

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD

**MINUTES OF THE 29th MEETING IN PUBLIC OF THE NORTHERN
IRELAND POLICING BOARD HELD ON THURSDAY, 3 FEBRUARY 2005
AT 12:00 NOON IN WATERSIDE TOWER, BELFAST**

PRESENT:

MEMBERS:

Professor Desmond Rea (Chairman)
Mr Denis Bradley (Vice Chairman)
Viscount Brookeborough
Mr Alex Attwood
Mr Joe Byrne
Mr Fred Cobain
Mr Brian Dougherty
Mr Sam Foster
Mr Barry Gilligan
Mr William Hay
Mr Tom Kelly
Mr Alan McFarland
Mr Eddie McGrady
Mrs Rosaleen Moore
Mr Ian Paisley Jnr
Mr Suneil Sharma
Mr Sammy Wilson

**POLICE SERVICE OF
NORTHERN IRELAND IN
ATTENDANCE:**

Mr Hugh Orde, (Chief Constable)
Mr Paul Leighton (Deputy Chief
Constable)
Ms Judith Gillespie (ACC Criminal
Justice)
Mr Duncan McCausland (ACC Urban
Region)
Mr Peter Sheridan (ACC Rural Region)
Mr Joe Stewart (Director of Human
Resources)
D/Chief Superintendent Norman Baxter
(Crime Operations Department)
Ms Sinead McSweeney (Head of Media)
Chief Superintendent, Command
Secretariat
Chief Inspector, Command Secretariat
Chief Inspector, Mike Ellis (East Belfast
DCU)
Chief Inspector, Steven Martin
(Ballymena DCU)

**OFFICIALS IN
ATTENDANCE:**

Mr Trevor Reaney (Chief Executive)
Mr David Jackson (Director of
Community Affairs)
Mr S Hagen (Director of Corporate
Services)
Mr David Wilson (Director of Planning)
Two Board Officials

Apologies

Apologies were received from Mrs McCabe.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

First of all, a very sincere welcome to members of the public to this public session, also to the journalists who are present. Welcome to you Chief Constable and your colleagues to this public session, also to representatives of the Superintendents Association and of the Federation, and one of the unions on the civilian side.

Chief Constable you have a statement to make, and then we have some presentations, and then you have some comments, and then we will move on to questions.

Chief Constable, Mr Hugh Orde:

Thank you Chairman. As this is a performance update, first of all I will go through at strategic level and update to the Board on crime performance. That will be followed by 2 very short presentations which the Board has requested, just to try and put some flesh on the bones of how we are reducing crime and the reasons behind it. One will be from Mike Ellis, Chief Inspector in East Belfast and secondly from Steven Martin, Chief Inspector in Ballymena which will be around partnership policing and violent crimes.

In broad terms, as you can see from the first slide, as we did last time just to put some context around crime in terms of UK policing, you will see there the comparative Forces i.e. Forces of a similar size, population and the level of crime in those areas. In terms of Northern Ireland, reported crime is down by

9.9% currently, compared to the same period last year. If we could continue the downward trend, we would anticipate it would be down by between 11% and 12% by the end of the financial year. It is important to remember also that since 2002/2003 that is within the last 2 years, reported crime is now down by 19%, which is an achievement which I do not think has been beaten in any other Police Service in the United Kingdom. It reflects the commitment of our officers at the frontline to deliver a safer environment for our communities to live in.

Moving on to the second slide, it shows that crime per 1,000 population which is a more useful national comparator and again with the comparative Forces it shows that we operate at approximately 55 crimes per thousand compared to the Forces you can see. Again we are one of the lowest in terms of the crime rate per 1,000 population.

The interesting part and the challenge we continually find and Members here continually ask us about is around the reassurance, if crime is dropping why is the fear of crime increasing. Again, not unique to here, much research has been done on this across the United Kingdom and it is a common factor that crime is going down pretty much across every Force in the UK and fear of crime is increasing. The recent crime survey in Northern Ireland, the figures are there, 52% saw crime as increasing in their local area and 80% perceived there was more crime in Northern Ireland as a whole. They list there the key influencing factors which is basically the media, no surprises there, television, newspaper and news stories. We are of course working very closely with the media, indeed I have a meeting with journalists tonight to discuss how we see the world and our interpretations of the world. Indeed, how we can learn from their advice as to how we can get the 'good news' stories across, many of which I have briefed the Board on this morning already. Perception is something we still have work to do on.

In terms of crime review and trying to put some figures on that and the fear of crime. Domestic burglary in Northern Ireland runs at 9 per 1,000 population which equates to 19 burglaries per day across the whole of the 1.5 million population in Northern Ireland but 61% of people are still worried about domestic burglary. In terms of comparisons, it is quite interesting, if one takes Northumbria which is seen as a Force that is one of the most successful in the UK and has been for many years, our crime rate is very similar in burglaries. Northumbria has 22 burglaries per day compared to ours at 19.

If you look at vehicle crime, again 53% of people were worried about vehicle crime and thefts from cars. We currently have 14 cars stolen per day across the whole of the Northern Ireland and 11 thefts from motor vehicles per day and again one of the briefings will cover what we have been doing to reduce that. But again, just to put it in context, some areas in Northern Ireland are extremely safe. If you take Carrickfergus as one example, population just over 38,000. In the whole of January 2005 there were 2 domestic burglaries and 2 cars were stolen, so again just to put some perceptions to rest.

Moving on to vehicle crime, again some examples of what officers have been achieving at the front end of policing. In terms of Lisburn, the figures are there for you to see, 764 vehicle crimes this year compared to 915 in the previous year, that is a 17% decrease. Likewise in Dungannon and South Tyrone, they have reduced crime by 26% as a year on year basis. In terms of how that is being achieved - in Lisburn they have an Auto Crime Team and they have identified through analysis the key issues, auto crime is one and they have an Auto Crime Unit to deal with it. They mount operations joined up with West Belfast District Command Unit which was referred to in the press recently as achieving a 92% reduction over a 3 year period. So it is joined up and the current focus is on disqualified drivers, for the obvious

reasons of the additional danger which we know are being used by other car thieves to drive out to steal vehicles. They have been engaged in leaflet drops and identifying vehicles where people leave stuff on view and contacting them by leaving leaflets on their cars to encourage them to keep their valuables safe and not to keep them in view.

