

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD HELD ON THURSDAY, 5 JUNE 2008 AT 11:00AM IN WATERSIDE TOWER, BELFAST

PRESENT:

MEMBERS:

Professor Sir Desmond Rea (Chairman)
Mr Barry Gilligan (Vice Chairman)
Ms Martina Anderson
Mr Tom Buchanan
Mrs Dolores Kelly
Mr Alex Maskey
Mr Daithí McKay
Mrs Mary McKee
Mr Basil McCrea
Mr Gearóid Ó hEára
Mr Ian Paisley Jnr
Mr Brian Rea
Mr Trevor Ringland
Mr David Rose
Mr Suneil Sharma
Mr Peter Weir

POLICE SERVICE OF NORTHERN IRELAND IN ATTENDANCE:

Sir Hugh Orde (Chief Constable)
Mr Paul Leighton (Deputy Chief Constable)
Mr Alistair Finlay (ACC Crime Support)
Mrs Judith Gillespie (ACC Rural Region)
Mr Drew Harris (ACC Operational Support)
Mr Duncan McCausland (ACC Urban Region)
Mr Peter Sheridan (ACC Crime Operations)
Mr Roy Toner (ACC Operational Support)
Mr Joe Stewart (Director of Human
Resources)
Ms Liz Young (Head of Media &
Communications)
T/Acting Head of Command Secretariat
2 PSNI Personnel

OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE:

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

APOLOGIES:

Mr Leslie Cree
Mrs Rosaleen Moore

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Senior Officers, members of the public, members of the media – you are all very welcome to this meeting in public of the Northern Ireland Policing Board. As is usual, Chief Constable, on behalf of the Board I have a few comments to make before we start.

Since the last Board meeting we have witnessed a serious attack on one of your officers. This was a cowardly and vicious attack, and as a Board we are pleased that the officer is making good progress. Indeed, when I spoke to ACC Gillespie she told me that he had left hospital. We commend him on his courage and determination to get back to work as soon as possible, and I trust that you will pass on our best wishes to him, although I have already written to him on behalf of the Board.

Of course, this attack was perhaps not unexpected given the stark warning given on the dissident threat published in the published in the latest IMC Report. A warning on the intent of dissident republicans to wreak havoc on our community and indeed in the last week the attempted fire bomb of a city centre store also had the potential of killing innocent people. The people who engage in these activities have no mandate, they have little support and as a community we must not give them room to promote their propaganda or the opportunity to murder, maim or fire bomb businesses and anyone with information must bring it to the police.

Communities want peace and stability, whilst dissident republicans have now been responsible for 3 attacks on police officers, the shooting of an officer in Carrickfergus was attributed to loyalists. It is time that the arms and weapons are decommissioned for good, there is no logical reason for these weapons to be retained. It can only be assumed as highlighted in the IMC Report that they are being kept purely for criminal and organised crime purposes. The Secretary of State stated in the last few weeks, indeed, he mentioned it in particular at the Mitchell Conference, he stated that the 'decommissioning train is leaving the station'. If the arms are not handed over, anyone caught with weapons must face the full rigor of the law and that message must be sent

to all those who have influence and control and again, the community have an essential part to play in giving information to the police.

There has been a lot of discussion in recent days focussing on the devolution of policing and justice powers to the Assembly. It is important to stress that this is a decision which is in the hands of our politicians and of course today all eyes will be focussing on the Assembly, but as a Board we will continue to get on with the business in hand.

Chief Constable, since the last meeting the annual crime figures have been published, and today we are to receive a presentation on figures against the 2007 to 2010 Policing Plan.

The fact that the 2007/2008 recorded crime statistics recorded a decrease of 10.5%, 12,676 since 2006/2007, and are the lowest recorded since the counting rules were revised in 1998/1999, that is very welcomed indeed. It surpasses the target set in the 2007/2010 Policing Plan. However, and of course in these circumstances there are however, the low overall clearance rate remains a cause for concern and the Board has set the PSNI a challenging target in the 2008/2011 Policing Plan to increase the clearance rate by 5 percentage points.

The Board has some other concerns around victim satisfaction, domestic burglary across Northern Ireland, response to emergency calls and sickness levels, these are all areas which we will consider in more detail shortly.

The Board welcomes the 7.6% fall in the number of violent crimes, the fall in vehicle crimes of 9.2% which are constantly highlighted as issues of concern throughout Northern Ireland. They build on reductions secured over the last number of years and evidence the success of police initiatives at a local level.

That, at the end of the day is where the public want to see the police, working in communities, working with communities, dealing effectively with issues of community concern and I know Chief Constable that you and your team are committed to that. In the last few weeks we were pleased to see some of the very good work that is being carried out by police being recognised at the Policing with the Community Awards and
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at the Commendation Awards, the latter ceremony was held in Ballymena at the beginning of the week.

It is a fact that good practical police work in Northern Ireland often goes un-noticed and not only good practical work, but also courageous work. The positive side of policing in our community and the day to day actions of officers in dealing with dangerous situations and protecting the public is not reported upon enough. It is so important to recognise the efforts of those who have shown outstanding commitment and have worked in partnership to solve crime problems, reduce the fear of crime and make our streets safer.

Chief Constable over to you.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

Thank you Chairman it has been another busy month and one, as you point out in your opening, of some contrasts. We have published now our crime statistics which do show the recorded level of crime is at its lowest in nearly a decade and I note Board Members have a number of questions in relation to performance and will deal with those issues a little later.

It has been I think, in my judgement, a significant reduction over 10% that could not have been achieved without certainly the determination and professionalism of my officers and support staff, but also of course with the support of the overwhelming majority of the community with whom we have been working. The police could not claim that crime reduction alone, it has been a true partnership achievement.

That having been said, as you also point out, on 12 May there was an attempted murder of one of our officers by dissident republican terrorists. The officer was actually on his way to work to serve the community and we do believe it was dissident republicans that planted the undercar booby trap device. It was more by good luck than judgement that we were not dealing with a murder inquiry although the officer did suffer serious injuries. We are pleased to report he is now out of hospital and we have updated the Board in the Private Session. That proves, as we knew, clear evidence, there are a small number of people, disenfranchised individuals, determined to kill a police officer for their own twisted and deluded ends, they have no political strategy that

is clear. I do think the commitment of the officer to get back to work speaks for itself, this will not work.

As the Chairman of the Federation pointed out, they have never intimidated the police service out of doing what we do, which is service the communities and it won't work now. That having been said, they do pose a threat but with the support of the people who know who these people are coming forward and indeed the support of the sort of people that came forward and rescued the officer when he was attacked we will continue to frustrate their activities. In the last 6 months, 29 people have been arrested in relation to dissident republican activity and we certainly welcome the overwhelming support from across the political divide for the officer who was injured.

One of our challenges last month was of course the Business Conference. You talked about the normal society Chairman, I think that showed the determination that everyone wants to move Northern Ireland on and we were pleased to provide the policing response to ensure it went smoothly. There was a concerted effort by dissident republicans to disrupt the conference with a substantial number of hoax bomb calls, again, they did not succeed and with very swift action by our officers disruption was kept to an absolute minimum. We would ask for information in relation to those hoax offences as well of course information in relation to the attack on our officer.

Chairman, I have referred to the publication of the crime figures and we will shortly be doing a presentation but I do think it is worth trying to quantify that crime reduction as you did. It is over 12,000 fewer victims of crime, over 1,000 people a month are now not a victim of crime because crime has been reduced. It has been in the major areas that can cause community concern, violent crime, robbery, theft, fraud, criminal damage and offences against the state. There has been a very slight increase in sexual offences, they are up by 19. Whilst our domestic burglary was reduced overall, if you include non-domestic burglary there was a small increase in the number of burglaries overall and we are determined to reduce that this year.

As I said in my brief opening I do think much of the achievements have been by the professionalism of our officers and staff. I think also the structural issues, the structural changes have helped, reduction from 29 Districts to 8, I think, has certainly made us more efficient and more effective at the front end and certainly pretty much basic down

to earth frontline enforcement tactics, targeting of hot spots and prolific offenders have also contributed to that reduction.

Chairman I accept as you say there is always room for improvement and clearance rates is the area that concerns me as well as this Policing Board. The statistics show a fall on the year of 3 percentage points in our clearance rates to 20.5%. That decrease is actually down to Home Office counting rules changing on the 1 April 2007 which means that crimes which resulted in no police action, non-sanctioned clearances, no longer exist as a category of clearance. That does sound slightly complicated, but for example officers called in pre April 2007 to a domestic incident, domestic abuse for example would record that as a crime, the victim refused to support a prosecution, that would historically have been seen as a "clear up" because we knew who had done the crime, we just could not prosecute it, this year that is not seen as a detection in any way, shape or form, so it remains an unsolved crime. There are sadly still some cases where hard choices have to be made in those circumstances where the safety of a victim is of course absolutely paramount.

If one was to look at our sanctioned clear up rate, that is to say where a person is, as the public would expect, charged, summonsed or caution, we have slightly increased our clearance rate over last year from 19.6% to 20.5%. As I said that having been said change of counting rules or whatever we can and we will do our best to do better.

Chairman, the statistics and figures give you the broad picture, can I just touch on what that actually means at the front end of the business and there have been some major operations running since we last met. In particular in relation to drugs and the fairly new phenomena of so called 'cannabis factories', a major police operation has been running since the beginning of the year on this by ACC Sheridan's Crime Operations Group working with Districts.

On 14 May, over 1,500 plants were seized along with specialist equipment to the value of £¾m, 2 people were arrested and charged. We located 2 further factories in May in Castlerock and Portstewart, in these 400 cannabis plants were sized and 2 people were arrested. That operation continues and a major effort this week has led to over 2,000 more cannabis plants being seized in police operations, the street value of that is about £1.1m. About 20kg of cannabis has been sized this week with a value of £200,000 and

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we have seized enough growing equipment, we would say, would fit out 5 more factories growing this wretched stuff and around £100,000 in cash has also been seized. That operation will continue, it is a major commitment but it does show that intelligence led policing is working.

At the other end of the spectrum, but equally important in terms of keeping children safer, in Carrickfergus there has been much work with primary schools in Whitehead where the Neighbourhood Teams are working very with the principals. Officers now give up their time to coach in their spare time, teaching young people how to play hockey and of course build a relationship with police, which is so critical in their formative years. The annual "Bee Safe" event for children which was in danger of collapse through local funding, again local neighbourhood officers stepped in and a part-time officer managed to secure additional funding from a major local employer to put it back on track. I think that shows the spectrum of activity that we are expecting our officers to deal with, organised major crime at one hand but equally community policing right at the front end working in partnership at the other. The City Safe initiative in Belfast is also working well where our partners with Belfast City Centre, the Chamber of Trade, the Community Safety Partnership and indeed the NIO itself. That won a top honour in the "Action Against Business Crime Excellence Awards" in England for crime reduction.

