

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD

MINUTES OF A MEETING IN PUBLIC OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 7 FEBRUARY 2007 AT 11:30AM IN WATERSIDE TOWER, BELFAST

PRESENT:

MEMBERS:

Professor Sir Desmond Rea (Chairman)
Mr Barry Gilligan (Vice Chairman)
Mr Alex Attwood
Mr Joe Byrne
Mr Fred Cobain
Mr Brendan Duddy
Mrs Arlene Foster
Mr Willie Hay
Mrs Dolores Kelly
Mr Danny Kennedy
Ms Deirdre Mac Bride
Mrs Pauline McCabe
Mrs Rosaleen Moore
Mr Ian Paisley Jnr
Mrs Dawn Purvis
Mr Brian Rea
Mr Trevor Ringland
Mr Suneil Sharma
Mr Peter Weir

PSNI IN ATTENDANCE:

Sir Hugh Orde (Chief Constable)
Mr Paul Leighton (Deputy Chief Constable)
Mrs Judith Gillespie (ACC Rural Region)
Mr Peter Sheridan (ACC Crime Operations)
Mr Duncan McCausland (ACC Urban Region)
Mr Drew Harris (ACC Criminal Justice Department)
Mr Roy Toner (ACC Operational Support)
Mr Joe Stewart, Director of Human Resources
Mr David Best, Director of Finance & Support Services
Mr David Cox, Director of Historical Enquiries Team
Director of Media and PR
T/ Superintendent , Command Secretariat
3 PSNI Officers

**HUMAN RIGHTS
ADVISORS:**

Mr Keir Starmer
Ms Jane Gordon

**OFFICIALS IN
ATTENDANCE:**

Mr Trevor Reaney (Chief Executive)
Dr Debbie Donnelly (Deputy Chief
Executive)
Mr Sam Hagen (Director of Corporate
Services)
Mrs Sinead Simpson (Director of Policy)
4 Board Officials

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Chief Constable, Senior Officers, members of the public and members of the media, welcome to this meeting in public of the Northern Ireland Policing Board.

This may in fact be the last meeting of this current Board because it is up for reconstitution, as all of you will know.

During the meeting, Board Members will question the Chief Constable on a range of policing issues, and the Chief Constable will present his latest report on levels of recorded crime and the PSNI's progress against the targets set out in the Annual Policing Plan. But before I ask the Chief Constable to present his report, I would like to comment on some of the events of recent weeks which have focused attention on policing.

At the recent Ard Fheis, Sinn Fein supported their Executive's motion to support the Police Service of Northern Ireland and join the Policing Board and DPPs. Mr Adams has called for co-operation with the police and he has urged potential recruits from within the republican communities to consider the police service as a career.

Although conditional on political agreements, I have already welcomed on behalf of the Board this decision, and I look forward to the day when Sinn Fein take their seats on this Board, with full political and community support for policing truly delivered. I trust that that will be sooner rather than later.

The public must have confidence in the police and for the police to be professional and act with utmost integrity at all times.

The publication of the report on the investigation into the murder of Raymond McCord Junior has provided a shocking and disturbing account of very serious failings in the past. Our sympathies go out not simply to the Mr McCord family, but to all the families involved.

The Board held a special meeting on this issue, during which Members discussed the report with both the Ombudsman and the Chief Constable, and questioned the Chief Constable on the report's findings, its conclusions and its recommendations, 17 of which are within the remit of the PSNI. All 17, have been accepted by the Chief Constable and the Board has at its earlier meeting today, ratified the mechanism that it proposes to put in place in order for the Board to meet its recommendation under recommendation 20. Indeed the Chief Constable has stated at the meeting that he is happy with the recommendation that has been put forward. Also, in that same deliberation, the Board held further discussion with the Chief Constable in respect of the work to be undertaken, proposed to be undertaken by the Historical Enquiries Team (HET) and the Board will look further at that in the light of further discussions with the Chief Constable.

Informants and intelligence gathering are necessary elements of policing and they are essential to ensuring public safety. However, these activities must be strictly managed in order to deliver the highest ethical standards of conduct.