In terms of Dungannon, one of the reasons why they have been successful is again, through analysis. They identified places of worship on a Sunday as the targets for criminals and by working together with local traffic wardens they have put on high profile patrols. They also did press releases around creeper burglaries and keeping their keys safe and other crime prevention measures and as a result of that initiative no vehicle crimes have been reported or recorded around places of worship as a result of that initiative. Newtownabbey also has a FARM Watch multi-agency initiative to deal with issues in a similar partnership way.

If I could move on to one of our areas of major concern and one where we are only part of the solution, in keeping with most matters that police deal with, which is road traffic collisions, serious injuries and death in serious collisions.

Again, Newry and Mourne is still the highest area and we have been doing substantial work in that area. You may have seen in the press, a number of police initiatives where people have now been driving at my officers rather than stopping and abandoning their cars both north and south of the border. I personally had a meeting with the Garda Commissioner this week on that matter and he is continuing to provide high profile support for our operations. We run joint operations north and south of the border to prevent people escaping into another jurisdiction. In addition, we have ordered speed reduction signs for all districts in Northern Ireland. These are the ones that

encourage people to slow down and flash up the speed they are driving at as they go through restricted areas, which we know has a major effect on driver behaviour without giving them the cost of a fixed penalty ticket. It is prevention rather than prevention plus financial pain and those will be rolled out to every district.

In terms of our speed enforcement, it does continue, it is far more focused. We deploy officers to enforce speed restrictions where we know there is a hot spot for accidents. Members may have noticed a drop in the numbers of speed enforcement tickets but those that are being given are being given in a far more focused way. There is a lot more advice and warning to complement the financial burden, because we know on occasions that has a better effect.

Overall, we have increased our drink drive detections. A very worrying trend, one of the things that concerns me more than anything else currently in Northern Ireland as it still seems to be acceptable to drink and drive. Many of the cars that try and drive through road blocks and drive at my officers, when we do catch them, are drink drive related offences. Again, that is something that we are doing an awful lot of work on but we need support from the community to deliver it.

In terms of drugs, again the drugs indicators as you are aware are changing next year but currently we have seized drugs to the value of nearly £8 million. In terms of trends and use of drugs you will see from the graph that cannabis is still the preferred drug of choice in Northern Ireland, 73% together with ecstasy, so called recreational drugs. We have been very successful in seizing drugs this year. The biggest seizure was December, 50 kilograms of amphetamine, that is the largest to date ever in Northern Ireland and 2 arrests were made.

The worrying trend for me is the increase in cocaine in the last 2 to 3 years, whilst it is only standing at 6% that is something we are concerned about. Again, major seizures this year, 9 kilos of cocaine plus a press. To find a press indicates that we are looking at cutting the cocaine, this is fairly pure cocaine, cutting it into less pure cocaine within Northern Ireland with a view to distributing. Earlier last year we also recovered 8.25 kilos so we are very much on top of disrupting the business but it is one we continue to be concerned about. Over 1,000 people have been arrested so far this year for drugs offences.

In terms of violent crime, in very broad terms, the figures are in front of you, it is down on all 3 categories, offences against the person, sexual crimes and robbery which again is a 'good news' story. A number of initiatives and we have just highlighted 3 for you.

The 'Bee Safe Week' that is not a printing error, it was aimed at young people by Youth Diversion Officer, educating school children on crime issues, working in partnership with the Fire Service, DoE, Translink and local councils.

In Limavady again, an initiative aimed at reducing incidents in licensed premises, which has seen a decrease in the number of crimes of that type. Omagh are running what we call 'Operation Night Life', there has been substantial media coverage of that, high visibility patrols in hotspots and a far greater engagement between the town centre police, licensees and patrons. This has led to a 24% reduction in violent crime in that district compared to last year, those figures being from April to September.

In terms of increases, domestic violence incidents continue to rise. It is hard to predict why that is but we would like to think some of that is around managing the considerable under-reporting of this offence which we know happens across the United Kingdom. We do think that by the initiatives we have undertaken, increasing confidence in victims of this type of crime, we

are getting a more accurate assessment and picture of the level of that type of crime. We do operate a very proactive policy in relation to these crimes, arresting where we can and dealing with them in a very positive way. By way of examples, Domestic Violence Unit at Foyle District Command Unit have a local protocol, they work with Women's Aid, it is fully investigative and it provides a 24 hour response to domestic incidents, likewise Newtownabbey has a very clear policy on repeat victimisation.

Moving on quickly to race and homophobic crimes that we, as a Service, take extremely seriously and are utterly committed to protecting people from all communities regardless of their backgrounds. We have a number of initiatives running here, in addition to our hate crime public awareness campaign which we have launched across Northern Ireland. Substantial poster campaigns and on-line internet hate crime reporting through our website, to enable people to tell us about crimes if they do not want to speak to us directly. Many local initiatives that are bespoke to the local diverse communities and in particular, for example, in Dungannon with the migrant workers there we have a 24 hour, 7 day a week translation service. We are working with the local community to turn crime prevention and protection information into many different languages so they are properly informed. Foyle has a local protocol with Partnership Rainbow to support and protect the local lesbian / gay / bi-sexual / transgender community. We have a new hate crime policy and there is a lot of work in progress but we recognise there is still more to do. You will see from the graphs that the level of crime seems to have levelled off in terms of hate crime and seems to have dropped slightly in terms of homophobic.

In terms of area I am still concerned about, moving onto one of our internal performance measures which you hold me to account for. We are still not getting cases to the courts as quickly as we would like, although a substantial increase on last year. Much activity has taken place in this area,

we have increased our performance, there is still some way to go. The main initiative that will deal with this will be the Public Prosecution Service pilot studies and electronic file transfer through the Causeway computer system which we are very much engaged to. So, I look forward to reporting more improvements to get to the target that we have been set.

That is really the broad overview, if it suits you now Chairman, I will ask Mike Ellis very briefly to go through what we have done at the Odyssey in terms of reducing crime and then he will hand over to Steven Martin who will deal with violent crime in Ballymena.

Chief Inspector Mike Ellis:

Good morning Chairman, Chief Constable, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Mike Ellis and I am a Chief Inspector in East Belfast. I have been fortunate enough to have served in East Belfast for just over 5 years and in that time I have watched the Odyssey develop from its foundations up.

I am talking today about how the partnership has developed, how the Odyssey has developed as a commercial success, in most peoples eyes, and to talk about how the crime has decreased by this year 36% and particularly car crime which has gone down by 70% this year. I hope to give some kind of background and context of the Odyssey because it was quite a unique event for Northern Ireland to have such a complex.