Chairman, I touched on the Investment Conference earlier last month, at a more local level I know you attended our conference hosted by the Deputy Chief Constable to secure the views of the business community on how we can work more effectively together, I think again another positive partnership is being created.

Chairman, you have already touched on the annual Policing with the Community Awards but I do think that it is important to bring this to the attention of the public because it showed those there saw the spectrum of activity and level of commitment to community policing. So, I think in terms of re-enforcing the Patten vision, I do think that was an interesting showcase and some outstanding examples of very effective police work in partnership with communities.

Chairman I will end my comments there and if I may move onto the brief presentation on performance.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Can I make a suggestion that we take any questions outwith performance at this stage and then we'll take performance questions on the back of the presentation, would you mind?

Mr Ian Paisley Jnr:

I just want to add my voice of support to the police officer who was injured and I am glad that he is making that recovery, and I am also pleased that the bravery he has shown, and that of his family, and I hope that is passed on to him and his family.

With regards Chief Constable to the issue of your management of the Investment Conference, can I particularly commend the police for the way that was managed. I mean, I understand quite frankly on the morning of the Investment Conference there were dozens and dozens and dozens of bomb hoax attempts. Of course the whole point of that was to generate fear. The whole point of that was to generate a story that Belfast rocks under bomb threat and the fact is the story was the Investment Conference and I am glad that the police managed that. They managed the way that was delivered without it becoming a public issue and no lives were placed at risk and those who attempted to rock Belfast on those days were denied any publicity, any oxygen that publicity was to give them and were denied any effort to disrupt the Investment Conference. I just want to commend you and your officers for that strategy.

Chief Constable, Sir Huge Orde:

I think ACC McCausland very briefly wants to touch on the numbers because it was a substantial police effort.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

Can I thank the Board for their support and in particular Mr Paisley for his kind comments. It was a very demanding 48 hour period and my officers and ACC Gillespie's officers behaved magnificently for it just wasn't in Belfast, it was across the province. It spread out on the second day and I think the intention was very clear to steal the headlines from the Investment Conference. We were intent with the whole community and I have to say to our colleagues in the media, who also co-operated very significantly to ensure that disruption was kept to a minimum. But I think any plaudits

have to go to our officers on the ground for how they handled these situations and I have to say that they have to be commended and are being commended accordingly.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Could I add to that that the Head of the Civil Service spoke to me personally to pass on thanks to the Chief Constable and his officers for the effective and efficient policing of that event. I think also the Board would wish to record its appreciation to the media because the media it seemed to me used their heads and took a very balanced approach with respect to thank and we should record that. Dolores Kelly.

Mrs Dolores Kelly:

Thank you Chairman, Chairman could I just ask in relation to the cannabis factories that have found, what evidence is there of organised crime involvement and indeed are these drugs being grown for the home market or are they for export?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

Substantial involvement in organised crime, I will ask ACC Sheridan to deal with the detail.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Peter Sheridan:

In relation to yesterday's events, 13 people were arrested and obviously interviews are ongoing with those people but it is clear that there is a lot of involvement in the Chinese community. They are not simply just for home consumption, although some of them will be home consumption but there will also be across the island of Ireland, or indeed into the UK market but many of the people involved will be illegal immigrants in the country. So it is clearly an organised crime gang involved in it.

Mrs Dolores Kelly:

Chairman would there be concerns that some people are being trafficked to be involved in these factories or are they willing participants?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Peter Sheridan:

I have no evidence that the people who are involved in it are doing so under duress. I think they are free agents in it.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

It might be useful Chief Constable if you could consider a presentation, I have been party to one given by the acting Chief Analyst and one of your colleagues, ACC Sheridan, and it might be useful if that sort of presentation could be made at a later Board meeting. Any other questions in terms of the Report, the other items in the Report, that's outwith performance?

Okay then, we will proceed to the presentation in respect of the performance figures, Chief Constable.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

Thank you Chairman.

Chairman that just shows our overall performance as you already mentioned in your opening, it's down 10.5%. The numbers are there I think in terms of our strapline making Northern Ireland safer that hopefully shows a hard edge of that. As I have said, it is very much around intelligence led policing and working with communities that in our assessment has delivered that, as well as hot spot patrolling and high visibility police patrolling where necessary.

If we could move onto the slightly more detailed issues. In terms of violent crime it shows that violent crime is down 7.6%, that's 2,678 crimes. This category is broad, 90% of those offences, that is just under 30,000 are offences against a person, that is to say assaults. Sexual offences make up 6% of that figure which is just over 1,800 crimes, robbery only 4% of that figure, just over 1,000 crimes.

In terms of the offences against a person, again that is a broad category in its own right and I think leads to the debate around what are we measuring and how we measure it, which is currently a key debate in England. Some forces are moving away from this bean counting approach to a more community safety orientated approach, which I am a big fan of, and would be happy to debate with the Board at some stage at your convenience. But the vast majority of offences against a person are assaults occasioning actual bodily harm or indeed common assault.

Within that group, Chairman are a substantial number of assaults on police officers in the execution of their duties, there has been an increase, I am preparing a paper which I will send to the Board in terms of the sentencing of people who assault officers on duty. It is not unusual for a person convicted of assault on police to receive a fine in the region of £20 or £30 which in my judgement sends the wrong message. I think one of the reasons assaults is increasing is that we are getting more officers out into the right areas at the right time to deal with the issues that concern communities, certainly around alcohol related crime, violence and anti-social behaviour. I do think we need to make sure we bring these issues to your attention and indeed if necessary to the courts' attention but I am having some work done so the debate can be informed rather than perhaps emotional.

In terms of robbery I think there has been a substantial success against robbery which we have reduced by 27% indeed over the past year.

In terms of crime against children, violent crimes, which are also included in this category they are down by over 10% per cent, 690 offences in total. The vast majority of assaults on children, a child being someone under the age of 18 in the legal definition, are actually by children. It is young people on young people, quite often in and around schools, which makes our school work so important and they certainly do follow seasonal patterns associated with the school year. The overwhelmingly majority of those offences are assault occasioning actual bodily harm or indeed common assault and they are down by some 700 offences.

So the key performance areas for us, domestic burglary down by 1.7% but not the Policing Board target which you set us, which was 3%. That graph, whilst it is rather busy, does show you the 6 year trend and it is important because the trend consistently has been downward and below the 6 year average through this year. In terms of the reduction it was only 119 fewer homes than last year despite huge efforts being put in by both Urban Region and Rural Region. I note that there are questions on specifics which I will allow my regional colleagues to answer in response to that question.

The areas of major concern. We are still seeing a huge number of burglaries, certainly creeper burglaries, 45% access through open doors and windows. So, we are still failing to get the message across to people to lock their doors and windows whether

they are in or out. I know there are some cultural issues, people like to have the feeling that they do not have to lock their doors and windows. The reality is you can prevent yourself being a victim of crime by taking some fairly basic crime prevention measures but we will continue to put a huge effort into domestic burglary. It was a question 2 months ago and again I see it is a question which ACC McCausland and ACC Gillespie will deal with today. Creeper burglaries do concern me, they are on the increase. This month is up on last month, I think last month we had about 60 compared to about 48 or 50 the month before, so again it is an area where we are very concerned.

In terms of criminal damage and anti-social behaviour again we reduced criminal damage way above the target you set us. Anti-social behaviour, where quite frankly I did not think we would reduce it at all because it is an area that requires a lot of effort just to keep it standing still, we did manage to reduce it but again not by the challenging target you gave us. I do think the more we drive a community policing debate, some of the stories you would have seen at our awards ceremony, the more effective we are going to be because it truly has to be a partnership approach. Our efforts against alcohol are critical to this and ACC McCausland has briefed you very briefly on our alcohol strategy and will answer a question today in slightly more detail in the public session.

Criminal damage is very important to us because if we do not reduce criminal damage we are unlikely to achieve our overall crime reduction target set by the Board because it is quite a big area. We certainly do substantial work on the hot spots using analysis. Halloween is still one of our major spikes, despite the fact it is been less prevalent this year, year on year but still again a lot of effort is put into using intelligence to try and target our activities.

In terms of drugs and criminal finance the figures are there, we have increased our performance over last year. I have touched on the new and emerging trend not just unique to here, it's happening across the country and particularly in London and the cannabis factory growing is largely Chinese or Vietnamese nationals, indeed I was discussing it with my senior colleagues in London only yesterday. Overall we seized over 3,000 drugs seizures last year and over 2,000 people were arrested for drug offences, both of which are an increase on the year before.

Chairman I don't have a slide on killed and serious injured because we are still seeking final clarification of our seriously injured figures. I can say on the un-validated statistics seriously injured people are down on last year marginally. More importantly, on the validated figures of fatal accidents they are down 20 on last year, down from 128 to 108. I think that does reflect well on our Roads Policing section as well as Districts and of course all the other ways of managing out that through training. Certainly our Road Safe Road Show efforts with young people and getting them to drive safely, I think, has contributed to that.

Chairman you raised concern in your briefing on clear up rate. Our overall clearance rate for crime is up 0.8% in terms of sanctioned detections and that is all we deal with now. The public are not particularly interest in crimes declared solved when no-one has been made amenable. These are crimes where people have been dealt with through a judicial closure. Again more worrying perhaps, within those figures, the areas I have highlighted, they are the ones which caused me major concern. Of course, the hardest type of crime to solve but it does not mean you should not put more effort into them and the clear up rates there are low and low in a national context as well. Even if one distils that with the particular challenges of policing in Northern Ireland we do realise we can do better in there. We are re-organising to improve our performance in that particular area of crime and I am happy to take questions on it.

In terms of the comparative figures those are our most similar forces, a slight word or caution on the clear up rates which are not shown which I will touch on before I go to the figures shown on the board. Our comparative force clear up rates are above us, for example Greater Manchester stands at 25%, Northumbria stands at 38%, Nottingham 22%, West Midlands 36% and West Yorkshire 24%. They count crimes differently, so we need to distil out of that a percentage of those clear up rates which are made up of fixed penalty tickets, an opportunity not allowed currently to our officers.

We are very keen supporters of fixed penalty tickets to deal with certain crimes at certain times, it is not the panacea but it does allow officers, for example, to deal with disorderly behaviour quickly and robustly without taking them away from the street for 2 or 3 hours when they are needed most. That having been said even if we had fixed penalty tickets in Northern Ireland disorderly behaviour, which is what many are issued for in other forces is not a recordable crime in Northern Ireland, so even then they

would not feature in those particular figures. Common knowledge is between 4 and 7% of clear up rates can be attributed to fixed penalty tickets across the UK so you have to distil that out of many of those figures to get a fair comparison. The figures you see in front of you are in relation to crime, criminal damage, domestic burglary and violent crime and you will see this Service has performed comparatively well within the figures you see there. I will not go into the detail of them but you see where our reductions are and you can benchmark them against the other force. That is available for Members in hard copy should they find it helpful.

