairman, you touched upon the McGurk's Bar tragedy, and as you know I met with some of the families and their representatives on Tuesday. I met with them with Senior Members of the Command Team and because I wanted to hear what they would wish to say to me. I am very grateful that we had the opportunity to have a frank and a valuable exchange of views and opinions and I and my colleagues have undertaken to meet with them again.

I reassured the families and their representatives that the investigation remains open where there is the possibility of new evidence and we are currently discussing and reviewing all possibilities with our relevant partners. So, that investigation as I said in the press statement last week, remains open and we will be looking and exploring any possibility to take that forward because nobody would want better than to bring people to justice in that than myself and my colleagues in the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

However, the families have requested of me that we keep that meeting and our discussions and my comments on the Ombudsman's Report private at this stage and I am going to respect their wishes in that regard. So that meeting, my comments, my views on the Ombudsman's findings will remain private at this stage because I want to meet further with the families and the families that I did not have the opportunity to see on Tuesday, and I would ask that people respect my judgement and the families wishes in that regard. Thank you.

Acting Chairman, Mr Brian Rea:

Thank you very much Chief Constable. Could I too, as you have done, just mention the support of David Ford, the Minister of Justice in the work that he did and how he assisted you gaining the additional money from the Treasury.

The first person who wishes to make a comment or a contribution is Jonathan Bell.

Mr Jonathan Bell:

Chief Constable, many people are deeply concerned that there is a propaganda campaign going on to damn the Royal Ulster Constabulary George Cross. It is important, would you not accept, that that service which is probably the greatest service in the terms of RUC that Western Europe ever saw in terms of what they sustained in violent terrorism and how they professionally and competently carried out their duties, it is important that single incidents are not used in some sort of Nazi propaganda way to dismurch an entire force. Now, can you assure us that the investigations for all the families, because there are many families being left out, not least the families of RUC officers who were murdered and nobody has been held accountable or brought to justice for that, can you assure us that the investigations into their deaths remain open, that the investigations into Bloody Sunday will receive an equality with the

investigations into Bloody Friday and that the calls for truth coming from sources that ordered the murder of Jean McConville, a single mother of 10 who was stripped, tortured and murder, that those people have more to answer than members of the RUC?

Chief Constable, Mr Matt Baggott:

Chairman, my job as Chief Constable is to deliver effective and efficient policing, to deliver a Policing Plan based on the concerns of local people across all communities and to keep people safe and that is why I said in my introduction that I welcome the 4 year policing settlement for the budget. We have some great plans that we work together with the Policing Board, with individual people and my job is to make people safe in 2011 and looking forward for the next 4 years and that is what we are absolutely dedicated to doing and I wanted to re-emphasise that.

Secondly, my job as Chief Constable is to be impartial and objective on behalf of all communities. They are responsibilities that I will always take seriously and whenever I am asked to make a judgement, I will make it impartially and objectively.

The third issue is, no investigation is ever closed while there remains the possibility of new evidence. The Historical Enquiries Team (HET) are still working through the events of the past chronologically and if there is evidence presented, we will pursue justice because that is what we are tasked to do under Article 2 of the Human Rights Act as well as other legislation. Again, that will be done completely impartially and objectively.

Acting Chairman, Mr Brian Rea:

Thank you. Martina Anderson.

Ms Martina Anderson:

Chief Constable, I am going to confine my comments to the attack on the PSNI last night and I would just like to comment as opposed to asking a question.

That attack is out of touch and out of step with the mood of the people in the community of Derry, across the community and there is widespread support in the community for an effective and efficient PSNI service and that has to be said. As you read out, we as
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the elected representatives from the community, did pledge our support to advocate for each other and to speak with one voice and the attack on the PSNI last night was an attack on all of us and that is how it is felt.

Building the peace and consolidating the process is far more important than fighting a war, a war that is over. That is the view and the mood across the city, not just of Derry but across the north and I just want to make those comments in relation to those who were responsible for that attack last night, are yesterday's men and women perhaps with yesterday's thinking.