The first slide I would like to show is the timeline. In December 2000 the Odyssey area opened and from 1999 to the end of that year, the project planner for the Odyssey were in close liaison with the police, with myself in Musgrave Street. We were looking at CCTV and ways of designing out the kind of crime that we anticipated. Again, this was all predicted because we could not know what kind of crime would come with a complex so large.

In 2001 the cinemas and restaurants opened and the pavilion. The arena is separate from the Odyssey pavilion and the arena, because of the profile and the way the events are run has virtually nil crime. It is well run and the profile does not lend itself to a great deal of crime.

In 2002 clubs began to open in the pavilion and by 2003 the majority of the units, 17 of them were let. I think there is still a couple still to go but by that stage we were seeing the Odyssey almost at its capacity, although at the moment it is rising by 3% per year in use.

The size of the Odyssey has brought with it a great deal of people, 42 million was the last estimate in 2003 coming through its doors. Vehicles - we have around 62,000 per month, certainly over Christmas and that brings along with it attendant crime and that is what we tried to counter.

Some other background to it, Belfast Harbour Estate is private land, it is owned by the Harbour Commissioners and the roads around that area are not adopted therefore the PSNI cannot issue fixed penalty tickets. It is small issues like that that make policing quite difficult. However, we have a good relationship with the Harbour Police and although their remit tends to be cargo and portage, they realise that when it comes to public order and crime they need the full service of the PSNI for prevention and victim support and such like. So, we do have a memorandum of understanding with the Harbour Police and that has served us well to date.

What has that meant in reality? Before the foundations went down, we were able to have CCTV fitted in the car parks around the Abercorn Basin. We started a traffic forum whilst we were involved with the project, people who were not involved with the planners and issues arise nightly, as people will know, with traffic egressing and ingressing to the Odyssey. Licensing was an issue and again only last month the Licensing Order has been amended to allow the arena to sell alcohol in its own peculiar format and that has been a long process as legal processes tend to be.

In the middle of 2003, we decided to have a security forum as well, because of the assaults that we occurring in the area. Always low level and when you consider the 4.2 million people, the fact that we had on average 2 assaults perhaps per week, there was not an issue there. However, we felt that the partnership could develop along the lines of speaking to licensees, health and safety, Belfast City Council and Translink and others.

Vehicle crime as I mentioned before that there was a 70% decrease this year. As the chart behind me shows, in 2003 we had a blip in around Christmas 2002 into the new year of 2003. We had a police operation in the following months which brought that crime down to practically 1 or 2 cars a month being stolen. That involved the partners, the Odyssey Trust providing security, it involved the licensees paying for radio link, radios that the CCTV staff and the police can use and you can turnaround information very quickly.

Arrests at the Odyssey, our approach has always been a proactive one. We have an operation called "Safe Night" where we have use of the TSGs from our region and it involves a high visibility patrol at the times that the clubs are getting out. Generally between 12:30am and 2:30am, we have anything up to 5,000 people coming out of the Odyssey. Tonight there is a concert on and there will be approximately 13,000 people at the Odyssey and I would not expect there to be any more than 1 or 2 crimes that whole night because of the policing and the partnership.

We are realistic and we realise that such a tide of humanity will bring some crime with it and it our job to make sure that it is safe as is humanly possible.

Just to finish and to reiterate that the Odyssey is a commercial enterprise, it has been a success and we have to balance that with our own policing priorities for East Belfast District Policing Partnership and also for public safety along with Belfast City Council. There are issues ahead of us, the legal status of the Harbour Estate is still not established. There is a Titanic Quarter coming on board, which will bring more people, more combination,

3,500 houses and we will have to adapt and involve the police needs for that area and if the approach to the Odyssey continues with the Titanic Quarter I would be hopeful of some success.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Chief Inspector Ellis, could I ask you just one question, could you say something about the taxi situation to and from the Odyssey.

Chief Inspector Mike Ellis:

Public transport is very important, at the moment there are legal issues with the taxis and Translink. There is a contractual issue with Odyssey Trust and taxi firms. It is our intention to get people away from the Odyssey as quickly as possible, that is our overriding aim. However, the buses have difficulty operating at that time of night and that is something that Translink and ourselves are working with. At the moment, whilst we had one report last week of an assault going on with the taxis, that is not the norm. It is an issue for the police but as long as the police are there, people get away quickly and the message is very strong from the police, enjoy yourselves but behave yourselves and get home safe.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Thank you very much for your presentation. We now have Chief Inspector Steven Martin.

Chief Inspector Steven Martin:

Chairman, Board Members, Chief Constable, ladies and gentlemen. I am here today to talk to you about policing violent crime in Ballymena. I thought the Board might appreciate, if today I linked that presentation to one of the priorities that we have agreed with our District Policing Partnership, where the community reflected concerns to them, they brought it to us and we are working in partnership with them to address this issue.

You can see that the priority that was set was to reduce serious assaults by 2%. A serious assault is an assault of grievous bodily harm and above. 2% you might say is not a particularly ambitious target, but bearing in mind that there is a trend that violent crime can be on the increase, we wanted to set a target that we felt would be achievable but at the forefront of our minds, let us beat this 2%.

The way we principally address this target is through an operation called Operation Socialise. Every Friday and Saturday night in Ballymena town centre we put out officers in high visibility coats, that is the yellow coats you will see our officers wearing. They go out to try to prevent crime and violent crime and to reassure people. They talk to people, they get in early and talk to revellers as they arrive and liaise with the publicans and licensees. The whole intent is, that as well as reassurance, if something does transpire, swiftness is the key to try and ensure that things are tackled and they do not escalate to the point where a violent assault can take place. On occasions we have had to use RIPA legislation, that is Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act, whereby we can actually put officers in plain clothes.

On occasions in the past year, we have noticed some sectarian issues creeping into some of the violent crime of this type of nature in Ballymena. We have been able to target individuals and use this legislation where we can go and try and look at people who we suspect of committing this crime and that has served, through Operation Socialise to quite good results so far this year.

However, in the Halloween weekend, last October, we noticed a deterioration in the serious assaults and the general level of disorder in the town centre and we felt it was something that needed to be addressed. You can see some of our local politicians in Ballymena and incidentally both these men are members of our local District Policing Partnership, expressed their concerns very forcibly to us through the media. This gave us a mandate, not that we needed one, we were committed in trying to tackle this.