In terms of the administration of crime which is again challenging targets I am pleased to say we are pretty much there on all them, 3 out of 4, we missed one target by 0.2 of 1%, so that is recorded as a failure but it is very close. We know the targets are going to be more challenging but I do think our new procedures, certainly the way we handle and manage crime cases now will allow us to deliver again this year.

Where I have an issue is the amount of work we are putting into case preparation which in my judgement is unnecessary and excessive. We are creating huge files which in many cases never get to see the light of day, simply to fit requirements to allow the PPS to make decisions based on full cases. It is an area I intend to put a lot of my own personal effort into this year to see if we can secure agreement to reduce administration where it is not necessary, to allow us to focus on the most serious crimes and put the effort where it should be. There are some very interesting case studies in other parts of the United Kingdom. The Minister, Paul Goggins and indeed the Attorney General, I know are very interested in this area of work and I will report back to the Board on how successful we are. But we are treated, it would be right to say, in many of these areas, somewhat differently for all sorts of reasons which need further understanding.

That is last year Chairman. Very briefly because we are early on in this year and I am still seeking validation of the figures you see in front of you there because they are within a spectrum of activity. That is because some of the forms we need on the new IT are not on the new IT yet and until they are I cannot confirm these figures, but the general trend at the moment is roughly standstill. The first month and a half show our overall crime rate is somewhere between down between 1.8% and up 1.5% so it is very close to where we were at the end of the last reporting year.

The key issues remain the same, domestic burglary as I have touched on, creeper burglary in particular which is where I know an awful lot of work is going on. It is also worth recognising that as the weather remains unusually hot for Northern Ireland for this time of year opportunities increase – (a) because people are out more and (b) windows and doors are left open more frequently. The current economic trends are not looking good. History tells us that where things become more expensive crime increases and if you see, looking at the price of food, petrol and those sorts of issues we would anticipate on the back of that an increase in crime. So, we are going to have to work even harder to stand still.

The summer, obviously the parades and interfaces, I know ACC McCausland and ACC Gillespie put a huge amount of effort with community leaders into hopefully securing a peaceful marching season. We will be looking at how we police every single event to challenge our own practices to see if we can minimise our resources without compromising public safety and re-deploy resources where we can. Of course, this will be the third year where we have deployed no military in support of public order policing.

Again, of course, we are planning for bonfires which will be the other major public event and certainly issues of anti-social behaviour and criminal damage spike on the evening of the 11 July where in the areas of bonfires and those things.

Chairman, I will draw to a close here because I know you have many questions that probably deal with the detail and will focus on Members' concerns rather than what I want to tell you.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

In order to bring a degree of order to this if we could stick initially to the questions on the order paper in respect of performance and I will take supplementaries and then additions at the end.

Question 1 relates to emergency calls.

Q1 - Can the Chief Constable explain why less than 80% of emergency calls are responded to within 15 minutes and, furthermore, why only 77% of emergency

calls can have the response time measured due to no arrival time being recorded?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

Chairman if I could start in relation to Urban Region and ACC Gillespie will follow. There are many factors which impact on the time taken for police to respond to emergency calls, not least the volume of calls being dealt with at any one given time. Set against that and also set against available resources, in addition, you have got to bear in mind distance or congestion, particularly in Belfast, in built up areas it can conspire against a more speedy response.

Police officers responding to emergency calls or other calls for service for that matter must in the first instance do so in a manner and speed which is consistent with ensuring the safety of the officers themselves and the person requesting the emergency service and the wider public. The Board would not be very happy and nor would any police officer, or the community, if there was a fatal accident as a result of responding to an emergency call. In addition, what is important is that police deliver an appropriate and professional service when they do attend. Based on this premise there will be always some degree of variance between response times to different situations and therefore on occasions as the Board has accepted that within the 15 minute time there may be a variation to be achieved. It is therefore important to review the reported statistics within these contexts as a general outline.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mrs Judith Gillespie:

The current percentage of emergency calls responded to within 15 minutes within Rural Region is 81.5% which is a slight improvement on last year. The percentage of arrival times available has also increased by 7%, so we are actually getting a truer reflection of performance this year than we did the previous year. The Board will know emergency response times are not a target in this year's Policing Plan but in a number of local Policing Plans in Rural Region they remain a target.

I think that is particularly important as we move to review stations in Rural Region so that we can still monitor our arrival times at emergency calls. As ACC McCausland has said it is dependant on controllers logging the times being called in and sometimes they can be engaged on other conversations, on other 999 lines and miss the call being

called in. It is also dependant on officers calling their arrival time into the control room. We are working on a technical solution for that which will mean that all the officer has to do is to push a button on their barracuda radio set and that will automatically log their arrival time at the call. We are not there yet but it is at an advanced stage. Obviously the isolated nature of some rural areas means it is difficult to get to some of them within 15 minutes but it is very important that we make the effort to do so.

Could I just use this opportunity to stress that the 999 system is for genuine emergencies, there is a single non-emergency number which is 0845 600 8000. Many of the calls we receive on the 999 system are not emergency calls.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Question 2 then relates to clearance rates.

Q2 - Can the Chief Constable outline the additional actions being taken to increase the sanction clearance rate which remains around the 20% mark, despite repeated requests from the Board to increase performance in this key area?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

Chairman, again, if I can start. The Clearance Champion Group has been established with the aim of maximising clearances through an improved process and adoption of best practice. The Districts, Criminal Justice Department, Scientific Support and Central Statistics Unit will all have an input into this group and progress will be reported back to the Chief Constable's Quarterly Performance Volume Crime Clearance Conference, which met yesterday. The first meeting of the group is on 9 June. Clearance performance will continue to be monitored on an ongoing basis, which the Chief Constable already said, at that Volume Crime Clearance Conference and we are actually looking to see how we can review and improve that actual process. We have gone through, as I mentioned on Tuesday, in relation to crime clearances and there are some Districts are showing a significant improvement, particularly, and I have to say it, in Rural Region. That is basically I think, around the issue of ensuring that we are maximising our clearances in terms of our administration processes.

At District level the role of evidence review officer has been created to maximise opportunities for clearances such as around taking offences into account. The Districts have highlighted the issues of clearances at district training sessions and have asked supervisors to ensure opportunities are not missed, including ensuring that outstanding the DNA and fingerprint hits are prioritised to ensure clearances are obtained. Sanctioned clearances improved in Urban Region in 'A', 'C' and 'D' Districts. 'C' and 'D' Districts almost made the 3% improvement in sanctioned clearances as outlined, but again we are not sitting back on our laurels, we are continuing to try to push to improve.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mrs Judith Gillespie:

I will certainly not repeat anything that ACC McCausland has said. Just to mention the emphasis now is on investigating today's crime today. I think the shift system that we currently have in place allows overlaps between shifts which allows follow-up enquiries, witness interviews etc to be conducted much more readily than the previous shift system might have allowed.

As ACC McCausland has mentioned we had a volume crime seminar on Tuesday, where we had a presentation from a Constable in Omagh who was able to show that by good use of the NICHE system, which I know has come in for a bit of criticism, but actually he was able to show that it is working very well and by using it properly he was able to show how clearances in his District could be increased from 24.2%, which is where they sat at the end of the last reporting year, to over 30% at an early stage in this reporting year. And that is simply by getting things right first time, on time and making sure that our administrative procedures are correct. For example, when the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) directs a caution or a prosecution, to make sure that the system is updated immediately by the PPS advising us of their decisions immediately. 'H' District and 'E' District both increased their clearances last year with 'H' District actually meeting the Policing Plan target with the highest clearance rate in the PSNI of 24.8%. We are looking at bringing the best practice from 'H' District across the Service and in particular, as ACC McCausland has said, looking at offences taken into consideration and already we have seen some progress in that area this year to date.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Mrs Kelly and then Mr McKay.

Mrs Dolores Kelly:

Thank you Chairman. You quite rightly said that clearance rates do remain a matter of concern for the Board but I am pleased to hear that there has been some actions being taken to try to improve the systems. There were issues in the past about not enough detectives being available and issues around forensics and the preservations of scenes and whether or not officers who are first at the scene actually were fully equipped and trained to do so. So I would like to hear of any advances in that and Chairman if I could take this opportunity, today marks the 9th anniversary of the murder of Elizabeth O'Neill, a grandmother in Portadown, and ask in relation to murders outstanding over the last 10 years what action is being taken in relation to those.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

If I deal with the issue of the training in terms of forensic awareness. We have developed and are rolling across the Districts in terms of training and forensic awareness at scenes, to ensure that we maximise our forensic ability for what we actually lift at the scenes. We also at the Chief Constable's Volume Crime Performance have a presentation from the Head of our Forensic Science who shows the performance across each District in terms of fingerprint lifts, footprint lifts, DNA hits and DNA clearances and conversions and this is emphasised and is examined both at the Volume Crime Conference and at the 78 performance accountability meetings that the regional ACCs carry through. So, this is very much pushed and it is very much pushed in terms of the speed of getting samples lifted and actually turned round and from the Forensic Laboratory. Also, we are now looking at the issue of individual scientific examiners and their actual workload and performance in terms of actually what they produce for us.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Alastair Finlay:

In relation to historic murder review you are aware of the HET, which considers that bulk of cases which are the security related deaths up to Good Friday. There is another unit which I have, the Retrospective Murder Review Unit, which will cover those deaths that are not covered by HET. So, during the period 1969 up to Good Friday the non-security related deaths out of that are being reviewed by the Retrospective Murder Review Unit and they are reviewing all deaths that took place since Good Friday up to 2004, March 2004, when Crime Operations Group was formed which has an inbuilt review capacity and capability within it. So there is a comprehensive strategy that is

reviewing every murder in 2 different units, probably in slightly 2 different ways but covering different types of issues, covering all murders that happened since 1969. That is ongoing at the moment, it will take a considerable time but there is a process of prioritisation based on evidential opportunities that is being prioritised. As you discussed with me earlier we are happy to discuss with key individuals or relatives and give an update on progress with regard to their particular inquiry they would have an interest in.

Mr Daithí McKay:

Thank you Mr Chairman and can I thank the officers for their reports and certainly there are some figures that have to be welcomed, particularly in terms of the frustration of drugs gangs. But to come back to the issue of the sanctioned clearance rates. I still have particular concerns over the figures there for hate crime and particularly sectarian hate crime where only 2 of the 8 Districts have shown increased in the sanctioned clearance rate in that regard. But there is also a disparity between the figures in terms of Urban and Rural Regions and I would ask ACC Gillespie to comment on this. Because in terms of sectarian crime in Urban Region it is 19% clearance compared to 10% in Rural, in terms of racist crime it's 12.1% compared to 10.2%, in terms of homophobic it's 19% compared to 11.8% for Rural Region, so there is a disparity there which I would like explained.