Chief Constable, Mr Matt Baggott:

Chairman, I am hugely grateful for those comments. I know they will mean an enormous amount to police officers who are out there as we speak and be out there tonight keeping people safe and I think they are a reflection, certainly in my experience, wherever I go across Northern Ireland now, in whatever community, I am hearing 2 words used more and more which are the words "our police". I think that reflects the relationship and trust and the impact that the PSNI are having against serious crime, whether that is kidnapping, whether it is people trafficking, whether it is domestic abuse, whether it is anti social behaviour, whether it is dealing with the reduction in road deaths, there is a new language being spoken of "our police" and I am grateful, hugely grateful for those comments that you have just made. Alongside the hard work that is being done in all of our communities between different partners coming together simply to make things better and safer for the future. I think that is the agenda that our Policing Plan will set out in April 2011, that is the agenda that I very clearly, with support from colleagues in the Policing with the Community Strategy as set out, that is why we are issuing the commitment and guarantees of service in April 2011 and that is why we are completely revising the way we are holding ourselves accountable in putting satisfaction and confidence ahead of anything else. But those comments I know were well said and very well received and I am hugely grateful for them. Thank you.

Acting Chairman, Mr Brian Rea:

Jimmy Spratt.

Mr Jimmy Spratt:

Thank you Chairman, and can I too associate myself with the remarks in relation to the shooting last night and offer our support to the police service in this very difficult time, particularly with the continuing dissident threat. It has no place in our society and certainly no support from our communities either.

Can I also welcome the fact Chief Constable, that you met with the McGurk families in the aftermath of firstly the flawed first Police Ombudsman's report and then 7 months later the new report presenting evidence. Can I also very clearly put on record in the public domain, the very disgraceful scenes at the private meeting in which you were accused of untruth. Certainly, we are not in any way associated or associate ourselves with those remarks. You have our absolute and total support in terms of the PSNI, and also the disgraceful revelation that a letter sent to you was produced by this Board and you had not even seen it.

Acting Chairman, Mr Brian Rea:

Thank you. Alex Maskey.

Mr Alex Maskey:

Thank you Chairman. Obviously, we are in one of these periods and one of these meetings where we have difficult issues to address and some challenges to rise to and I mean that for every single one of us, all the way around this room.

I want to make it very clear that I fully endorse Martina Anderson's comments, fully endorse them and have every confidence that they are very well intended and fully intended to be followed up on and I am very pleased that she made those remarks.

All of this comes down to, how do we deliver on all of that? Because people have quite clearly made choices in this community, and I am delighted that they have made choices in the way in which they have done. I am also very, very pleased that we have been part of driving that. What we have been trying to do in the last number of years, with a lot of other people around this table, is to try and bring ourselves to a point where we have a police service where, as you say yourself as Chief Constable, you want people to say "it is our police". But as I told you last week, we are a way of that yet. Big progress has been made and we need to continue making more.

None of this progress will be made unless there is confidence instilled in the broader community and obviously I have to speak for the people that we represent in the first instance, of which there are many tens of thousands. I am also very, very mindful as I speak here today, that there are victims right across our community, from all walks of life and I give no hierarchy to any victim or any set of victims, very much against that, so I am mindful when I make my remarks today, because I will refer to the McGurk's Bar bombing and the fatalities there, but I am very mindful that there are victims right across our society and they all grieve and none of them are more worthy or less worthy than others and that is not the position unfortunately which has been adopted by many others.

There are 2 things in respect of confidence which have borne down on my thinking and my party's thinking in the past week. One of them is in relation to the latest edition from the Police Beat and the Federation boys are here this morning and I think you need to listen to this. The Police Federation magazine was published a week or so ago which launched, I think, an absolutely disgraceful assault on the concept and application of human rights. I also think that that magazine was extremely prejudicial in relation to the death and the circumstances surrounding the death of Marc Ringland. I think Chief Constable that you personally, in this meeting today, need to address that issue with the Police Federation, because there is an issue of confidence in my mind that we have an organisation which represents a substantial body of officers which published that article last week. I am not going to rehearse what it said, but I think it is important that it is read and understood and rejected and I think that needs to be done very, very quickly and very, very forcibly by the Chief Constable and your Senior Management Team.

The second issue I want to address is the whole issue around McGurk's Bar and the Ombudsman's report. Quite rightly Chief Constable, you have made the point that you have met the families and those discussions with yourself and those families are confidential and I wish you well and I wish those families well and I am not going to second guess the outcome of those discussions because I appreciate these are very difficult issues. That some of these incidents, and particularly McGurk's Bar, go back many decades, but as we said upstairs by I think Gerry O'Hara who made the point, that for the people that we represent and I make my remarks about McGurk's Bar, not on behalf of any family, for I was born and reared 200 yards from McGurk's Bar. I worked with a number of the individuals on the docks who died in McGurk's Bar. I

knew the families and still do, of the bereaved in McGurk's Bar, so I speak as an individual who was a resident of that area but who is now a representative of a number of people in that community and others.