Now how did we do it? Through positive policing, in effect we enhanced our Operation Socialise. We spoke to the licensees, that was during the week in advance of the weekend, we spoke to them about their obligations. We spoke about what we would ask them to do to work in partnership with us in terms of their door staff, in terms of simple things like not allowing people out in the street with glasses, little things that they could do as good partners to try and help us in dealing with this apparent rise in serious crime.

We used criminal justice strategies, we maximised our use of CCTV, we committed our officers in the yellow coats, into the town holding handheld cameras themselves to set the scene to get in earlier and talk to people, let people see that they were subject to video if something happened and we deployed the resources of a roof mounted CCTV on a police vehicle.

We asked our Regional ACC to support us with TSG, whilst we tried to keep them in the background and let our officers get on with the job. They were there that in the event of the disturbances breaking out again that we had resources to deal with it. We operated a 'pro arrest' policy. People were given a warning, they were advised as to their behaviour but if they did not take that behaviour then we operated a 'pro arrest' policy. We ensured that when they got back to the station, we were interested in swift justice. We had a process team there from CID and everybody who was arrested during this enhanced Operation Socialise were charged in the next available court. At the court we sought bail conditions and everyone who was arrested during this time were subject to bail conditions. Those bail conditions were that they were to refrain from the town centre on Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings between 8pm and 8am and also to not go to licensed premises.

So what were the results of this enhanced Operation Socialise. During October, the month that gave us concern, we had 26 assaults. In November that was decreased by 50% down to 13, our arrests proportionately went the other way they increased from 10 to 20 and quite importantly to us and to the

town, one licensed premises was closed down during this period, a licensed premises that we did have some difficulty with in terms of associated disorder.

If you remember, I started my presentation talking about our DPP priority for the year about a 2% reduction, how are we doing so far. You can see that our 2% has been greatly exceeded. So far this year we are showing a 57.1% reduction in serious assaults in Ballymena so Operation Socialise and our enhanced Operation Socialise that we put in place whenever we start to see worrying concerns, I would submit is working very well.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Thank you Chief Inspector Martin.

Mr Ian Paisley Jnr:

Chairman, could I ask Chief Inspector Martin a question, specifically about Ballymena.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Ian Paisley Jnr.

Mr Ian Paisley Jnr:

Could I just say that I know the public appreciate the efforts that the police have made in Ballymena especially with regards to this operation, it has been a success. It has been noted to have been a success and the public certainly feel a lot more at ease especially during the very dark months of winter.

Could you perhaps elaborate a little about the assistance and support you have also had from the courts in making sure that this policy is driven home?

Chief Inspector Steven Martin:

Thank you Mr Paisley, the courts have been very supportive to us. During our enhanced Operation Socialise you will see we made 20 arrests. Those who were adults were all charged and taken before the first available court and on every occasion where we sought bail conditions, the resident

magistrate granted the bail conditions that we sought. Bail is a very useful tool in the armoury of the police in trying to deal effectively with people who are inclined to commit these type of offences. But when bail is granted it places an obligation on us and I can tell you that certainly in Ballymena, we police our bail conditions. Every month my various teams are given their own bail checks. They are given ownership of their own bail targets and we ensure that those are checked on a regular basis, to ensure that people who are under curfew are where they should be. So, bail is a very useful asset and the courts have been very supportive.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Sammy Wilson.

Mr Sammy Wilson:

Could I just ask the Chief Constable a couple of questions. First of all about his presentation and then Mike Ellis.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Sorry, I will come to his presentation in a moment, so could you leave that as I will be taking those so you could you just concentrate on this one.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Chief Constable, you have some concluding comments.

Chief Constable, Mr Hugh Orde:

This is to update Members of the Board on a couple of significant events that you may remember.

The Northern Bank robbery being the first one. The Board was briefed as you aware in the private session so I gave a full briefing to Board Members on the progress of enquiry. In terms of where we are currently, the Senior Investigating Officer and his team continue to follow a number of lines of enquiry. I stand by my previous statement as to who we believe was

responsible for this raid, the Provisional IRA. In terms of a day to day running of enquiries, Sam Kinkaid and Detective Superintendent Supt Andy Sproole lead.

In the broad picture and so you are aware, in terms of actions currently being undertaken, there are over 1400 actions being taken, over 320 statements have now been taken, 902 documents exist and we have over 1100 exhibits, so it is still the biggest enquiry currently underway in Northern Ireland.

In terms of the other issues that are concerning us currently, the firebomb campaign which Members will be aware of and I am aware there is a question on that so this may help in that regard. The current campaign of incendiary attacks commenced on 17 November 2004, the first one being found in a wallpaper store in the city centre. To date there have been 20 incendiary incidents involving viable devices. We have had a number of hoaxes but in terms of viable devices it has been 20. The most recent was Strabane on 30 January 2005 when security staff found and prevented a device going off in Safeways. We attribute all these attacks, without exception, to the Real IRA and they have taken place province wide, noticeably the Sprucefield B&Q Store where £3.5million of damage was caused, Newtownabbey Pound Stretcher Store, Londonderry Carpet Rite, Ballymena Harry Corry Store and Strabane Linton & Robinson was destroyed by fire.

These have been claimed by the Real IRA, who have claimed that they are not attacks on the community, which is an interesting one, but an attack on the economy. They are right, as what they are doing is making people unemployed, it is as simple as that. In particular, take the last attack on Linton & Robinson a premises that has been in existence for over 50 years, it could result to the loss of 20 jobs in an unemployment black spot in Northern Ireland.

In terms of our assessment, this is in a way, cheap terrorism by people who are badly disrupted by police activity north and south of the border. We are very much following up a number of lines of enquiry, a number of searches have taken place, people have been arrested and that is ongoing. We have done a lot of crime prevention work with store-holders working very closely with them to make sure they are warned. We keep them up to date of our intelligence, there has been a substantial media campaign and commercial awareness campaign as well as proactive patrolling. So, in a way that is just to update colleagues on that, there have been successes and I am slightly restricted on what I can say to some extent in the public session.

The third point, that more recently concerns us, is the UVF/LVF feud. Duncan McCausland leads on that and may want to add something at question time in relation to it. In broad terms there has been a history of feuding as colleagues will be aware between these 2 organisations, currently it is focused on the Ballysillan and Ligoniel areas. There have been a number of attacks mainly around taxi firms and there have been a number of searches and a number of arrests made as a result. We have recovered a large number of petrol bombs and we have also committed significant policing resources to policing this out. It is a difficult issue for policing in terms of the close proximity of the feuding players. Large numbers of extra police officers have been dedicated to policing this matter. Large number of searches and disruptive tactics seem to be working currently. I do not know if Duncan wants to add anything specific at the moment.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

No.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

A number of questions arose from the initial presentation Chief Constable. Members noted for example, the increase in detections for excess speed and Barry Gilligan has a question about that.