In recent years, the Board has invested significant time and energy in holding the PSNI to account in ensuring that the systems, the processes, the practices are in place to ensure that the PSNI operates to the highest standards of conduct and professionalism expected, quite rightly, by this community.

Whilst the Ombudsman has recognised the improvements made in recent years, the Board in meeting its accountability role will continue to be vigilant to make sure that the changes that have taken place are maintained and enhanced. In public session we have received in the past, presentations on this area to inject openness, transparency and public confidence.

In September 2004, the then Assistant Chief Constable, Crime Operations, presented to the Policing Board a detailed report on the review of informants. At that time, he outlined that one of the big issues for any police service, is to ensure that its intelligence sources are sources that do not present to the organisation, corporate risk. That means ensuring informants are not causing more problems to the community than the quality of the information they are passing to the police.

PSNI now have systems in place which facilitate the periodic review of PSNI informants to make sure they are handled properly, that the risks are properly looked at and judged, and that they are giving relevant information that can be used.

As was reported to the Board in 2004, as a result of the then review, PSNI deactivated relationships with 12% of informants. This was further reinforced in public session in June 2006 when ACC Sheridan provided a detailed update report on the review of informants, reporting a total of 24% had been now deactivated.

At the time covered by the Ombudsman's Report, it would appear that there was a question of the availability and the suitability of guidelines for informant handling and in the context of then terrorist threat.

In the context of the society in which we live, and have lived, it is important to remember the service and sacrifices made by the vast majority of police officers who did their job professionally and to the highest standards. 302 officers lost their lives and many more were injured. To them, this society owes a huge debt and this should not be forgotten.

In this context, a question has been tabled today asking for a considered statement on the role of Special Branch in protecting the public and saving lives during Northern Ireland's turbulent past.

As we look to, and plan for the future, to all those considering a career in policing, to those officers who recently joined the police and to serving officers, on behalf of the Board I send this message.

Policing in Northern Ireland has gone through unprecedented change, change for the benefit of everyone in this community and each of you have been at the forefront of the change. You are part of one of the most modern and accountable police services in the world today. As is stated in the Code of Ethics, which all officers now sign up to, officers who meet the high standards set, not only deserve the support of the community, but they also deserve the respect of the community.

Whilst we can look to the future with enthusiasm, recent events have shown that we cannot ignore our troubled past. But dealing with the past is not just an issue for the PSNI or for this Board. It is also an issue for the wider community, for political parties and for Government. Others must face up to their responsibilities.

I personally am on record, that this must be dealt with sooner rather than later and that a special Commission could be established for the purpose of recommending how we as a society, should deal with the past in order that we might embrace the future. The people of Northern Ireland must, in my view, take ownership of this issue.

We all have been touched by the past, we all have a responsibility to find a path forward for the future. As we move towards the March elections, I urge the politicians to think of the future and in securing a lasting settlement for Northern Ireland.

Finally, there has been much focus on the appointment processes and practices of this Board. I can assure the public and any candidate for senior posts within the Board or PSNI, that the Board is committed to equality of opportunity and operates to the highest standards of employment practice; making appointments based solely on merit. The debate on the recent advertisement by the SDLP, did not take place this morning, it will take place this afternoon after this public session and after we have had lunch.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

Thank you Chairman. Before I go into the crime performance figures as this is our 3 monthly update, I just want to make a couple of observations on the comments you already made.

I note and support your observations on dealing with the past, my views on that are well known and I also agree that this is not a matter that is solely in the realms of policing, or the Police Board and certainly do believe that it is something that needs to be grasped and moved forward as a matter of urgency. That having been said, in relation to the recent Police Ombudsman's Report, my statements are on record, I did find it a disappointing, shocking and uncomfortable read and I have accepted all the recommendations and issued an apology on behalf of policing for what was or was not done during the times referred to in Mrs O'Loan's report.

Looking forward, we had a good meeting this morning and I thank the Board for their support on moving the recommendations forward, in particular, recommendations 1, 2 and 3 all of which will be dealt with by my Historic Enquiries Team (HET) and indeed work is already underway. There is a substantial commitment to deliver those recommendations which will require additional resources and we will be in negotiation with Government in relation to that, following further discussions with this Policing Board.