Because you see, on the one level and this goes to the heart of the confidence and Chief Constable, your own particular role in all of this. The people in North Belfast indeed the people from the nationalist community right across our community, really do not need an Ombudsman's report to vindicate the families, they do not that. The people in Bloody Sunday did not really need a British Government report to say that their families were innocent but they were very important to those families, very important those reports because it did give some official acknowledgement of what they had been saying for so many years were true and that their families and their loved ones were indeed innocent. My concern is the response from yourself Chief Constable, and we have discussed this upstairs as you know, and I do not intend to rehearse all of that because we were very frank upstairs and I do not want to repeat that all here in respect of everybody around this table. But the comments made by yourself were a serious, serious disappointment to those families, and I have to say to the wider nationalist community. I would repeat what I did say upstairs, that it does underline the view in the minds of many people, in the nationalist and republican community that the police should not be investigating the police and that is not to call into question the integrity of anybody from the police side around this table or people who may be investigating whatever they are going to investigate in the time ahead.

But the belief, perception or otherwise whatever people may choose to call it, the belief in the nationalist and republican community is that we have had a serious problem with regard to policing, which we hope to be putting behind us and we are making great progress in that regard, but people are saying from last week, not only those families got a slap in the face by the remarks made by yourself, and it is not just about the remarks, it is about the rejection of the inherent point of the Ombudsman's report which was that those people were actually innocent victims. So, therefore what I am saying to yourself Chief Constable, and I do not say this lightly, that we believe and I believe firmly that yourself and your Senior Management Team have a very, very important job of work to do to build confidence out in that community. Last week I have to say was a very significant setback in that confidence building process and I do not want to overstate that, but neither should anybody understate that.

I do believe that those remarks have setback the job of work of building confidence in the nationalist and republican community, I do not know if you could put it in years but you have certainly put it back. I do believe and I made this point perhaps more pointedly upstairs, you need to reflect as the Chief Constable that we need to move away from the past and to build a new future, now you need to consider whether you are part of the future or you are not and I think that is a direct challenge, not a challenge, I am saying that in as constructive a way as I possibly can do.

I simply finish Chairman and thank you for your indulgence, I simply want to make the point, that there is a job of work to do to build confidence in the broader community and I ask you, I urge you, to bear that in mind whenever you are responding to and taking forward these very, very complex and difficult matters. Thank you.

Acting Chairman, Mr Brian Rea:

Chief Constable, you may wish to respond to that briefly please.

Chief Constable, Mr Matt Baggott:

Chairman, firstly I am always grateful for the frank conversations we have in private and they must remain private.

Firstly, just to re-emphasise that I am absolute adherent to the Human Rights Act, we had a great conference just recently and I thought it was one of the most successful and constructive things we have done together for a long time, but I am absolutely behind human rights for all. I am behind human rights for police officers too because we are all part of the community together, and I think it is important that we have those ongoing discussions. I took the opportunity at that conference to reinforce my absolute adherence to the Human Rights Act, but also the welcome challenge when we have difference of opinions.

Police Beat is not an official document, it is a document to the Police Federation. Now it has been brought to my attention I will go and have a look at what it says, but as I say it is not a representative document of either myself or the PSNI, but I will have a look at that.

Thank you for your comments. I go back to what I said originally which I think is, policing is doing an enormous amount of good at the moment together, and nothing must compromise that. The future in Northern Ireland is very much focused on policing and we are absolutely committed to delivering the best service.

My job as Chief Constable is to be utterly impartial and objective and I take that role incredibly seriously. I think sometimes there will be times when people agree with what I say, there will be times when people disagree and sometimes that might be painful, but I do hope and I have been very clear with politicians and everybody alike, if people disagree and if there are occasions when I get it wrong, nothing I do will be done other on the basis of absolute integrity. There is an issue for me, which is in any case where I am being asked personally as Chief Constable, bearing in mind I am accountable to all communities for that impartiality, if I am being asked to make a definitive judgement, then I need to be personally reassured that the facts are there. That is a judgement that I and only I can make and I respect everybody's wishes and judgements in relation to that, but I do things on the basis of impartiality and objectivity and I take that role very seriously indeed. But I do appreciate people's views and I do appreciate the frankness of that in shaping the role as we go forward into the future.