Mr Barry Gilligan:

Thank you Chairman. You mentioned this during the course of your presentation but perhaps you would comment further on why detections for excess speed are significantly down from the same period last year, I think it is about 2000 detections. Are we slowing down or is this reduction resulting from a shift in the PSNI roads policy?

Deputy Chief Constable, Mr Paul Leighton:

The theme as you know of our speeding campaign is “We want to stop you speeding not catch you speeding”. The objective is to change the attitude of people and not necessarily just to catch those exceeding the speed limit and we hope their driving behaviour will change as a result of this. While the exact numbers of people seriously injured on our roads during 2004 are still being confirmed, the number of people killed on our roads due to excess or inappropriate speed, has reduced slightly from 2003 to 2004.

In 2003 excess or inappropriate speed was responsible for 29 collisions, that resulted in 33 deaths. In 2004 this factor was responsible for 23 fatal collisions resulting in 31 deaths. The point we are making is that we are now using the National Intelligence Model to target our speeding enforcement where it is most needed and where it will have the most impact on deaths and serious injuries.

Another point to make is, that other detections have gone up at the same time, so our detections for careless and dangerous driving have risen. It has been highlighted in the media recently our drink and drug driving detections have gone up significantly, there are 1150 more detections for drink and drug driving in the same period. So, although we have had a reduction in excess speed, what we are doing is targeting our road traffic work to make the biggest impact on deaths and serious injuries.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Regarding the increase in numbers of domestic violence offences this is under question 17, Fred Cobain.

Mr Fred Cobain:

Thank you Chairman. Chief Constable, given there has been a significant increase in the number of domestic violence offences, would you comment on your studies and initiatives currently being taken by the PSNI to tackle the problem?

Chief Constable, Mr Hugh Orde:

I will ask ACC Gillespie to deal with that question.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mrs Judith Gillespie:

As the Chief Constable as already mentioned in his presentation, the number of domestic violence incidents and crimes has increased on last year, in fact the number of criminal offences identified rose by 7% on last year. Of course, this is a very complex problem and it is well recognised that there is considerable under-reporting of domestic incidents and domestic crimes, so as such, an increase in reports is not necessarily unwelcome and could be an indication of increased confidence in the Police Service to deal with this.

Last year we introduced a new policy in relation to domestic violence, whereby every domestic violence incident would have a specialist domestic violence investigator and the victim would be appropriately supported throughout. As the Chief Constable mentioned, where a power of arrest exists, that only in exceptional circumstances will that not be used. Equally important I think, is the adequate steps required to protect children and that includes unborn children because research shows that pregnancy is in fact a risk factor in this area and so we need to appropriately protect children in this regard.

Finally, we have been a very active participant in the development of a government strategy called "Tackling Violence At Home" which is to be published later this year. You may be interested to know also that there will be a media campaign commencing on the 21 February 2005 on television across UTV and RTE on this issue.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

The Chief Constable reported a decrease in the amounts of cannabis being seized in particular in the Urban region. Brian Dougherty to question.

Question 18.

Mr Brian Dougherty:

Thank you. As the Chairman mentioned, you did touch on this in your presentation. There has been a decrease in the amount of cannabis seized this year and in turn, an increase in the amount of amphetamines and cocaine seized this year. Do you believe this represents a change in the drug culture in the province?

Chief Constable, Mr Hugh Orde:

I will ask Norman Baxter to deal with the detail but as I raised in my presentation, our concern is the increase in cocaine as a increasing drug of choice but I will ask Norman to give more detail on the broader question.

D/Chief Superintendent Norman Baxter:

Chairman, statistical information in respect of drugs is always a useful indicator as to the drugs culture within Northern Ireland but we have to be careful as to how we draw analysis from that.

When we look at the recent figures, the drugs recovered were mainly from multi-kilo seizures, for example, there were 3 major seizures of cocaine during 2004. On 13 May - 9 kilograms were recovered, 10 July – 6 kilograms and 22 December – 3 kilograms. With amphetamines on 18 May there was

10 kilograms recovered and on 22 December - 50 kilograms. So, equally the decreasing amounts of cannabis recovered has more to do with the failure to get supply to the market rather than the demand within the market place. In respect of cannabis, it remains the most commonly seized drug in the province and during 2004, 73% of all drugs seized was cannabis while cocaine seizures accounted for 6% of the drugs seized.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Sammy, do you want to ask a question?

Mr Sammy Wilson:

Just some general questions to the Chief Constable.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

I thought it was on that topic, I will take your questions after I take Willie Hay, questions 19 and 20 relating to the number of fire bombs.

Mr Willie Hay:

Chairman, I thank the Chief Constable for the facts and figures given on the whole issue of fire bombs right across Northern Ireland but especially in border areas. Part of the question was because some or most of these fire bombs are planted in border areas, such as Strabane and right down the North West region, does he believe that all of these fire bombs are being planned and executed solely in Northern Ireland or is some of it coming across the border?

Chief Constable, Mr Hugh Orde:

We are working very closely on this with the Guards and a number of other matters as I mentioned. I am not convinced that they are all being made, produced and distributed from here. There have been some successes in the south which we are very aware of which we think has had some impact on this particular group's ability to deploy these things. So, it is very much a 2 pronged attack, we are working closely with the Guards, we have had some

success, they have had some success. I think in the bigger picture, the reason this particular group is focusing on this low level, in terms of it being easy to commit crime, is because they are being disrupted by action north and south of the border in terms of there more serious intentions, which they clearly still have.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

The Chief Constable spoke of the policy and the close monitoring of the number of incidents of a racist or homophobic nature and Tom Kelly has some questions relating to this.

Mr Tom Kelly:

Just one question Chief Constable. Considerable effort has gone in from the Board's point of view to demonstrate a commitment to equality and diversity and to oversee the Police Service in terms of its delivery of the same agenda to the public. In relation to that, it is quite reassuring to see some of the initiatives that the police are carrying out on the ground. But part of the architecture of our DPPs and the Board themselves and the public role that we play is in providing reassurance to the public, because we are a reflection of civic society in terms of what we say and what we do. I wondered if you have any comments in relation to (1) your own initiatives and (2) the role that DPP members can play in conjunction with your senior officers in the District Policing Partnerships in reassuring members of minority communities, whether they be gay or from ethnic communities that you have mentioned in Dungannon or the Chinese community in Belfast, that it is important that we are actually joined at the hip in terms of the delivery of our commitment to equality and diversity to all people in Northern Ireland?