I would also think it would be useful, I mean in terms of the Districts, you have given a breakdown in terms percentages, in terms of the targets and the increases in the clearance rates. But I think it would be useful if the Board could be provided with the actual figures in terms of clearance rates itself, which are outlined overall in terms of the overall figures of Urban Region and Rural Region.

Finally, in terms of the detail of the figures in regard to sectarian hate crime. I have spoken to ACC Gillespie about this before, in regard to specific attacks of different groups of different identities, in terms of the attacks on Orange Halls, GAA Halls and Churches, is there any plans for the PSNI to gather more detail and collate more statistics in regard to these that it could be provided to the Board, so that we can see how you are dealing with those particular attacks and we can then garner from those statistics and relate that to the public in terms of increase in confidence in the public? Because I know there are concerns in regard to people from the Orange Order, from

GAA circles, in terms the clearance rates for those specific attacks and that would be quite useful.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

Certainly, I will ask ACC Gillespie to deal with the disparity issue. In terms of if you want more detailed figures perhaps we can have a conversation and we can supply you with what you actually want. That is easy fixed.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mrs Judith Gillespie:

Well I agree Mr McKay that we could improve certainly our sanctioned clearance rates across all of the hate crime dimensions. What I would say I suppose on the good news side that across all hate crimes in Rural Region they are all down, sectarian, homophobic and racist crimes have reduced and that has to be good news. Also some of the figures, especially around homophobic crime are very, very small, so in some areas if you have 4 offences and you have only cleared one that a 25% clearance rate, if you have cleared none obviously it is 0, so small numbers can affect the figures. That is just by way of explanation, it is certainly not an excuse.

In terms of what you say about attacks on culturally significant buildings, you are quite right, we have started to collate within Rural Region a running list of all of those incidents which are tagged on our command and control system. Now it is possible that we will miss some but it means when I come to talk to the likes of yourself or other community reps that I have a running total of exactly where and when those incidents have taken place and we can talk about them in detail.

I also met with representatives from the Orange Order just last week in relation to attacks on Orange Halls to provide reassurance that we are logging when we pass Orange Halls, when police patrols give particular attention, that we actually log the date and time that that happened because obviously in rural areas it is extremely difficult for the police to cover every Orange Hall all the time. And that is where we need some support from members of the community and the Orange Order themselves to help us when they see suspicious activity around these premises. It is not just Orange Halls, it is Churches, Chapels, GAA property etc, if there is suspicious activity seen to report it at the time. Unfortunately some times we get reports 2 or 3 days later and that is not really any use, it needs to be reported at the time.

Most sectarian crimes are criminal damage and our criminal damage clearance rates across the peace are around 10 to 11%, they are usually opportunist, random attacks and very difficult to detect. Again, that just means we have to work harder to try and detect them, it is not an excuse but I would ask that we need community support to help us solve these crimes and where we have had support from the community we have been able to arrest people. Recently there was an attack on an Orange Hall and people who were actually in the hall at the time, went out and apprehended the people who were responsible. So, where we get community support we can have significant success.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

We do similar to Rural Region as in Urban Region in terms of monitoring all locations of significance and sensitivity for the community and we have the information and have plans in position to protect various sensitive premises across Urban Region from that point of view. I also have the figures available here for you if you wish afterwards we can give you for Urban Region and Rural Region, unless you want them now.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

It might be useful if the breakdowns that you were asking for could be supplied in terms of a written response and indeed if you want to clarify the request you could do it over the lunch period.

Can I then take you to the 3rd question which relates to domestic burglaries?

Q3 - Could the Chief Constable explain why the number of domestic burglaries did not meet the 3% reduction target set by the Board despite a 10% reduction in overall crime? Could he also specifically comment on Urban Region which experienced an almost 5% increase in domestic burglary during 2007/08?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I will ask again ACC McCausland and ACC Gillespie to deal with the specifics. We were and frankly I was disappointed not to make this one. We were very close, it was the end of the year that showed an upturn when we were not predicting it, that is notwithstanding that a huge amount of effort has gone into this particular crime. I think the effect of the Level 2 Crime Team in Urban has been hugely important to delivering

what we have delivered, I do not know if ACC McCausland and ACC Gillespie want to go into some of the more specific details of what we would say happened.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

Yes Chairman, again like the Chief Constable I was disappointed, as the Board has constantly questioned me in relation to the burglary issue and I gave reassurances, which I stand over, that we did everything we possible could in terms of trying to maximise the detection and prevention of burglaries.

The increase that the service shows was in my region, a 4.8% increase in domestic burglaries and that was down to the following and that is in real terms 198 more burglaries. On average we seem to be having, or we are having around 3 burglaries per day in any one District across Northern Ireland to put this into context. The sort of burglaries we are having, motor vehicles are obviously now more difficult to steal and what the Chief Constable has already referred to the issue of creeper burglaries. We saw a late rush in March and that was where the figures crept up on us, in terms of the thieves breaking into home to actually steal peoples' car keys.

Now, I would make an appeal here to the public that they should not put their car keys at the most easiest location for them, on hall tables or whatever, please put them out of sight, burglars are breaking in through windows or doors, front doors just to grab car keys to steal the cars.

It is easier and it is sadly easier in today's society, to dispose of property and that is an issue which we the police continue to work on in terms of handlers. The Chief Constable has already referred to the cost of living increases over the last year and we are seeing that having an effect in the type of property that is being stolen. We are also sadly seeing that a lot more young people are getting involved in this type of crime and a lot more younger burglars are being detected. There is a new and emerging trend of theft of copper and lead, the price of copper and scrap metal combined with the number of vacant rental and newly build housing premises on the market have led to new burglary phenomenon where pipes and water tanks are being stolen for scrap value along with white goods.

The Chief Constable has already referred in his opening comment about the issue of unsecured doors and windows and again I make another appeal to the public. One third, one third Chairman of all burglaries in Urban Region are as a result of people leaving their windows and doors open at night. Please secure your doors and windows at night, even in good weather, because opportunist burglars will take the opportunity to break in and we have focussed very highly on a few very significant prolific burglars who during 2007/2008 were arrested and put into custody.

Those would be the main features as to why Urban Region in effect did not make the target but what we are doing next week we are calling all the crime managers in Urban Region together to look at the following areas and co-ordinate the forensic aspect, the information sharing ACC Gillespie mentioned about the TIC, taking offences into account, scene preservation, which Mrs Kelly commented on and we have created in the Districts right across Northern Ireland Op Converter Teams, where we take the scientific returns and focus Detectives to actually go out and arrest and apprehend the individuals that are committing these crimes. Obviously we will be focussing and had focussed on a series of gangs in relation to prolific offenders, I have commented about creepers and we do have a footprint database and a fingerprint database which is probably second to none across the United Kingdom. We believe all of that together will start to make a significant difference and we are focussing very early this year in relation to burglaries because we want to achieve the Policing Board target of under 6,000 burglaries in Northern Ireland in the next 3 years. But Chairman, I have to come back to my starting point, prevention is better than detection.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mrs Judith Gillespie:

Can I add just in relation to Rural Region where the number of domestic burglaries has reduced by 11.6%. So, 3 out of the 4 Districts in Rural Region actually significantly reduced burglaries and in the one that increased it only increased by 2 crimes. That is not to minimise of course the effect on those 2 victims but just to say across Rural Region we have seen a very significant reduction in domestic burglary which is really good news.

I believe that is down to targeting of prolific offenders which ACC McCausland has mentioned and in particular I would mention the Operation Bullent strategy which the Board will know is the strategy to deal with aggravated burglary against older people

and that has undoubtedly had a positive spin off in relation to other domestic burglaries within Rural Region. It basically targets prolific offenders and we have had a number of very significant arrests and whilst those offenders have been in custody it is very clear it has an impact on the burglary figures. The challenge of course for me and for my Commanders will be, to maintain this performance and that will not be easy given that we have reduced by such a significant amount but we certainly cannot afford to be complacent and every District has a control strategy regarding burglary which refers to prevention, intelligence and enforcement.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Vice Chairman of the Board supplementary.

Vice Chairman, Mr Barry Gilligan:

Chief Constable, during the course of your presentation you showed us a table comparing PSNI performance with most similar forces. I am wondering do we have anything to learn from Northumbria who seem to be doing well right across the board but particularly in the area of domestic burglary where they have achieved 21% reduction as opposed to your 1.7%. I mean are there any initiatives going on in Northumbria which we can learn from?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

We have already invited them over and they have come over. A lot of this is around how they deal – when you arrest a burglar you do not arrest a burglar for the first offence that individual has ever committed and where they have been very effective and it is linked to what we do now with forensic is around having intelligence packages, so if you get a burglar of a certain MO then you look at all other burglaries of that ilk and you interview them in relation to a series. Now, it does not happen overnight, it requires a level of expertise and it requires a build up and indeed burglars have to be arrested more than once before they start talking quite often. We have now adopted, all the recommendations from their presentation have been shared with every District Commander at one of my Crime Performance meeting which I was present at. It does not mean we can go back, we certainly do look at sharing and learning from others, certainly in that comparator, in that comparative group. I do not know if the Deputy Chief Constable wants to add as he is ex Northumbria.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

We hosted a conference where we brought English colleagues over in terms of taking into account offences. The service of our size, we only have 175 offences which was 0.2% of our clearances whereas if you go to Northumbria you will see that they have significant numbers in their detection rate in terms taking offences into account, that is where a prolific burglar admits to a number of offences. We are looking to maximise and ensure on an ethical and a professional basis, I am not suggesting anyone else is not doing it correctly, but in terms of an ethical and a professional basis how we will actually maximise our sanctioned clearances.

Deputy Chief Constable, Mr Paul Leighton:

The reduction in the number of burglaries in Northumbria is very, very interesting and certainly they have been ongoing now for a number of years. A lot of it is down to good partnership working and education and one of the things that struck me about Northumbria and still strikes me about Northumbria, it is a country leader in terms of its partnership working. Its relationship with local authorities, the way that local authorities play a very effective role in crime prevention messages getting out it is absolutely second to none and that is one of the reasons that their crime is lower and is continuing to go down. Now, we struggle with partnership here, we are still working on partnership, we still do not have local authorities which have got real power, real money to put behind initiatives so there are things that we need to change in Northern Ireland society but they are not within the police control.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Question relating to the definition of community engagement used by the PSNI –
Question 4 is under Mr Rose's name.

Mr Basil McCrea

Sorry folks just before you move off performance. I always get a bit worried when I see a big page of green. It does suggest to me though is everybody else, I mean you hear, even on the non-comparative police forces you will hear that they are doing very well in crime as well, so it seems everybody is doing very well, are you all doing the same thing?