Acting Chairman, Mr Brian Rea:

Thank you Chief Constable. The final question in relation to this is from Basil McCrea and then we will be moving to the general questions from Committees. Basil McCrea.

Mr Basil McCrea:

Thank you Chairman. Chief Constable, obviously the fact that we are so late down from our private session indicates to many people here, that we had a long and extensive conversation and the nature of private conversations is, that it is probably best not to repeat them in detail. But there is obviously an issue that has to be confronted here.

I have to say that I do not think that we deal very well with the past, that for all the progress that we talk about, for all of the good things that have been done, there is always the danger that there are people that will drag us back to the past and the fact that you had to open your statement with the comments about the success in getting £245m extra for which you are to be applauded and supported, does suggest that that

is £245m that we could have been spending on hospitals or on education or on other issues and the fact that we have to keep spending it to deal with some people that have lost the plot is highly regrettable.

When we talk about these issues and you mentioned the issue about human rights, to tell you the problem, sometimes when people use those terms is that there is a knee jerk reaction almost inevitably in the negative. The real thing is, that we are dealing with humans and when we talk about rights, we are talking about what is right and this debate that we are having when we seek to look to the past, all I can say is, I read here what was said at the time many years ago and I think it is instructive by Patrick McGurk, he said *"it does not matter who planted the bomb, what is done cannot be undone, all I can do is mourn by loved ones. I have been trying to keep the bitterness out of it. The only thing I do regret is that in our society so many people have been jumping the gun in putting their own conclusions to it"*. He concluded a little time later when he was asked to give his opinion on who was responsible, he said *"I would like to give an opinion but I do not want any trouble in the community"* and he said he had forgiven those that were responsible.

The attitude expressed there is the attitude of generosity, forgiveness and understanding that we all have to take if we are to make this place the better place to live for all. Perhaps the most significant side of progress that we put and sometimes even this is misunderstood, is that when you see and hear Martina Anderson and Alex Maskey making the point condemning the shooting or the attempted shooting of our officers yesterday and the complete universal rejection of that form of activity in our society. There are times when people find it difficult to support political opponents and I have to say to all political opponents, you have to sometimes see yourselves as other see you, but the key point to come out from this tragedy and I will say, just in the conclusion, that the McGurk family was known to the police in a positive way, they were friends of the police, we lost friends in that regard. But the tragedy is if we allow the past to dominate our future. We have to find a way of going forward and one of the issues that I think we will address in another place, is how we ensure that collectively we reassure our entire community that the police deserve the support of the entire community and it is the only way forward for all of us. Thank you.

Acting Chairman, Mr Brian Rea:

Thank you, Basil McCrea.

Chief Constable, Mr Matt Baggott:

I am grateful for those comments and again to re-emphasise how pleased I am for collective support for policing, particularly in the after events of last night and the endorsement of all we are doing together and nothing will deflect us from that, that is my assurance, and also the importance of human rights and all that that stands for and the legitimacy of policing. So, thank you for those comments.

Acting Chairman, Mr Brian Rea:

Thank you very much. We move to the questions then and some of our colleagues have been very kind to commit some of our questions to written answers. Again, you may wish to know that the Board has asked that questions that were down for oral answer on the day are now going to be responded to within one week by the PSNI rather than to have to wait for the month. So, there are some questions that have been committed to written for today and I am grateful for that.

Question 4 is on behalf of the Community Engagement Committee and it is in the name of Alex Maskey and it is number 4.

Q4 -What is the Chief Constable's strategy for engaging with the community in a way that develops community confidence in policing and in particular what plans does the Chief Constable have to ensure that wider public engagement is undertaken at a local level.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Will Kerr:

Thank you Chief Constable, I am going to take that one. The overarching strategy for engagement now of course is a revised Policing with the Community 2020 Strategy, and as Chairperson of the Community Engagement Committee, Mr Maskey, you will be very, very aware of the amount of work the Committee and ourselves have put into that over the last 12 months to make sure it is a pragmatic and effective document that actually impacts positively in community engagement and engagement is one of the 3 critical components of that.

Policing with the Community of course requires reciprocal engagement and community support and I think we have seen lots of positive evidence of that over the last number of years and I think that is certainly a significant contribution to why we have had recorded crime at its lowest level for over a decade because we have been working so positively together. To make this strategy more meaningful for all officers and staff, it has been supported and recommended by a number of delivery guides. I think in the past we have tended to look at community engagement as simply a neighbourhood policing issue, a uniform neighbourhood policing issue. Those delivery guides exist, not just for District policing now, but also for our Operational Support Department, our Roads Policing, our TSGs (Tactical Support Groups), for Serious Crime Detectives.