Chief Constable, Mr Hugh Orde:

I will ask Judith to give more detail but we are absolutely committed and we are fully aware of our responsibilities under Section 75, as should be all public authorities, to do exactly what you said, I will ask Judith to cover in more detail.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mrs Judith Gillespie:

I think as the Chief Constable covered in his presentation, with the number of initiatives that are going on within local areas to deal with hate crime in whatever form, our commitment to equality and diversity is very clear and we are very public on that point. You will also know that our Code of Ethics promotes values of equality, respect and dignity amongst all of our staff. We have made a very public commitment to ensure that the Service is fully representative of the community which we serve and the Chief Constable has referred to our Section 75 obligations and those refer to all public authorities in Northern Ireland.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Sammy, your questions.

Mr Sammy Wilson:

Chief Constable, I think first of all the report that you gave us today is very encouraging and it might be useful if Members have a copy of the slides, I think we are all aware at our own local levels of the initiatives which the police are taking, some very innovative initiatives as well to reduce crime. However, against that background, just a couple of questions.

First of all, have the police any explanation as to how against the kind of performance you have described to us today and it was reported to us at the last Corporate Policy Committee, that amongst all the public surveys done of public services here in Northern Ireland, the Department of Environment, DRD etc. the police had the lowest rating, I think 52% when it came to public satisfaction?

Secondly, do you believe this has anything to do with the fact that you do not publish some of the good results you have had. Do you think and I detect this, that there is not sufficient follow-up and reassurance by officers when they do investigate and report back to people?

Thirdly, is some of your reporting mechanism itself defective? I found out recently for example, that any burglary or robbery which involves less than £1,000 worth of goods actually does not go down on the records, is that correct or is that just what happens in some DCUs?

Chief Constable, Mr Hugh Orde:

In terms of a robbery, the money is irrelevant so if someone reports a burglary even if it is 5 pence, it is recorded and validated as a burglary. We have just audited our crime figures and the first thing I do when I see a crime reduction is to trust good supervision is better. We check the figures of the independent audit of our classification process and we stand up to scrutiny so that is a myth, it does not happen.

In terms of reporting fear of crime, what you are describing is a phenomenon that is not unique to Northern Ireland. As crime goes down, fear of crime increases and it has baffled such august journals as the Economist as to why it happens.

Our job is try and get as much of a positive message out as we can and we do our best. One of the reasons we make good journalists, the reason we push these stories out, the reason you are seeing for example, the Derry Beat, the car crime programmes, we engage as much as we can to get the message out that we are committed to fighting crime and we are delivering. The more helpful and constructive responses from all people engaged in policing, the happier I am and we are committed to continuing to do that.

I do have to say that on occasions, irresponsible statements from people around policing issues does not help. There are some people who do not want policing to succeed and will do their level best to criticise the very best efforts of my officers at the front end but we are determined to make this place safer. The evidence we have produced today has been validated, it is not just made up, it reflects real reductions which means less victims and I am

far happier having less victims and a higher clear up rate. You have to deal with both ends of the equation and that is what we are committed to doing.

In terms of public satisfaction, we always look at and take the opinions of the public very seriously. The public expectation of the police is very high here. We did have 13,500 officers we are now at 9,000 officers so people expect an awful lot from police officers who are committed to delivering. Our policy stands at devolved power to District Commanders to police locally, you have seen examples of what we are doing and with our working with communities to deliver a safer environment and we will continue to do our best to deal with that.

Mr Sammy Wilson:

I have a question on the presentation by Mike Ellis as I did not want to join the 2 questions together. Mike, could I just ask in terms of the Odyssey, where I think again the police in East Belfast have done a good job in trying to reduce levels of crime. Are the police concerned however, now at the accumulation of liquor licenses which appear to be reaching saturation point and secondly, can you explain if assaults are going down, why have the trend of arrests gone up by 100% on the graph that you have shown?

Chief Inspector Mike Ellis:

Chairman, on the first question of the liquor licensing, all the licensees are involved in partnership with police. They take active part and take advice from the police. We provide letters on a fortnightly basis pointing out where we think issues lie with each licensee, with their door staff and how they manage it. As for saturation point, at the moment it is being managed. We look critically at any extensions of that however, ourselves and the council, who have a role to play in this, are content with the licensing right now. We are aware of the family and friendly atmosphere and they are as keen to maintain that as we are.

On the second point regarding the arrests, the introduction of NIM and our National Intelligence Model has allowed us to target our resources more effectively since April 2003 when we introduced it in East Belfast. Our proactive stance and Operation Safe Night which has produced more arrests, crime has gone down by 36% so against that, the arrests really complement that and are proof of it. Many of the assaults never reach court. It is fair to say there is a proportion of people who, after a night out, will decide not to pursue the crime at a later stage. But I am convinced that it is the officers and the proactive stance they take which accounts for increase in arrests.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Security assessment question in 2 parts. This is question 31 from Ian Paisley Jnr and one from Alex Attwood on question 24. Ian could you put your question.

Mr Ian Paisley Jnr:

Thank you Chairman. Before I say that, regarding tackling organised crime. In the past we have been quick to criticise when the police have a lot of high crimes and remember you getting a lot of stick and I think we should equally be quick to congratulate whenever you are seen to getting it right. I notice you have crime down to under a 100,000 incidents and if you can keep that up I think it will be a very good and excellent job for the people of Northern Ireland. We may be should have set a more ambitious target last year.

With regards to the security assessment Chief Constable, could you give us an updated picture of where we are in terms of the intelligence picture. In particular, I would refer you to the Prime Minister's comments that there is dissent within the IRA's ranks. Have you any intelligence to indicate that this is the case? If it is, how serious is that dissent in light of last night's contemptible statement by the Provisional IRA that they are not going to decommission any of their killing machine? Could you indicate to us that you have any intelligence to indicate that they are going to increase their activities

and assure us that the police are fit for purpose to take on the men of violence?