That having been said, I think there is an important point to make. It is absolutely right that we are held to account for what went on in the past, but we must be careful that in that process we do not damage what has been achieved in policing the present. We must not demoralise our officers and we must not demoralise our staff who every day are out there delivering an effective policing service and some of the impact of that I will report on very shortly.

I met only yesterday, with a large number of my officers from Crime Operations Department, mainly those who are charged with the most difficult and challenging part of policing, handling of informants and handling of intelligence. It is not a precise science, it requires a great degree of professionalism, training and commitment and I reassured those officers that I have confidence in them. I have confidence in the processes, the rules, the practices and the law which we comply with when dealing with that and I encouraged them to continue doing the work they are doing currently, because undoubtedly, it save lives and brings people to justice and I look to the Board to support those contentions when meeting my staff.

We have to continue policing effectively now whilst dealing with the past and by that I mean not just the Ombudsman's Report Chairman. There are of course public enquiries, some of which are very old and some of which are currently underway and some of which may be created in the near future and all of that will have an impact on policing the present and we need to be aware of that.

In relation to your comments on Sinn Fein, as I have said before, I am frequently on record as saying they should be part of this Policing Board. The decision is welcomed, policing is a public service and we look to engage it from all communities and we look to be held to account by all communities through the proper processes including the Board. I do think, as an observation, that the conditions created by modern policing have made it inevitable that all parties now engage in policing. I think the communities which are represented by Sinn Fein, many of them have realised and have understood the benefit of policing. I saw only this week, a letter from a West Belfast resident in the Andersonstown News explaining just how effective the local officers have been in solving their problem. I think that hopefully we will see more of those letters as we engage and are allowed to engage more with those communities.

If I could move on to crime performance Chairman which we have some figures on. In terms of all crime, the overall trend continues over 4 years to be downward. As of yesterday, Board Members will have slightly different figures because these are as of yesterday, overall crime is down 1.9%, the Board set us a target of reducing it by 2%. The Board will be aware that about 6 months ago crime was up 5% so this shows considerable effort by my officers at the front end and indeed, the intelligence gathering capability of my officers to work very hard to reduce crime across the peace. The decrease now is on average of 370 crimes a day this year compared with 390 crimes 4 years ago.

An awful lot of effort has gone in. We have held regular performance meetings for all districts which I or my Deputy Chief Constable has been at, to drive the importance of this home and many good initiatives have been circulated which I think contribute to that overall downward trend.

Moving to the next slide – most similar forces. These are the forces Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary (HMI) compares us against. Members will see the figures that in terms of all crime, while these are the latest figures up to December 2006 released by the HMI, so for fairness we have not shown a decrease in those figures. In the December figures, Members will note in terms of all crime, we are still the lowest level of crime in the comparative group, you will see the changes there with other forces. I think the ones I would highlight against the target set by Policing Board, domestic burglary currently down 7% in Northern Ireland, vehicle crime currently down 8% which I think compares favourably with other areas. Violent crime, whilst decreasing currently in Northern Ireland, is still higher than in some places. Northumbria for example and West Yorkshire which are probably even more similar in population levels. An awful lot of work is going on in relation to that.

Just by way of brief examples, in Banbridge using our analysts to identify where the crimes are taking place, hot spotting on maps, CCTV, high visibility patrols for example, Banbridge has reduced overall violent crime by 4% reducing it to 622 crimes during this year.

In East Belfast, 'Operation Safe Night' ran in December again targeting violent crime, that included leaflet drops regarding knife crime at the Odyssey, partnership work between the police and nightclubs at the Odyssey using metal detectors to remove or to deter people from carrying knives and high visibility anti robbery patrols and as a result, 2.7% decrease compared to the same time last year, but clearly more work to do.

In overall terms all crime, as the next slide shows is down 1.9%. It breaks it down to the 29 districts, you will see the downward trend is in 18 are static and 9 are going up slightly and that is by way of information.