We have had no more recent example of effective engagement between senior Detectives and District Policing Partnerships (DPPs) to talk about the invisible side of policing. Our Head of Serious Crime Branch was out talking to DPPs in the last few months about people trafficking for sexual and labour exploitation, so engagement to talk about the full spectrum of policing activities is very helpful.

We have also built some of the enablers into the policing commitment which basically asks some simple questions. Are we taking every opportunity to talk to communities, not just in formal fora, informal fora as well? Are we going to where communities are talking to each other and are we feeding back to them afterwards what we have actually done to try and address our problems and that feedback is critically important, particularly around anti social behaviour and are we doing it consistently?

I think the process of engagement is getting more subtle and I think it is reflecting the fact that communities in Northern Ireland are getting diverse. I think better use of neighbourhood profiles, better use of active citizen networks, better use of District Media Officers which we are putting out in the next few months will help in that process.

But can I conclude on a very simple and obvious point, but no less important for that which is, we cannot engage with communities if we are not physically in communities and we have been investing in a lot of time and effort in the last 12 months to make sure, whether it is mobile technology, whether it is in trying cut through the bureaucracy associated with criminal prosecutions to make sure that we keep officers out in communities as visibly and as productively as we possibly can.

Mr Alex Maskey:

Chairman, thank you. Could I thank ACC Kerr for his response on behalf of the Chief Constable and obviously the essence of the question is, just specifically the whole question of engagement and I actually would like to place on record my gratitude to the people who are very often behind ACC Kerr and people who are the Board officials who are working kind of very, very routinely and quite intensively over this past period of time to try to get all of the building blocks and the foundation blocks of a fully fledged 'fit for purpose' Community Engagement Strategy and Policing with the Community Strategy in place for the short time ahead, but I think there has been some good progress. But I simply make the point and the Committee is very clear about this, there does need to be an organic, substantive, qualitative form of engagement from the Chief Constable right through the ranks of your organisation. Thank you.

Acting Chairman, Mr Brian Rea:

Thank you. Now we are going to move to a couple of other questions. Jonathan Bell has 2, there is one in my name and both questions relate really to road systems and cameras and so on. So, I will ask Mr Bell's question first of all, it is down at question 10 and it is to do with identifying what policies were being followed and the determination as to when and where mobile speed enforcement cameras are placed.

Q10 - Would the Chief Constable identify what policies are being followed in the determination as to when and where mobile speed enforcement cameras are placed?

Acting Chairman, Mr Brian Rea:

The question is now on the screen. Chief Constable who is going to address?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

Chairman, if I could take that and the second part then around the APNR.

Acting Chairman, Mr Brian Rea:

Yes, number 10 and then number 9, 2 answers in one go.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

I would refer the Board to this document that was sent down a number of weeks ago, months ago to you and in it, it outlines exactly the policies that we use in terms of the use of and the selection of sites for enforcement of road speeding cameras.

The Safety Camera Scheme (SCS) is an evidence based scheme that uses evidence of collisions and speed to target Safety Camera enforcement at specific locations. This enforcement either takes place at a site, a specific point on routes or between 2 specific points. The key data to sum it up very quickly for you Chairman are, the number of people that are killed and seriously injured in terms of collisions, or the personal injury collisions that take place on a specific site or across or on a length of a road, or the speed at which 85% of the traffic travel on that particular road carried out by a speeding survey, or the site length and this refers to the length along a road on which collisions have taken place and the total length where the impact of casualties is to be measured.

We publish on our website to the public every location in which we have mobile cameras safety schemes and cameras deployed, and I would encourage everyone to look at that and to understand actually where the cameras are. They are the length and breadth of this country and we continue to look to drive down road deaths by enforcing speeding because it is a major contributor to road deaths. Sadly, this year we have already had 9 people who have lost their lives in Northern Ireland on our roads and a significant number of those have been down to speeding.

Acting Chairman, Mr Brian Rea:

Thank you. Jonathan Bell.