The reason why I asked the question is, although you produce statistics there are still a lot of people out there that feel that crime is not really working, that there is a higher crime rate than probably there is. I wonder is that because you have been able to pick the low hanging fruit so that if you do concentrate on prolific offenders or hot spots that you get a highly localised effect? So, it is very good in one particular area but actually the general position has not changed much, and it might even be that when you look at criminal damage which although it is a serious thing it is one of those things that does not really affect people, it is just out there. So you get a situation where the seriousness of the crime and the crime against the person is actually what is really driving people, making people concerned and if so how do you actually plan to tackle that, because I do notice that you are now bottoming out, that you are not seeing much movement this year compared to the last. There needs to be some real focus on tackling crimes that matter to people.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

Well that is what we are doing. In terms of the hot spot analysis crime analysis we have some outstanding analysts and we go where the crime is, that is what we are paid to do.

I do not think there is an issue around low hanging fruit, by definition, you get the hardest solved crimes, the ones that are hardest to solve, are the organised crimes and I have just discussed and I raised this morning for example intelligence led operations against organised drug gangs which are peddling this stuff into our communities take a huge effort, large number of police resources, great cost but are extremely important. So you are dealing with that at one end but you are also dealing with you are using the same techniques, certainly around analysis, to work out where you put your people to make sure they are dealing with the crime that concern the communities. You know as well as I do that concerns are fed up from the DPP into the Policing Board and we are responding to what the communities that you people represent are asking us to do.

In terms of the fear of crime issue, our Police Board survey says exactly what you are saying, the analysis of that is people feel relatively safe in their own areas but they feel crime is higher in areas they do not know about but tend to read about. One could be forgiven sometimes if you read about a particular burglary which, of course, very serious matters in their own right, tends to raise the fear of crime when across this

province there is about 20/22 burglaries per day across 5½ thousand square miles of policing territory. So we have to focus our resources using intelligence but I think the Deputy Chief Constable wanted to add something.

Deputy Chief Constable, Mr Paul Leighton:

I think just to reinforce what the Chief Constable has said. If you look at the research which is very voluminous and there is loads and loads of research across the world about how public perception and actual crime rates differ. I mean there is the continuous household survey in the UK which has continually differed from police figures but have paralleled each other with a time lag. So, public perception of crime we would hope would follow actual crime recorded figures in a period of time because that is what traditionally has happened and certainly that is what the figures in the research would show. But I think there is a huge amount of work to be done around the quality of life issues that you do highlight. We are trying to do that with neighbourhood policing teams, but that is an early piece of work and will take a lot investment. One of the things that I would ask the Board to take on board is the investment in tackling quality of life crimes is investment early on in peoples' lives. I think we really need to get down to investing in crime prevention messages and working with children as young as primary school age because that is when their opinions are being formed and that is when these things start to take root. So the work that needs to be done is partnership work, it is not all to be done by the police because it would be improper for us to jump in with our 2 big black books in many of those cases.

Mr Basil McCrea:

I will not detain you long but I will make a point. If you look at domestic violence, which is a key issue, you talk about lifestyle or issues, in 'A' District it is up 9.8%, in 'C' District it is down 9%, overall it comes out to 1.6%. I am concerned that people do not understand or believe the figures that we are bringing out, whenever we tell people everything is good and they know too their position it is not so good. There just needs to be a way of explaining to people what is going on. I share your general thing about early intervention, and I do not mean to detain other people, I am just making a point that statistics, averages, sometimes mislead.

Deputy Chief Constable, Mr Paul Leighton:

I understand that, but policing is a complex business. 'A' District has a very proactive approach to domestic abuse, and has a one stop shop approach with Women's Aid and other agencies which was a pilot scheme. So, we are quite glad that the domestic abuse figures there have gone up, because that shows an increased confidence of women coming forward to report violence that they have suffered at the hands of a trusted partner, or whatever the nature of that violence normally is. So, there are differences across the whole Province, and that is always going to be the nature of things because we will always be trying something new or something different in different areas.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Okay, Mr McKay and Mr Ringland.

Mr Daithí McKay:

Thank you Mr Chairman. Chief Constable, you touched at the end of your presentation with regard to parades as being a potential summer risk. And certainly from my experience with regard to parades, that risk is ...

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Could I bring you back to that at the end? I was going to take that at the end because I think it is an important point. Daithí McKay.

Mr Daithí McKay

As a separate question.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Sorry, you have got several.

Mr Daithí McKay

As a separate question on it?

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Yes, all I was saying is that I do think that we should refer to that as a separate area at the end, so I will call you, okay? Mr Ringland.

Mr Trevor Ringland:

Just, very briefly, dealing with crime is a responsibility for all of us, and I think that cannot be emphasised enough, and is the responsibility of the wider community, but I do welcome the Deputy Chief Constable's comments about tackling matters earlier and putting far more investment into particularly the young and trying to steer them in a proper direction. I think that a lot of good work is out there being done and can be built upon, so I do welcome those comments.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

There was a comment on the radio this morning, Chief Constable, about the fear of women in terms of moving around this city in the evenings. Would someone like to comment on that?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I did not hear the comment, but in terms of general safety in the centre of Belfast, ACC McCausland.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

Chairman, the Board should be well aware of our 'nightlife' operation and 'get home safe'. I think the comments that were being made this morning were in relation to surveys of women who were going out and obviously were travelling around the city. I think it was reflected about the reductions in the numbers of police or soldiers that were on our streets. Now, the reality was, and I think the presenter did make it clear from what I heard, that that was the past and we have to live in a modern 21st century city. We emphasise safety, particularly in terms of the night time economy, and the emphasis working with the licensees, the City Council and all our partners in terms of ensuring people can go out, enjoy themselves; they can consume alcohol sensibly, and I emphasise the word 'sensibly', and they can get home safe.

We have been very much pushing that issue in Belfast, but it is not just safety in Belfast, it does extend around the whole of Northern Ireland. ACC Gillespie might like to comment.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mrs Judith Gillespie:

Just one final comment. We should not be surprised by the fact that older people and women do tend to have a higher fear of crime. That is well borne out by research, and it is certainly not unique to Northern Ireland, or Belfast. I think the other very important point to make is that the vast majority of attacks on women are perpetrated by someone they know, or an acquaintance: I mean, stranger rape is still very rare in Northern Ireland, and the vast majority of sexual offences certainly are committed by a trusted partner, as the Deputy Chief Constable has said, or an acquaintance or someone that they know.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Are you satisfied about the young people who come out of pubs, very late at night and the transport that is available to them to get home and, indeed, is the alcohol industry conscious of its obligations in monetary terms of ensuring that people get home safely?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

Chairman, frankly, the answer is no. There is more can be done and that is why we are about to launch an alcohol campaign in the next 12 months, which the Board are fully aware of, in terms of young people and abuse of alcohol. I am on record as saying that the city itself needs to be zoned, in terms of licensed premises at different times putting people out of those premises onto the streets, so that the infrastructure of the city can cope, and can deal with the number of people coming out.

I mean, the Odyssey can put up to anything like 12,000 people on to the streets at a major event, at the same time in Shaftesbury Square I can have 3 and 4 thousand people coming out on to the streets. You, yourself and Board Members witnessed this and have witnessed what the police have to deal with. Now, the reality is we are working actively with all our partners, including the City Council, in terms of trying to ensure that people do get home safely, and people go out and have a sensible and sociable time, and that the city is able to be a vibrant and economic place for everyone to take part in terms of the night time economy; but there are other issues. Social responsibility – that must be shown by everyone, including the licensees. We are keen to work with them, and we know they are keen to work with us and we would hope to report positive developments back to the Board in the next 12 months.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Mr Weir.

Mr Peter Weir:

Just on that point about young people getting home safely. I am sure, and I would just ask maybe if the police would comment, there has recently been through the Assembly legislation passed through in terms of taxis legislation, part of which should be aimed at, while ensuring there are proper safeguards, lifting levels of restrictions on some of the uses of taxis. Particularly I think, one of the reasons is actually targeted at ensuring that whenever there is the glut of young people emerging, particularly late on a Friday or Saturday night, particularly in Belfast city centre, that there should then be greater levels of taxis able to deal with that. I just wonder if you can comment whether you think this could actually make – the opportunity, if you like, to get young people away a lot quicker, and therefore not loitering or waiting for a taxi will make a degree of advantage in terms of this as well?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

It makes a very big difference. I mean, Translink tried a night time bus system, but the problem was the young people were not in effect subscribing to it. They were more in favour of taxis and private cars. Now, we would encourage in terms of people, if we can get people off the streets safely that, in effect, helps us significantly. But, as you know Chairman, and the Board know, in England and Wales they are introducing alcohol disorder zones. Where a licensed premises, if there is disorder associated with the sale of alcohol around a particular licensed premises, can be required by the Council and the police to, in effect, finance the police for additional policing support for a period of time to ensure that that disorder, caused by the sale of drink is, in effect, effectively dealt with. We have not yet moved along that line because we are looking to work with the licensees and, hopefully, through them adopting greater social responsibility with us, I am hopeful that we will be able to make a change. If not, I will be eliciting the support of this Board to, hopefully, support in terms of changes in the legislation, to give us a greater enforcement hand.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

The last question I am going to take on the performance, really relates to your final slide and the summer risks, Chief Constable and Mr McKay was about to ask the question about parading and civil unrest, I would imagine, as well.

Mr Daithí McKay:

Thanks, Mr Chairman. I mean like I said earlier, the issue of parades can be quite, particularly when it comes to contentious parades, can give rise to the risk of civil unrest and, in particular, when alcohol is involved as well. I have come across examples of the past, where PSNI officers have not been willing to engage with those drinking on the streets, and they have given the excuse that this may lead to a possible breach of the peace. In that particular example I have seen improvements in my own area in regard to that, and the police must be commended for that, but there are still examples of that taking place and can I get a guarantee from the Chief Constable that officers will act in all instances of on-street drinking at contentious parades during the summer.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

Well, I will ask ACC McCausland to deal with the detail on what is going on, but the bottom line is yes. The time is right to start pushing very seriously around street alcohol and street drinking in relation to enjoying parades. You do not need to be drunk to enjoy a parade, and certainly there is a lot of work going on. There will be some situations where it is a fine judgment around the level of disorder that might be precipitated by certain actions, certain isolated events, but the general principle is – it will not be tolerated, and ACC McCausland will flesh that out a bit.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

Chairman, I think it is Ms McKee's question in effect, at Question 7, if I take it now with your permission, Chairman, that might help.

Question 7 - Can the Chief Constable provide a briefing on the proposed PSNI approach to consumption of alcohol in and around parades over the coming months?

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Yes, okay.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

I had a meeting with the Loyal Orders and the Bands Association on Monday 12 May 2008 to discuss this issue. I outlined our intention to enforce the legislation in relation to alcohol consumption at processions and parades as laid down in the Public Processions (Northern Ireland) Act 1993. The Loyal Orders and the Bands Association agreed to support the police in this action and are corresponding with their members in relation to the issue. In fact, they were very keen to actually move down the line where their parades and band festivals were seen as that very event, a festival and a family event.