Chief Constable, Mr Hugh Orde:

A number of issues there. In terms of the assessment, I have read the statement that was released last night by the Provisional IRA and I discussed it with my senior colleagues both last night, through the night and this morning and our current assessment stands, as I have said 2 days ago to Newsnight. We are clear the IRA has the capacity, we are clear it has the capability I am not convinced they have any intent currently to go back to what they would call "war, or an armed struggle". We continue to monitor that daily, that is my assessment and I stand by that assessment as to where they currently are, regardless of the fact they produced that statement yesterday.

In terms of the intelligence structure, this Board has been briefed 2 or 3 times on the way we handle intelligence, the role of Crime Operations group, the way we have responded to the Blakey, Stevens and Crompton Reports, this organisation is utterly fit for purpose in terms of gathering intelligence. It is probably one of the most sophisticated intelligence gathering police organisations in the United Kingdom, without exception.

Just going back to the Northern Bank robbery by way of example. On the 23 December I was briefed by my senior detectives in relation to that particular robbery. It was a briefing I would describe as world class, no-one could have beaten it quite frankly. What is different is, the Senior Investigating Officer was present and that officer has access to every single scrap of intelligence available to any organisation that has a lawful right to operate in Northern Ireland, so it is fit for purpose and my officers are most definitely fit for purpose.

In terms of other dissident groups, I have briefed you on the Real IRA, I think with the Continuity they are determined to continue their 'armed struggle' but are limited at the moment to fairly pathetic acts which makes members of this community unemployed and does damage to property. We are working hard to prevent further attacks, there is nothing else particular to add in terms of dissident republican groups. I do not see any current evidence of any split within those groups although some people have made comments that there are.

In terms of the threat from loyalist paramilitary groups, again I think that remains fairly static at the moment. In terms of the UDA, I think there is some evidence of disagreement between those who are trying to pursue some political route and those who are incapable of following a political route and are determined to continue to conduct their criminal operations, which again we are working hard to disrupt. We have had a number of successes which I am unable to comment on in any particular detail. There has been, as I briefed at the beginning, this feud going on and again Duncan may want to give some different information on how he is policing it. We are working at both ends, in policing it out, enforcement action and working with community leaders to try and encourage some common sense to prevail. Do you want to add anything Duncan in relation to the feud?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

Except Chief Constable, and I know you will support the call for calm in the community, particular in North Belfast. To say it is a feud, it is a feud at the lower level at this moment in time. We have deployed over a 100 additional officers into North Belfast, those are officers that clearly Members will accept we have had to take off other duties and again I would emphasise that I do know that this Board do not particularly want to have to read the newspapers or deal with situations where people lose their lives.

This is clearly criminal activity by criminal gangs linked with UVF / LVF paramilitaries and I would again emphasise it is not acceptable and the only people that are really suffering are the community.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Alex Attwood supplementary.

Mr Alex Attwood:

Thank you Chairman and could I first of all agree with the comments that the Chief Constable made in respect of the intelligence capability of the PSNI. It is changed and for the better and will improve the flow of information to the police and within the police.

Could I ask 2 questions Chief Constable. Arising from your observations in respect of IRA activity, are you in a position to confirm whether or not the IRA have increased or recommenced any activity such as intelligence gathering, targeting or training of volunteers in recent times?

Secondly, and developing your comment about what is going on within loyalism at the moment. You have previously given an assessment about the state of the UDA ceasefire and UDA activities. Are you in a position to give a further assessment in that regard and indicate whether the UDA continues to be involved in criminal paramilitary activity and if there are, in your view, any intentions within the UDA as an organisation in respect of their continuing and future role?

Chief Constable, Mr Hugh Orde:

I have gone as far as I can in relation to Provisional IRA activity in terms of intelligence, bearing in mind the public nature of this meeting. All I can do is repeat the fact that although we know they have the capacity and the capability, we do not think they have the intent at this moment in time.

In terms of the wider issues around loyalism, as I said we have assessed that some of the leadership of the UDA are keen to pursue a political path and to desist from paramilitary and other types of criminality. However, we also assess there are many members of the UDA who are incapable of doing that and will continue to deal with criminality in particular activities such as extortion, robberies and punishment beatings. There has been a slight increase in punishment beatings within the loyalist community since Christmas. That really is as far as I can go in terms of attribution at this moment in time Chairman.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Thank you. I am assuming Sammy that question 11 has been answered and now question 9 on Omagh, could I ask Joe Byrne to ask the question.

Mr Joe Byrne:

Chairman, I wonder could the Chief Constable give us an update in respect of the police investigations into the Omagh bomb. I think Chairman, we have gone on 7 years since we had the Omagh bomb, we were told then by the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach that no stone would be left unturned in relation to getting the people who planted the bomb and the public are beginning to question is there an intent, is there a real commitment in making sure that we get these people apprehended?

Chief Constable, Mr Hugh Orde:

I will ask Norman who leads the inquiry to comment but in broad terms of our commitment it is 100%. It is still one of the biggest investigations currently underway in Northern Ireland but I will ask Norman to give detail.

D/Chief Superintendent Norman Baxter:

Before I commence this brief, I would ask the Board to bear in mind that there is an ongoing prosecution pending against an individual in connection with Omagh which limits exactly what can be said. But I would reassure the Board that there is the commitment and dedication of the inquiry team to progress this investigation and that that has not changed and the public of Omagh can be reassured of that, the commitment still remains.

One person has been charged with 20 terrorist offences including possession of the timer power unit which was used to detonate the bomb in Omagh. Papers have been submitted to the Director of Public Prosecutions and that remains confidential material. What I would say is, that there are a number of proactive lines of enquiry. There are 500 outstanding actions which the Inquiry Team are following up in conjunction with our Garda colleagues who are looking at about a quarter of those for us. The investigation will continue until all lines of enquiry are completed and all possible evidential opportunities are explored. So, I can reassure you that it is not a matter of turning over the stones, it is a matter of looking and gathering the evidence.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Question relating to Traffic Wardens. Sammy, questions 12 and 13.

Mr Sammy Wilson:

Chief Constable, I noted in your presentation you indicated that one of the reasons for the reduction in car crime in Dungannon was the work which was done by traffic wardens around churches etc on a Sunday where you had noted that car crime was taking place. Could you outline to us what other additional duties traffic wardens take in support of the police, in terms of marches, funerals etc? Has any assessment been done as to the number of additional police hours which are going to be required, when the police move the traffic wardens over to DRD, and what the financial implications of that are likely to be?

Secondly, could you give us any indication in your discussions with DRD what assurances you have about the future of traffic wardens within the Civil Service and within the DRD?