Mr Jonathan Bell:

I would thank the police for that answer, but there is a perception, I mean the vast majority of our deaths are happening on rural roads and certainly on the rural roads of Strangford that I go on, I do not see the police speed cameras. Now, it could be I am just missing them. Where I do see them is on Sunday mornings on the Belfast to Bangor dual carriageway and there is a widespread perception and I will allow you to refute it if it is not fact, that the police are placing these cameras here because it is easier to make money and to catch people than it is to actually enforce road safety where the main problems are, which are on our rural roads.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

Well first of all I would completely refute that, we do not make any money detecting anyone that is breaking the speed limit. The money that is generated through any detections that are made, is ploughed straight back into safety systems, and in effect improve our roads.

If you look at, and again I refer you to specifically the locations where the mobile safety cameras are being deployed and this particular book as to why we deploy in certain roads, it is very, very clear and very evidence driven where we have to be to reduce deaths and in effect make the roads safer. I would encourage Members, if you wish to deploy and come out and see the use of the road schemes and the safety camera schemes, it may be an object lesson and an object thing for Members to look to do to come out and actually deploy with us and then you can see first hand and experience first hand what we are trying to do. But we do not deploy just to get our funds Chairman, the reality is, the funds are all ploughed back into road safety, and there is no application towards the police at all.

Acting Chairman, Mr Brian Rea:

Thank you. ACC McCausland, could you give us some more information on question 9 please, the one to do with the ANPR (Automatic Number Plate Recognition).

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

That is referred to ACC Jones.

Q9 - Can the Chief Constable outline the benefits he expects from the Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) system in terms of crime prevention and public safety?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Dave Jones:

The question is in relation to the benefits from the Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) system. Clearly it is our duty to make sure that we use the latest modern technology to support policing, not only ANPR but also hand held devices for officers to keep them out of police stations.

The ANPR system is and members of the public should be familiar with this, it is often used in car parking when you book on line at Belfast International Airport as an example where you can do this, it is also used in the road charging system in the Republic of Ireland and widely used across the rest of the United Kingdom.

The system is designed to make sure that we can identify those individuals who we believe using certain vehicles, because the system is base on purely on vehicular traffic, that maybe using the roads without insurance, who maybe disqualified drivers and have no tax.

In one District last year alone, 300 detections were made for no insurance, no tax, identifying disqualified drivers. The technology is there to assist casualty reduction and it has been reported to the Board around the success, up until recently, where we have been tackling killed or seriously injured persons on the road. Obviously we are not complacent and it links directly back into what ACC McCausland has been saying in relation to the ongoing work about road safety. It is also clear that criminals use the roads, we have to cover a geography of 5,400 square miles, so it is only incumbent on us to make sure we use the latest technology to protect the public.

Acting Chairman, Mr Brian Rea:

Alastair Ross has a supplementary question.

Mr Alastair Ross:

Thank you. It is probably more relevant to Mr Bell's original question about the speed cameras. The average speed cameras that are in place are very effective in terms of changing driver attitudes and the way in which they drive and particularly between Belfast and Bangor, there is a notable difference in how drivers drive there. They are a fixed location type of devices. Could you comment on if the technology has improved to allow that type of technology to be used in a portable average speed device, so that it could be moved around? Even in some of the more rural areas, there is the potential to use that in those areas as well because I think that is the technology that actually does impact upon the way people drive and I think it counters some of the accusations that it is just about creating money or trying to fine people. The average speed cameras are actually working so well that lots of people are not getting fined and are

not having to pay Fixed Penalty Notices. So, is there is the technology available now to move the average speed cameras around the country.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

That is one of the key things we are looking at and thank you for the question. It is one of the key things we are actually looking to do with any money that is generated from the detections, in effect, deploy it back into purchasing new equipment for reducing road deaths and improving road safety.

The SPEC schemes that you are referring to are very effective and we find that people in effect obey the fact that the sites are there and they do significantly slow down. They are an expensive system to install and we continue to explore developments in relation to the actual safety camera schemes. In fact, we have just purchased new vehicles and you will see far more visibility of vehicles being deployed out, to in effect warn people in the first instance, 'reduce your speed or else you are going to be detected'. But let us all be clear about this, no-one forces anyone to break the speed limit and when you do break the speed limit you put your own life at risk and the lives of other people. I accept fully the point about rural roads and that is why we have redeployed, from the motorways for example, significant resource because the motorways are actually safer in many instances in terms of the roadways than our rural areas are, and that is why we deploy significant resource from the motorways to the rural areas. That is one of the things we think, was a reason why we saw road deaths reducing last year and will continue to explore this.