We will work with any organisers of any parades no matter where they come from, and what part of the community, in terms of dealing with the issue and working together to make sure it is an enjoyable day for everyone. We will take a robust approach, and decisions will often have to be made by the officers on the ground dependent upon the situation at the time.

Now, I want to emphasise that we cannot sit here and say, officers will do this, this and this. An officer has to have the flexibility, at the time, because what the Board would not want would be one of my officers, or ACC Gillespie's officers, in effect start a major disorder, or a major riot in effect, by in effect enforcing legislation, but by working with the Loyal Orders and the Bands Association they will encourage their members to co-operate and assist the police in this. We would look to see this process starting at the launch of our alcohol and young people, or alcohol abuse operation which we are looking to, in effect, introduce in the next 12 months.

So, I would hope, with the co-operation and partnership of everyone involved, you will see a significant change in terms of the whole of alcohol and the use of parading. This actually is already going on a number of various – I mean ACC Gillespie might like to comment specially about some of her districts which are already doing this I think – Derry/Londonderry.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mrs Judith Gillespie:

Yes, I would certainly echo everything that Duncan has said, and I do not want to prolong the discussion on this, but suffice to say that there has been some very significant progress, and just illustrated by the weekend where we were able to significantly reduce the resources at the Junior Orange Parade through agreement with, and local discussion with, community representatives and the Orange Order. So, it is good news to see both the legislation being properly enforced, but also a reduction in the type of resources that we need to deploy at parades, which I think is good news all round.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Ms McKee.

Ms Mary McKee:

Deputy Chief Constable, you and I have done a lot of work on this, but is there a similar strategy beginning around bonfires, because there is less of a structure to actually begin to have discussions on alcohol?

Deputy Chief Constable, Mr Paul Leighton:

The difference with bonfires is the legislation. This is slightly different. There is legislation around drinking and parades, there is not legislation around drinking and bonfires. But, it is something we could discuss and see if pressure could be brought to bear to extend the legislation to that.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

There is one question relating to statistics and performance. It is Question 8 regarding domestic incidents. Mr McCrea – it is in his name.

Q8 - PSNI crime figures for 2007/08 indicate there were 23,076 domestic incidents in Northern Ireland.

- (i) how is the figure of 23,076 compiled? Are repeat incidents included within the figure?***

(ii) are there any follow-up procedures in place when PSNI are called out to a domestic incident that is not subsequently recorded as one of the 9,283 crimes with a domestic motivation?

(iii) do the PSNI track those 13,753 (i.e. 23,076 – 9,283) incidents which are not recorded:

what is the typical weekly pattern of domestic incidents?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Roy Toner:

Domestic incidents and crimes are identified through a motivation box, which is part of the occurrence management form, and then that automatically goes across onto the NICHE system as it is updated. So the figure of 23,076 incidents includes incidents plus all crimes, and that is a global figure and it will include repeat victimisation as single incidents.

It is a policy that every victim of a reported domestic incident, or crime, is offered the services of the Domestic Abuse Officer, who would now sit within the Public Protection Unit and then information is also offered related to other statutory and voluntary support agencies. Domestic Abuse Officers also make referrals, as appropriate, to other statutory agencies, primarily social services and other voluntary agencies such as Women's Aid, in keeping with the circumstances of the situation, or indeed the wishes of the victim.

A recent announcement by Mr McGimpsey surrounding the funding of the MARAC process – this is a multi-agency risk assessment conference process – is very significant, because that will roll out the pilot which ran very successfully in South Antrim, right across Northern Ireland. And that will deal with the high risk victims of domestic violence, or where a victim has reported a domestic incident on three or more occasions within the last 12 months.

All domestic incidents are recorded; the difference referred to is whether an actual crime has been disclosed. Of the 23,000-odd incidents, there were 9,283 notifiable offence. A large number of domestic abuse incidents do not result in a notifiable offence or crime, and these may involve such things as verbal disputes, but domestic incidents also, not only include the stereotype of partner relationships, it also would be

about relationships in a house, and can include incidents of elder abuse or a sibling within a family being abused if that person is no longer a child.

During 2007/08 there was approximately 52 to 59 incidents on a Monday to Friday, and that climbs to 78 on average on a Saturday, and 88 on average on a Sunday. We have been greatly assisted though, in terms of NICHE, because it gives a good recording mechanism for identifying victimisation ...

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Can you elaborate on the NICHE system for members of the public and the journalists present.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Roy Toner:

We introduced a completely new records management system using NICHE software under Project Horizon as part of our requirements under the Causeway Initiative for an electronic joined-up criminal justice system. From colleagues round the table, we have been able to ascertain exactly the type of information that police officers require, the National Crime Recording Standards requires, and the National Incident Recording Standards requires, and we have created that recording mechanism. All those modules from custody, through crime recording, property management and now, case preparation, are all live and functioning. And the next one that we are going to put on is a new intelligence module so that we can actually link up all this information and hopefully improve those detection rates with the points that were raised earlier. For the specific types of crime that ACC Harris has raised, in relation to vulnerable people, we have specific information boxes that go on to the system so we can collate this, and analyse it far better than we could do previously. This saves time and effort and energy on the analysis side, and on the officer's at the inputting side as well, and for the Domestic Abuse Officers and, for example, also the Minority Liaison Officers etc. Quite happy for Members of the Board to come and see that system in operation if they so wish.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Okay.

Mr Basil McCrea:

The reason for asking the question though, is it is not really clear what is going on here. You are giving us a lot of information and this, that and the other, but you know, whenever we talk about this particular issue, 23,000 incidents but only 9,000 of those are crimes, and only 6,000-odd of those are violent crimes. Yet we also know that it can take, according to the research, between 35 and 40 incidents before a woman will come forward and make a complaint. You also have 25% of people that are subject to more than 4 offences against them, and the issue were are trying to get to grips with is that if you look at the size of this particular problem, we don't really know what it is. If it was 23,000 crimes out of 108,000. I mean it is really significant figures and we need to get some reliable baseline figures that tells us how big is this particular issue. I am particularly concerned about trying to trap this issue between those people that have got the courage to come forward and make a complaint, but it does not then translate into a crime where action is taken. It does seem to me that there is still some prevalence around the idea that this is just a domestic. And I think that we have to do something more about that, and these statistics are not helping us get to the bottom of it.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

Chairman, just on that. The notion that officers treat these as 'just a domestic' is utterly flawed and I challenge it entirely. I mean, if it helps Mr McCrea, I would be delighted for you to come and visit one of our Domestic Violence Units to try and talk through it. It is a complex issue, I understand that. Not everything is a crime that is recorded as a crime. That does not mean we do not take it seriously, that is why it is recorded, but it may be that a presentation from some of our Domestic Violence Officers may be helpful Chairman? I do not know if ACC Harris can take it any further this morning.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

I think that also, it might be useful if some of this was put in terms of a written response and then on the back of that we can explore it further.

Basil McCrea:

Can I say briefly, there was not criticism

Mr Peter Weir:

Chairman, I appreciate this is an important issue, but if we are going to have fairness to all Members we can not have a situation where somebody asks a supplementary and then comes in, yet again on that side of it. We have got to have something that is across the board in that regard on it. It is an important issue, but it ...

Mr Basil McCrea:

Chairman, the reason why I asked to come in again, and I will take the Chairman's indulgence on it, is because the Chief Constable wanted to reject what I had said quite strongly. Ordinarily I would not have done it and I just wanted to make the position clear because this is a thematic issue that we are dealing with.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

I think it is better clarified in the way in which I have suggested, and I think we should proceed on that basis.

Question 4 relates to the definition used in respect of community engagement. It is under Mr Rose's name and it is on behalf of the Community Engagement Committee.

Question 4 -To ask the Chief Constable in the context of their work with communities, what definition of "community engagement" does the PSNI use?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Drew Harris:

Thank you. The definition which we use around Community Engagement with the PSNI really centres around listening to communities and delivering to them the police service that they want, together with our partners. So, to be really effective we need to be sure what the issues in a community are, involve the community and other partners in dealing with those issues and actually provide for sustainable issues. So, obviously then, a continuous process involving day-to-day involvement, but we have given officers assistance in return in terms of tactical community engagement methods, and it is really then for officers to use those; some of these include street briefings, environmental audits, the use of the PACT process – which is Partners and Community Together type meetings, but also using existing consultative forums and the active citizen network. And it is down then to the ingenuity of constables and sergeants to find a way of communicating with the actual community that they are dealing with, working

out what the issues are and then taking those forward with that. And as it is constables and sergeants that are dealing with this, we can trust that it is in good hands and it will be dealt with in an innovative and effective manner.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

David.

Mr David Rose:

I just want to give a little bit of context to it. The Community Engagement Committee is starting to roll out its own strategy on this, and in a lot of the paperwork that was sent out to us, there is a whole range of different definitions that run across different police forces across the UK. If two years down the line it turned out that the PSNI's definition was different from the Community Engagement Committee's definition, we would look especially stupid. So, I think that we are probably going to have to get together at some point and come up with a shared definition so that our strategy can complement, and hopefully enhance, the PSNI's strategy on community engagement.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Drew Harris:

Well, we would be very happy to do that, and to work with you on that. There is absolutely no problem at all.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

There are 4 questions relating to District Command Units. They are Question 5, 21, 22 and 23. One is on behalf of the Community Engagement Committee, the others are in the name of Mr Brian Rea. Maybe you could answer those questions and put them in context as well, Chief Constable.

Q5 - With the PSNI focus on reconfiguring to 8 District Command Units, how will this affect police resources and plans when councils restructure to the new 11?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

In terms of the related to the 8 District Command Units, I maintain this was still the right thing to do. I think the Review of Public Administration made an awful lot of sense, and with our budgetary constraints and a reality check around what was effective in terms of policing, 8 looked pretty effective to us compared to 29 and, of course, meant

recognising all the specific sensitivities around District Policing Partnerships, which I think we strove to ensure we reassured as best we could that they were still a critical and integral part of policing. But as I said, our budget is finite. We have to live within our means. Eight frankly is working, and I think much crime reduction can be attributed to that system being brought in very quickly, actually, and working more effectively, more quickly than I had initially envisaged.

That having been said, co-terminosity can add huge value providing there will be proper legal underpinning to those relationships and, certainly, if you look in the UK the Crime and Disorder Act was critical to ensuring that District Councils delivered to the district police units which were co-terminus with them. You are never going to get a perfect match. Certainly if you look at health authorities for example, they are not currently a perfect match, so whilst it is desirable it is not essential.