More worrying is the next slide - clearance rates, the new recording requirements have increased the focus really universally now to sanctioned crime, which is the one that people are interested in. A sanctioned crime is one where there is a judicial outcome rather than an administrative one and you will see, whilst we have managed to increase our sanctioned crime clear-up rate from last year by 1%, a far more vigorous analysis of non-sanctioned crime has reduced the non-sanctioned clear-up rates substantially.

Those for example are, administrative clear-ups where historically, if someone refused to prosecute, that would be seen as cleared-up that is now not necessarily the case.

Moving on to domestic burglary, as you can see against our comparative forces, down in December 6.6% again the number of burglaries per 10,000 which I think is a very important indicator because it levels the playing field. Compared to all our other comparative forces we are the lowest, we have 75 crimes per 10,000 households.

Again much good work going on in Armagh. Frequent offenders are one of our big issues, offenders out on conditional bail, stringent bail checks of those individuals making sure they are at home when curfews are in place, for example, it has reduced Armagh's burglaries by 6.2% to 211 this year.

North Down has had one of the more successful reductions in burglary, huge effort there. Again crime prevention preventing the events taking place in the first place. Special burglary packs for victims of crime, marking pens, compliant alarm companies being recommended, stickers around Neighbourhood Watch, it is down an amazing 36% from 310 crimes last year to 199 crimes this year. I was personally briefed by the Detective Inspector on that particular initiative and it clearly has and can be applied elsewhere in Northern Ireland.

Castlereagh also had a large crime prevention initiative running to prevent people making themselves vulnerable through simply leaving keys in the right place or those sort of things, so much work again underway across the place.

Moving on to vehicle crime, we remain the lowest vehicle crime areas in the United Kingdom. Again an 8.8% decrease this year on last year that has been a consistent success story since 2002.

Criminal damage is more of a mix bag quite frankly, basic analysis shows the following. One is, criminal damage is twice as bad at weekends, no real surprises there. Broken windows, about 33% of all crimes are people throwing things through windows and the average number of reports per week is 605. This is an area very much linked to anti-social behaviour. Youth Diversion Schemes for example, are seen as a key and a symptom of a wider problem which is around young people generally with not much to

do, so a huge effort is being put into Youth Diversion Schemes as well as proactive bail checks for those who are on bail for offences such as criminal damage. Anti Social Behaviour Orders are relevant to this and we do apply for them where we think they are relevant.

In terms of crimes against older persons, which are I know very much in the public domain through media reporting for example. The domestic burglary trend is down, more importantly in terms of violent crime whilst every crime against an elderly person, especially in their home, is one that quite rightly is a matter for public concern and public debate. The potential of being a victim of crime if you are an elderly person, is 2 victims per 1,000 compared to 22 victims per 1,000 in the general population, that is of course 2 people too many, but it does put it in perspective in terms of what sometimes the perception of crime against our elderly citizens is. There are substantial initiatives, especially in Craigavon and Ards around community safety, working with Help the Aged, panic alarms, more secure buildings etc are underway.

Moving on to homicide rates, murders last year we had 19 recorded to date and that includes the one only last week which has already been cleared up, of which 16 have been cleared. That rate I could not achieve as Head of Crime in South London. That is a very impressive record, the vast majority of those currently going through the courts.

The next graph simply shows the trend which I think is a good news story, the homicide rate currently is the lowest in 20 years.

Drugs, a different drugs market here to many parts of the United Kingdom. The heroin market has been assessed as stable, these are not our figures, these are a Department of Health analysis. If one looks at problem users which of course are important because they are linked to crime, those with a habit we know commit crime to fund their habits. Northern Ireland in terms of problem opiate or cocaine users only has 3 per 1,000 compared to the Republic of Ireland nearly 9 and Scotland 15.4 and again, our registered addicts are very low even for our population size.

The area of concern is cocaine, we are seizing more and more cocaine generally being found for recreational use. Very little evidence still of crack cocaine although 2 small seizures have been made in the recent past, it is something we are keeping an eye on,

Largely it is still a recreational drugs market which we are focusing on, obviously linked to paramilitary in terms of fund raising, so we do put a huge amount of effort for example into cannabis, which other forces would not be able to do, we think it is still very important.