But we also take community concern sites going back on Mr Bell's question, and we will look at specific sites where the community comes to us and has specific concerns about people in effect breaching the roads and speeding on those locations and we can, in effect, deploy our cameras there with community assistance.

Acting Chairman, Mr Brian Rea:

Thank you very much ACC McCausland. I want to move next to a question in the name of Dominic Bradley, we are still on driving. It is the one on what are the PSNI doing to tackle drug driving? Question 8.

Q8. To ask the Chief Constable what specific measures are being taken by the PSNI to tackle drug driving?

Acting Chairman, Mr Brian Rea:

Back to you ACC McCausland.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

Back to me Chairman, thank you. I am hugging the limelight today.

The PSNI have an ongoing 3 day training programme for operational officers on how to conduct preliminary impairment tests. A preliminary impairment test is comprised of a number of physical and psychological tests designed to detect the presence of impaired substance. An impairing substance maybe either, and this is very important for Members and the public to realise, a prescription drug or an illegal drug or a combination of both.

To date, PSNI have trained in excess of 450 officers in this particular technique Mr Bradley. Now, the good news is, the Home Office Scientific Development Branch is due to issue their approval specification this spring of a drug detection machine, to be submitted for approval and then to allow the police to conduct roadside screening tests for drivers of suspect driving whilst under the influence of drugs. I am happy this afternoon Chairman to invite the Board or any Board Member to come and see the training and undergo the training in relation to what we actually do.

I re-emphasise, I am more than keen to have Board Members go on patrol with the Roads Policing enforcement exercises and in the next few months, I will bring down with your permission Chairman, the new machine when we get it and so Members can see the new machine and experience the new machine and I hope to do that in the next few months when it is available from the Home Office.

Acting Chairman, Mr Brian Rea:

Dominic Bradley.

Mr Dominic Bradley:

Thanks very much ACC McCausland for your answer. I think it is interesting that you mentioned there that testing for drugs includes for prescription drugs and many members of the public may not be aware of the fact, that when they are taking prescription drugs that they maybe breaking the law whilst driving. Do you think there is a need for a publicity campaign to raise awareness on that particular issue?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

We have done a number of campaigns and we continue to drive this along with our Drink Driving Campaign. It is a very valid point that there are a number of prescription drugs which will make people drowsy and you should not drive and we would encourage everyone to read what it says on the actual medication and to comply with that. But let us be very clear, we estimate and scientific assessment would be, at around 25% of people that actually loose their lives on our roads, may well have some sort of impairment in their system through either drink or drugs, and that drugs could well be down to prescription drugs.

In the last 3 years, we are detecting on average around 4,000 people for drinking on our roads. The shocking figures Chairman are very clear. There are 10 people every day caught on our roads for drinking and driving and that is something that we can all make a significant difference, and I would hope with the introduction of this new machine, that we will be able to focus on drugs impairment as well. But I would be very keen to encourage people to read prescription drugs particularly that they do not in effect break the law, innocently or whatever, but it is still a very clearest thing that you should not drink and drive in any fashion that you are impaired.

Acting Chairman, Mr Brian Rea:

Thank you very much. Now, we have 2 questions left. One of them belongs to Dominic Bradley but we are going to make that the last one, so it is question 11 on the sheet on criminal assets recovered in Northern Ireland and Jonathan Bell is asking this question. I am not sure if it is on monetary value or what the items are. ACC Harris.

Q11 - What criminal assets have been recovered in Northern Ireland over the past 12 months?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Drew Harris:

Thank you. I was going to answer this in monetary value.

Over the past 12 months, £1.2m in cash has been seized by PSNI and it is subject or is in process through the courts towards forfeiture. In that same 12 month period, £922,000 has been successfully forfeited by the courts and 50% of that money is then returned to the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

In addition to that, approximately £5m of assets have been placed under restraint by courts and that is where an investigation is ongoing to ensure that those under investigation do not dissipate those assets. In that same period then, £1.4m has been successfully confiscated for distribution and again we receive a proportion of that money. So, overall we have been successful these last 12 months of recovering a grand total £2.3m but there are many more millions of pounds currently under restraint and currently going through the court process. In addition, we have a number of cases both to SOCA (Senior Organised Crime Agency) for civil recovery and also to HMRC (Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs) in respect of taxation or VAT avoidance.

Acting Chairman, Mr Brian Rea:

Thank you. Yes, Mr Bell.

Mr Jonathan Bell:

Two questions arising from that and I would thank the police for the answer in relation to it.