Lastly, since there does not appear to have been a great deal of consultation with traffic wardens, some of them received information by e-mail and will the police be prepared to meet with the traffic wardens to discuss their future?

Chief Constable, Mr Hugh Orde:

This covers a number of areas and I will ask Joe Stewart to deal with the administrative matters. In terms of meeting, I would have no problem with a meeting between my representatives and members of the traffic wardens and they provide a very valuable service to us. If Joe could cover the non-operational services I will come back and cover any matters outstanding around operational or ask my regional ACCs to.

Director of Human Resources, Mr Joe Stewart:

The DRD, Department of Regional Development, decided to decriminalise on-street parking, following a review by the Audit Office of that activity. The legislation has now been changed and DRD's intention, as we understand it and know, is to transfer responsibility to a private sector contractor. We have to deal with that as a Service with that decision.

One of the most significant consequences, amongst others for us, is that the Government will reduce our main grant provision when we no longer have this responsibility and transfer funds to DRD. The transfer of the traffic wardens will follow that transfer.

I said this last month when I spoke to the Board on this particular issue, we as a Service have no intention of transferring the traffic wardens to a private sector company, although the DRD wishes us to do just that. Our preference is for and this has been clear right along and I think one of the issues here

has that this matter has been ongoing since 1999 and has been an extended period. Our preference is for the transfer to be to DRD. We sought legal advice about this and we are still pondering that legal advice as to where we stand. Discussions in the meantime continue with the DRD and Roads Policing, with Roads Policing in the Police Service of Northern Ireland taking the lead and discussions have been ongoing with the union representatives of the traffic wardens.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Final question, the implication of finance.

Mr Sammy Wilson:

Could the Chief Constable go back on the operational services.

Chief Constable, Mr Hugh Orde:

I think Duncan would be in a better position to answer that as he is in the operational end of the business.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

Chairman, obviously on behalf of both Regional ACCs there are a number of activities that traffic wardens do perform over and above the enforcement of parking. We are asking our colleague Roy Toner to explore with the DRD, potentially establishment of service level agreements in relation to some of the additional duties that traffic wardens could assist us with, which should address the concern Mr Wilson raised in relation to potentially additional policing resources having to be used to offset the traffic wardens transferring over. So operational support will be entering into that discussion with DRD in terms of establishing that agreement.

Mr Sammy Wilson:

If that is not being done, have you any estimate of the additional hours police hours that are going to be required to carry out the duties currently carried out by traffic wardens?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

I would say before we get into that, we would like to see and discuss with DRD and I think we are fairly confident that we will be able to make some sort of arrangement. However, if we are not, we will certainly be reconsidering the position in relation to the deployment of police officers in the duties that we undertake with them.

Mr Alex Attwood:

Chairman, very briefly, I think it would be very important to make it known that the view that has been expressed by Sammy I think are shared, certainly by other parties around this table and maybe by the Board, that this is something and given it is not going to happen for 18 months or so, that this is something that the PSNI, the Board, the DRD and Government have to get around and do whatever is necessary to get it right.

Mr Willie Hay:

I think the other very important issue Chairman is not the issue of transferring the traffic wardens to DRD but the issue of the DRD then transferring to a private company, I think that is a big issue.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Finance and the IT Strategy, Sammy Wilson, question 6.

Mr Sammy Wilson:

Chairman, maybe the Chief Constable would just spell it out who is behind the fire bombing of the taxis in North Belfast. You have told us it is between 2 groups but to whom would you attribute the fire bombing of the taxis, perhaps you could answer that before we come to the finance question.

Chief Constable, Mr Hugh Orde:

As I said, it is an LVF / UVF feud.

Mr Sammy Wilson:

Are the fire bombing of the taxis being carried out by both groups?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

Yes, Mr Chairman.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Are you going to want to ask your finance question?

Mr Sammy Wilson:

Yes, I do.

Chairman, the Board has recently agreed an IT Strategy for the PSNI which runs into £10 million. We have also received from the NIO some indication of the financial allocation for the next 2 years. Unusually they have not given us the figure for the third year of the future, but the first 2 years shows a shortfall in the second year of £30 million and could be as high as £70 million on speculation for the third year. Could you advise us Chief Constable as to the shortfall in the allocation of funds and the effect that will have on the implementation of the IT Strategy but also in terms of your manpower, if the kind of cuts we are envisaging do occur?

Chief Constable, Mr Hugh Orde:

In terms of the first part of the question, we are already in negotiations with the Northern Ireland Office who fully recognise the gap which is some way away but we are already working on that, so I am fairly positive we can reach a successful accommodation on that.

In relation to the IT Strategy, I think we have some more positive news and I will ask Paul to update the Board on that.

Deputy Chief Constable, Mr Paul Leighton:

We met with the NIO on the 20 January this year and obviously Board Members are aware, that 3 business cases for part of the IS Strategy were actually with the Board for some time. We discovered that the delays were partly due to the fact that the NIO were concerned that some of those business cases concerned on Patten work, as opposed to pure Patten Non-Severance work where we were applying for the money from. We have now agreed to develop an appropriate proportionality between Patten Non-Severance and Main Grant work, within our ISIT Strategy, to go back to the NIO with that and they have agreed that once we have done that they will take the overall picture to the Treasury. The outcome of that should be that we will get a much quicker response to the overall ISIT Strategy funding problem. We are very positive about that meeting on the 20 January. We think we have moved some distance with the NIO with regards to the funding of the programme. What will happen then is that individual programmes will go to the NIO only for approval, within that overall picture which will have been approved by the Treasury, therefore speeding up the whole process.

Mr Sammy Wilson:

Are you happy now Deputy Chief Constable that the portion which would have been allocated or taken from the Main Police Grant is what you have anticipated would be taken in the first place and not an additional burden which the police had not anticipated in the original IT Strategy?

Deputy Chief Constable, Mr Paul Leighton:

Obviously that all still has to be worked out and yes we are fairly confident that we can get to a reasonable solution to that. That is all part of the negotiations over the shortfalls in the coming years with regards to budgets. We have been working very hard with the NIO and I am quite confident now that we can come to a satisfactory solution.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Chief Constable, do you have a concluding comment?

Chief Constable, Mr Hugh Orde:

No.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Could I say thank you on behalf of the Board to you, your colleagues and in particular Chief Inspector Mike Ellis and Chief Inspector Steven Martin.

Thanks to members of the public and journalists for attending this session.

(Meeting closed 1:20 pm).