My current plan, ACC Toner is already in contact with the relevant agency at Stormont to look at this. I have no plans to move currently to the 11 District model. I think the next stage is a Boundary Commissioner, which I understand will be appointed shortly, I think it is July, I can't remember precisely the date. We will look certainly to work with the Commissioner and give our views on how we can minimise any impact if 11 is where we finally end up. I do not know if you want to touch on that in any more detail ACC Toner.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Roy Toner:

Yes, we did a presentation to the Corporate Policy Committee, the Chief Constable and I, a few weeks ago, and there was some useful feedback from the Committee in relation to engaging closely with NILGA and the Minister. We have already spoken to the Minister and we are drafting up letters at the moment to both parties so that we can run in tandem with the development work of the Boundary Commissioner and other agencies in relation to the 11 Council model. We have no specific plans in place at the moment for any moves on that, and I think we would be pre-emptive to make any plans until we get some more clarity around what it looks like. And also the powers that the new local authorities would have in relation to planning and community safety and crime reduction, we have written to the Minister, Mr Goggins asking specifically for a Crime and Disorder Act to be put in place for Northern Ireland, and we would still be

very strongly supportive of that, that all agencies would have a legislative responsibility to reducing crime and disorder.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

If the Board would like a longer debate on it, I am happy to have it and take Members' views because it would be useful for us in informing our overall decision making, but I would be concerned, frankly, about creating 3 more command teams and actually reducing the size of the others to accommodate something which is yet to happen, and even to be defined in terms of boundaries, in precise terms.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Okay, Mr Weir.

Mr Peter Weir:

Just briefly. I can completely understand where the Chief Constable is coming from in terms of wanting to ensure there is maximum efficiency. From what you have said, however, can we take it that the police will be, whenever we get the final position as regards boundaries, will at least though be willing to look at maybe adjusting the boundaries of the 8 that you have at present, to ensure that we maximise the level of co-terminosity, and minimise the level of disruption indeed between that?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

Yes, absolutely, and in a bizarre way I am going back to the Review which in my memory, I think the other was 15. In a strange way 15 might have been easier because we could actually have probably had 2 district councils for one District Command Unit, and that is not a suggestion that you go back in that direction, but we are absolutely happy to have that debate.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Question 6 relates to lines of communication that exist between the Parades Commission and the PSNI. Question 6, it is under Mr McCrea's name but it is on behalf of the Human Rights and Professional Standards Committee, and there is a supplementary.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Roy Toner:

Chairman, you don't want to do 21, 22 and 23. They were the linked ones.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Sorry, I apologise, yes.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

Do you want to deal with the efficiency savings?

Question 21 - What efficiency savings have been realised from the move to 8 Command Units? I would be grateful if the Chief Constable would provide examples of the savings that have been realised and an outline of his views on the timetable for the achievement of the 15% savings?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Roy Toner:

Yes. The specific question (21) looks at the efficiency savings. We made a strategic objective in the re-structuring of the Districts to deliver 15% efficiency gains across a range of service delivery functions, basically cashable and non-cashable savings and benefits of 15%. Now we do not have any definitive figures at the moment because the first year of that project completed there on 31 March 2008, however you will note that from Part III of the Policing Plan we have agreed to provide a post-implementation review in November. The interim report will be available in November and I have written to the Chief Executive advising that we can provide an update interim report in November, and then an update report from beyond that through to March next year. This will include the 15% efficiency gains and where they are actually at.

But, to give some idea of broad brush stuff at the moment we are talking about, the reduction in crime across the districts was assisted by way of, we think, the new District model. The overtime is actually down, which is seen as an efficiency saving around the new shift patterns, and having the new District model in place. There has been a reduction in senior management tier at the most senior level in the Districts; for example, across the Province we had 35 Superintendents performing functions, we are now down to 25, and we have 2 less Chief Superintendents as well; and the new model has also facilitated the introduction of other innovative approaches such as Public

Protection Units. So, we will include all those aspects in the interim report in November to the Policing Board in line with Part III of the Policing Plan. That is 21.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

22.

Q 22 - What consideration has the Chief Constable given recently to changing the names of the different Command Units? I would be grateful if he would outline the detail of his considerations?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

22 is a really interesting one, Chairman. You wrote to me on this and I understand that the Board's preferred view is that we actually change our names around. My only reservation about that really is, having established them through the CORE project, where the Board is represented, I am a bit nervous about simply changing the names. I understand the sort of emotion behind it, and if the Board would like to debate it with me again, obviously not today, I could be persuaded. It is just how we manage it if we are going to do it because people will see it – we have gone down one route and we have sort of established it, and we would have to sort of turn it around. I do not think frankly there would be a huge cost to it, it would simply making sure that people understood the changes were for understandable reasons, but sort of cosmetic rather than real.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

The next question.

Q23 - Can the Chief Constable confirm his intention to ensure that there is one Commander of Chief Inspector rank for each Area Command? Can he comment on his plans to change the recent arrangement in relation to Armagh and Banbridge commands?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mrs Judith Gillespie:

In relation to, this is the Area Commander question. The role and rank of Area Commanders was one of the areas considered by the CORE project team, and there are no plans to remove Chief Inspectors from Area Commander responsibilities. There

are, however, the Board will know, proposals for Chief Inspectors at Districts to evolve to a more functional role, and that is in accordance with the CORE Strategy.

The decision to combine Armagh and Banbridge Council areas under one Area Commander was taken by the District Commander to balance the workload of the three 'E' District Area Commanders, because 75% of the crime in 'E' District occurs in Craigavon and Newry and Mourne; the other 25% occurring in Armagh and Banbridge. So the DPPs were fully briefed on this decision, and the rationale behind it. And a similar arrangement, the Board will know, has been in place already for over a year in Moyle and Ballymoney, with those areas operating with one Chief Inspector interfacing with the DPPs. So by combining Armagh and Banbridge Area Commanders posts, a functional Chief Inspector post has been created to look after criminal justice processes, and the Board will know that we have been focusing a lot on those processes this morning in terms of performance, and this will give "E" District a Chief Inspector post to focus on those areas of performance wholly.

There are no plans to change this arrangement, but what I can guarantee is that the two DPPs in Armagh and Banbridge will have consistency of engagement with Chief Inspector Ken Mawhinney, who is a very capable individual and I have no doubt will be able to manage both DPPs without any difficulty.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Mr Brian Rea.

Mr Brian Rea

Thank you for that answer. However, I think that there are people out there who may have concerns around two points and if you are satisfying both of these points. Number 1, the requirement that each District Command Unit or Area Command as I understand it is, has got a Chief Inspector as a Commander for that area. Is that strict and is that tight, and that each one would have that, but is it also an interpretation of yours that you could have up to, say 2 or 3 and that requirement is being satisfied in that it is a Chief Inspector who is commanding, even though he is commanding multiples? That is the one point.

The second point I think that people would be concerned about is this the beginning, is this the introduction of a trend, and I think the public would like to have that answer, is

this the thin end of the wedge where all of a sudden we are doubling up and the service could be weakened as a result? Could you assure us on both of those points please?

Thank you.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mrs Judith Gillespie:

Yes, I can understand the concerns. The short answer to the first question is yes, in theory we could have a Chief Inspector engaging with two or more DPPs and it works, as I say, successfully in Moyle and Ballymoney. But I think this is about capacity, and certainly we would not ask a Chief Inspector to engage in more than we thought was physically possible to do. I think it is very important that the Chief Inspector is seen as the visible face of local policing in the area, but I think it is also important to stress that many of the issues of concern to the DPPs can best be dealt with by the local neighbourhood sergeant, or the sector inspector, so the rank of the individual is not necessarily the issue, it is very often the capability and the performance of the officer. But I would say to answer your question Brian, I have certainly no intention of reducing Chief Inspector engagement with DPPs, whether they are dealing with one DPP or 2, or more.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

Can I just add to support ACC Gillespie on this. Where capacity is required we have actually put extra Chief Inspectors in, ie look at South and East Belfast and North and West Belfast. There are extra Chief Inspectors that are deployed there as geographical responsibility due to the commitments and demands in those particular unique areas, so there is no plan to start removing or thinning this down in any way. We look at it in terms of district by district.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Question 6 relates to the Parades Commission and it goes back to its lines of communication. Question 6.

Q6 - Is the Chief Constable satisfied appropriate lines of communication exist with the Parades Commission to ensure expeditious clarification of determinations, particularly around contentious parades?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Roy Toner:

Chairman, this is actually, I think a very good question because communication is a key aspect in liaison with the Parades Commission both at a corporate level, and at local level. There is an issue here, we have an Inspector who works full time within my Department to facilitate that communication and liaison role. That is his primary function. He does absolutely nothing else but parades liaison. He does it on behalf of the two regional ACCs and the District Commanders, and there is an issue that has been raised in relation to the speed and clarification aspects.

We have a protocol in place which is signed up to by the Parades Commission and ourselves about exchanges of information and the timelines around that. Of course, District Commanders when they get a determination will want clarification on key points of it. We feed that back in immediately to the Parades Commission as the circumstances arise. However, sometimes that communication flow can take a longer period of time than we would necessarily like. I know Urban Region has had a couple of instances where it has been right down to the wire to get exact clarification on some of the determinations, and we flagged that up with our colleagues in the Parades Commission themselves. We think it is an important issue that we have to keep looking at, but the Inspector who is there is there full time and does nothing else but parades liaison work. I do not know whether Duncan wants to mention anything from Urban region on it.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

Just, Chairman, that the message has always been “no surprises”. No surprises for people parading, for people protesting and clarity is essential to ensure no surprises.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Okay. Can I just say to everybody. I am anxious that there is something happening this afternoon, and everybody knows that we have an important item of business to transact before Members go. Could Members give me some guidance. Would the people behind Questions 13, 14 and 16 agree to defer those questions to the next meeting?

That is Question 14 deferred.

Martina Anderson, you have a supplementary to Question 6.

Ms Martina Anderson:

I want to thank you for that answer. The speed and clarification process that you referred to. In the context of Whiterock, are you satisfied that that process is going to deal with the issues that you dealt with last year, because the lack of clarification around the determination created all sorts of problems on the ground? Therefore, I would be anxious to know if the ambiguity that was around last year, if you feel that the process that you have now put in place is going to actually result in a better, hopefully, a better parade, but for all concerned around the Whiterock area and the Springfield Road?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

We have had a face to face meeting with the Parades Commission at the end of last year to ensure that there was a very clear understanding of what was required. The Chairman has kindly written as well in around Easter, to define that clarity of these determinations is critical. We believe that the processes that are in, that if we get a clear definition of what the Parades Commission want us to do, we will have no difficulty. My concern is that when I have to go back for clarity, one side or the other believe that I am back trying to do something under the table, which is not the case, because I need clarity in terms of enforcing and upholding the law. I know that the Parades Commission are very conscious of this, and we have had a number of discussions at both Chief Executive level, Chairman level and with the whole Commission, and I would be hopeful that we will get a very clear statement in terms of any determination if there is one that has to be made in relation to any sensitive parade because we sit here today and we may well get some sort of an agreement, I just do not know, people are negotiating.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

A more substantive question in the sense that it would prevent things happening out with the Commission, are you satisfied that there is sufficient movement on the ground in terms of the community and local politicians that can prevent disorder?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

Chairman, people are having meetings at all levels. The community are obviously meeting and discussing among themselves, and across community. There are politicians involved. The two Junior Ministers at the Office of First and Deputy First Minister in relation to the Shared Futures Committee are also actively involved, and we are attempting to ensure that what we had in the last few years, a peaceful summer, will be replicated this year. But, I want to put one marker down. We need a long term solution to these situations, because we are burning huge amounts of money in the last five minutes, because it tends to come to the last five minutes before decisions are made, this Board is aware we do not have the resources to continue to operate in that fashion.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Mr McCrea and then Mr McKay.