Firstly, 50% of it comes back to the police, where does the other 42% go. Secondly, we had some great work undertaken by Mr McQuillan when the whole situation was Northern Ireland based, are we are satisfied that the current situation is as good as what we had when it was based here in Northern Ireland?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Drew Harris:

In respect of where the money goes, it does not come back to us. It depends whether it is cash or it is assets. Where it is cash, half ends up with the Treasury with George Osborne and if it is assets then a proportion comes to us which works out at approximately 25%, the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) would get a proportion and

also Court Service would get a proportion, but again a sizeable proportion does remain with the Treasury.

In respect of the Assets Recovery Agency (ARA), SOCA was created and took in the functions of the Assets Recovery Agency, in doing so they received new powers. One of the powers they received was around taxation and following a taxation route. The Assets Recovery Agency only could use civil recovery and so the effectiveness of SOCA has to be judged in terms of both the taxation and the civil recovery route. Unfortunately, taxation is done across in effect a solicitor's desk as opposed to being in the public domain and so there is just not the same reporting of criminal assets being stripped from individuals.

Mr Jonathan Bell:

Thank you Chairman.

Acting Chairman, Mr Brian Rea:

Final question, now it is a question and a subject that I thought had been dealt with substantially in both the private session and the earlier part of this session. However, Dominic Bradley wishes to ask question 6 and the Chief Constable can give the answer as he believes. Question 6, it is back again to the Police Ombudsman's report and the bombing of McGurk's Bar.

Q6 - To ask the Chief Constable if he accepts the Police Ombudsmans report into the circumstances of the bombing of McGurk's bar

Chief Constable, Mr Matt Baggott:

Chairman, I think I have answered that already in my initial comments. I do not think it is appropriate for me to speak publicly on this issue having given an undertaking to the family and I am going to abide by that decision. Thank you.

Mr Dominic Bradley:

I note what you said Chief Constable, but in relation to the Ombudsman's report I would just like to make the point that he has said that, in this particular report he has introduced a key process improvement involving subjecting cases to a higher level of scrutiny through internal critical review and he makes the point that this supports him in

his responsibility to ensure an independent and impartial investigation capable of securing both the confidence of both the public and the police. He also adds that he has brought new evidence and material to bear in this particular report.

I think what many people find it difficult to come to terms with Chief Constable, is your tendency to rely on earlier reports in coming to your conclusions. But, as I say, I note what you have said but could I ask you, can we take it from what you have said that you will give the Police Ombudsman's report further consideration and that your initial reaction to it and your initial response to it may not be your final word on it?

Chief Constable, Mr Matt Baggott:

While I have met with the family and had a very good and a very frank exchange of views and opinions and I will meet further with family members, I have not met with all the families again, suffice to say that the greatest interest I have of course as well as dealing with the particular concerns of the family, is to make sure that we have an investigation and I said at the time, nothing is every closed and that will continue. But I think it is inappropriate having given that undertaking to the families that were at that meeting on Tuesday, that I discuss further any part of that report. So, I am going to decline to answer those questions and there may be a time in the future where it may come back, but at the moment I am involved in ongoing discussions with the family and they have specifically asked me to keep all the nature of that private and that is exactly what I am going to do.

Mr Dominic Bradley:

I am not asking Chief Constable to go into any specific detail on his discussions or on the report, I am just asking are you giving the report further consideration and might it be the case that your initial response may not be your final word on it.

Chief Constable, Mr Matt Baggott:

The families and representatives have asked me to consider some other detail that they have given to me, and I will give that my very close attention with my senior colleagues which we looked at completely objectively. As I say, those discussions remain private, so there will be further opportunity to comment no doubt in the future on this matter, but for the moment I am absolutely respecting the wishes of the family members that were there at the time.

Mr Dominic Bradley:

Is there a possibility that the further detail the families have given to you may have a bearing on your initial response?

Chief Constable, Mr Matt Baggott:

My response to the Ombudsman's report was made impartially and objectively and I was asked to make a definitive judgement in relation to the issue of investigative bias. Now, as you see, my role is to be completely impartial and objective and that is in no disrespect to the Ombudsman's role whatsoever. But, I will consider very carefully the issues that the family presented to me and their views and their opinions and those discussions are ongoing, and as I said before, I am not going to talk any more about those issues.

Acting Chairman, Mr Brian Rea:

Thank you very much Chief Constable. Thank you very much to everyone for coming along today. Our meeting is now concluded and we will see you next time.