Mr Basil McCrea:

Your answer does not actually fill me with a great deal of confidence. The question was 'is the Chief Constable satisfied that the appropriate lines of communications exist?' Last year we had a situation where, I think, it took 6 days to get clarification on a particular parade between the PSNI and the Parades Commission, and it was therefore very difficult for the officers to police it. There should be no problem about getting communication between the PSNI and the Parades Commission. We have spoken to them twice in recent times, and the last time you were speaking to them was last year. We need to make sure that whatever it is that you require to get quick and timely decisions, that that is in place.

If you are not satisfied with that, you should tell us now because it is a matter of, it is now June that we are into, this matter must be dealt with, and you either can say to me you are happy, or you are not happy. And if you are not happy, then we will go out and try and help you in this particular issue.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I am grateful for the offer of help, and the point is that there is a process, as everyone around this table knows. The Parades Commission makes a determination, we police that determination. The process is in place, the structures are in place. The issue is

about every single word, and that is the way the law works. And we respond to what the determination is. What we are talking about is where there is any, or because every word is looked at, of course the potential for ambiguity is vast and huge, and our job is to make sure we go back and get the clearest determination possible so we can deploy our officers. There is nothing else anyone can do, that is the process.

We would see our obligation, if we see something as “imprecise” and there is a history of that far wider than Whiterock, our job is to go back and say this is not good enough. Now, not only do we have the processes in place to achieve that, we also now have protocols so, for example, we make sure those discussions are taped to allay fears that something else is going on under the table. So, I do not need anymore help in that sense, what we do need, and where, you know success is that we do not have to go to the Parades Commission at all because these things become non-contentious; now we are some way from that. In the meantime what we want, is for more, we would encourage if the work that is going on, I know ACC McCausland had to cancel something else at short notice only this week to make sure he was at that meeting of Junior Ministers, that is what is really important. What is really important is community engagement, led by community leaders and politicians to get the agreement so the Parades Commission’s job is minimised. That is the way we move on. The outcome, if it is not, and you know, if these things go to the wire, we will police accordingly and we will come to the Board and explain why we have had to spend that money, but the onus is on others as well as us. But, I am happy that I know my role and I am very confident that ACC McCausland and Chief Superintendent Gary White and my other Commanders know theirs.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Mr McKay. Final question on this.

Mr Daithí McKay

Chief Constable, quite often when the Parades Commission determinations are issued there is often a Code of Conduct attached, and there is a lot of clarity needed around that because sometimes a Code of Conduct is included within determinations, and sometimes it is not. Would you agree that it is important that in future cases the Code of Conduct is incorporated within determinations, even if it is just to ensure that misbehaviour at parades is deterred in future instances? Aside from that, there is also

a tendency from the Parades Commission to issue what are called 'Decisions' which more or less mirror determinations except that they have no legal standing, and that creates a lot of confusion within the community, and within other circles as well. Would you agree that there is absolutely no point to these decisions, and there is absolutely no benefit to them and that the Parades Commission should stick to the determinations?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I do not want to comment on what the Parades Commission does. The law is clear, it is the determination that we are interested in. And the Code of Conduct, I think we already answered that, have not we ACC McCausland. Yes, it would help. I think it is around clarity, and so everyone knows what the deal is, and who is going to do what, and it is ACC McCausland's phrase of "no surprises". When we get that, we actually tend to get a pretty peaceful and mutually acceptable parade that does not cause anyone any difficulty. But ACC McCausland does the detail, so he may want to add observations on the Code of Conduct point.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

I think in terms of the current review that is ongoing, we have asked specifically that the Code of Conduct should be given some sort of statutory standing, that you can in effect hold people responsible. And remember what you are holding them responsible for – for their own behaviour. Therefore, if they misbehave they have only got their own selves to answer to. Now, it does help us in terms of referring to the Code of Conduct in trying to support, a potential weakness has always been that the Code of Conduct has not been given statutory backing, which leaves us then in a very difficult position that we are falling back on other, more harsh, legislation in terms of interpreting how people behave or do not behave, and we have already referred to that earlier on about the Parades and Processions Order, and public order itself.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Question 13 relates to CS Spray and an EQIA. Question 13, it is in Ms Anderson's name.

Q13 - To ask the Chief Constable to reconsider the decision not to carry out an EQIA in relation to the deployment of CS Spray in light of a court case in Derry on 24 April 2008 (George Cairns v the Chief Constable), when damages were

awarded to the Plaintiff – a first aid worker who suffered serious physical repercussions after coming to the aid of a teenage girl who had been subjected to CS Spray by a PSNI officer during disturbances in 2004. To ask the Chief Constable to detail whether any disciplinary measures will be taken against the officer who deployed the CS Spray in the George Cairns v the Chief Constable case, given the judge’s ruling that he had acted improperly?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I will ask ACC Toner to deal with the policy matters.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Roy Toner:

The question relates to a specific incident which was referred to in the High Court recently, in relation to a civil claim. In relation to the first part which relates to the EQIA aspect, the original CS Spray policy was subject to a Section 75 screening process, and the decision at that time was that an EQIA was not needed. Nothing has come forward in the intervening period which says that we should conduct a full Equality Impact Assessment, or is there a requirement to as there is nothing to indicate that any specific group has any differential application of CS Spray that would require a review of the policy itself.

However, in relation to the specific incident itself, the Ombudsman’s Report into that specific incident said that there was no misconduct by any police officer, either criminal or discipline-wise. So the Ombudsman gave that particular incident a clean bill of health.

In relation to the actual policy itself, I would be quite happy if the Board would like the Human Rights Advisors to review or look at that policy. We do review all our policies in line with human rights compliance on a rotational basis, and we report to the Human Rights & Professional Standards Committee on that, and indeed Jane Gordon and I were discussing that very issue yesterday. So, if the Board would like that particular policy reviewed in more depth by their Human Rights Advisors I have no difficulties. I also have no difficulties at all with Members of the Board coming and seeing the CS Spray training, and the guidance that is given to officers in the use of CS Spray specifically, and we would actually welcome as many Members as possible to come along and see that to provide reassurance that the training is actually in place.

In relation to the specific incident itself. We have nothing to indicate that the individual concerned suffered serious physical repercussions. We referred the matter to the Ombudsman's office, even though the Ombudsman's office received no specific complaints. This is going back 3½ years. The policies have been reviewed in that intervening period and are constantly updated, as we always take on board any guidance or advice from the Ombudsman's office or elsewhere.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

Can I set out a couple of points. This is an interesting case where you have an investigation by one organisation finding the police not at fault, and then a judicial investigation finding us, as a Service, at fault. But I do think it is important because it is an important question. Just to read a couple of points out from the Ombudsman's actual conclusion.

The first question was, was the officer properly trained and authorised and in lawful possession of the CS Spray and that they confirmed that he had been trained, was properly authorised and been trained to the right level to carry the device. In terms of was it justified, the Ombudsman found there was strong evidence to support that at the time the officer used the spray, he was subject to threat of attack, and taking into account all the circumstances it would appear it was justified and proportionate within legislation, and guidelines, to prevent serious injury. The Ombudsman also commented that they received full co-operation throughout the investigation. And, I think, the point is it shows how complex and difficult these cases are. The individual concerned, of course, was a person not involved in the incident, but a person who came to the assistance of someone who had been subject to the CS Spray. I do not think an EQIA would add any value in those sorts of circumstances, or would have changed anything in terms of the outcome.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Ms Anderson.

Ms Martina Anderson:

I welcome the comments about the Human Rights Committee or the Human Rights Advisor maybe taking another look at this, because I do think it would change the outcome. Because I think if you carried out an EQIA, then the kind of guidance and

training that you would put in place would be different to what exists at the moment. And, I think there is a discrepancy here that needs to be explored further because, as you say, if the Ombudsman's office already reported prior to the findings of the court that no one was at fault, and then the Judge actually tells you that all that the PSNI officer had to do was close the door, that his life actually wasn't in any risk and there was no danger really around him. He could have closed the door and instead of that he used the Spray. So therefore I think that once the Judge has made that finding that there should have been some kind of follow up disciplinary procedure taken place by yourself, or conducted by yourself; and secondly, if referred again, I thought there would have been a duty on yourself to refer it again to the Ombudsman as a result of the Judge's findings in this particular case.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

The officer had already been investigated once. The officer has rights too. I do not think you can re-investigate an officer on the same facts just because a Judge finds differently to a full blown investigation to the standards of the Ombudsman's office, which is always uniquely high.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Okay, Question 16 relates to dissident activity in Tyrone. This is the final question and it is Mr Buchanan's question.

Q 16 -To ask the Chief Constable to give his assessment of the level of dissident republican threat against security force members in West Tyrone?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Peter Sheridan

Chairman, security forces in Northern Ireland, but particularly police officers, remain the primary target for dissident republicans. They continue to make preparations for further attacks, and further attacks on members of the security forces, in particular police officers remain a strong possibility. They do, as you mentioned earlier Chairman, have little or no community support. They lack finance, but the recent attack on an off-duty officer in Spamount demonstrated that they do have a capability and intent to carry out their attacks. If I was to put it in summary, Chairman, I would say they remain a major threat and are capable of extreme violence, particularly against police officers.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Okay.

Mr Tom Buchanan:

If I can just follow on from that, Chair. Can I ask is this dissident republicans, is that threat being closely monitored, and what steps are being taken to eradicate that?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Peter Sheridan:

There is considerable effort, both between ourselves and Garda Síochána and the security services against a key number of dissident individuals who we will continue to focus our efforts and attentions to.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Okay, that concludes the session. Could I say thank you to members of the public for attending. Also the journalists who are present, and also to the Chief Constable and his team for taking our questions. We will re-convene at 1.40 pm. Thank you.

Ms Martina Anderson:

Chair, before you finish there is Question 9 that wasn't taken. Is that now going to be a written response.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Yes, it is written. We agreed. Thank you very much everybody.