In terms of extortion, again I think a very positive story. It is a matter of fact that when we get a complaint for extortion, we normally get a conviction. It is also a fact that these sentences are rising. There is a very clear message from the Judges that if you commit extortion you are going to prison for a minimum of 6 years on the recent Court of Appeal Judgement which is being complied with by the Judges. So, a very clear message and again if we are told by business about extortion we can be extremely effective. We are doing a lot of work with business to encourage them to work with us on that particular crime.

In terms of tiger kidnaps, these figures are for the last 3 years and there have been 36, an average of 1 tiger kidnap a month, over the last 3 years of course. That includes the Northern Bank robbery which makes the actual amount of cash seized very high. The vast majority of target kidnaps take place where the object is to steal cash, although you will see on 3 occasions there were other objectives, cash and cigarettes and indeed jewellery. There is a slight shift away from financial institutions towards retail outlets, cash in transit and fast food outlets, so it is something we are putting a huge amount of work into. You will see 6 people arrested in December 2006 in relation to preventing one of these and those people are currently awaiting trial. Recently a successful arrest in Strabane for one of the offences in that area and we are doing a lot of cross border work with our colleagues in the South of Ireland to make sure that where cross border offences are being undertaken, we are seamless in terms of dealing with that particular offence.

In terms of cash in transit, a huge amount of work has gone into this, not at least by uniform colleagues protecting cash in transit shipments and deliveries wherever we can. We have a joint operation centre running which has helped and it is showing that we have managed to reduce the number of attacks significantly. In terms of our share of the United Kingdom problem and that is partly a legacy issue in my analysis, is that we are now only 5% of the United Kingdom crime rather than 15%. Group 4 and Securicor have been extremely complementary and have worked very much with us on

these particular matters and we continue to work with them. In 2006, 22 people were arrested for cash in transit robberies.

Finally, the one that has caused us concern over the last 4 years, I am pleased to report that the custody and bail figures are now in excess of the Policing Plan targets. It took us far too long to get there, but I am pleased to say we are getting there now. I am also confident that when we go to the larger units we will become even more efficient in terms of delivering the raw material to the criminal justice system.

Chairman, that is as requested a fairly brief run through bearing in mind the number of questions, but I am happy to take any questions.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Question 2 relates to hate crime, Vice Chairman of the Board.

Vice Chairman, Mr Barry Gilligan:

Thank you Chairman. Chief Constable, thank you very much for your report. Just by way of a general comment, it is comforting to know by way of comparison with the rest of the UK that we do have a lot to be thankful for. I have no doubt we will not be complacent as I am sure you will know, but we do have a lot to be thankful for.

Specifically on hate crime, we have had the recent Criminal Justice Inspectorate report "Hate Crime in Northern Ireland", can you outline initiatives aimed at improving the clearance rate for hate crimes, and in particular, those crimes that are motivated by sectarianism and racism.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I will ask ACC Harris to deal with that question.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Drew Harris:

Across all 29 DCUs there are over 100 initiatives aimed at hate crime, all the various types of hate crime – racism, sectarian, faith, religion, disability and homophobic. It has to be pointed out, that people who commit these sorts of crimes do range across all these groupings and with that in mind, it is important to concentrate upon the offender. We are developing Public Protection Units specifically for this purpose which will have

an investigative footing in order to link events, link the modus operandi of attacks, develop intelligence, as a hate crime offender very rarely is responsible for only one attack or incident but are multiple offenders and it is important that we maximise investigative opportunities.

The present initiatives that we have, have been successful in increasing reporting and reporting is very important in order to develop investigative strategies. In particular, Foyle have increased their clearance rate by 43% in respect of racial offences following initiatives there and Ballymoney have increased their clearance rate for sectarian offences by 50%.

Our new Hate Crime Policy has been in place for almost a year and will be reviewed in April 2007. Specifically it allows for a Chief Inspector to oversee all hate crime investigations and determine that sufficient action, sufficient enquiries and a proper investigation have been conducted. But we want to concentrate very much upon the offenders as well, because as I have said, these offenders are typically multiple offenders who subject all vulnerable groups to attack.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Question 3 relates to violent crimes against children, Vice Chairman of the Board.

Vice Chairman, Mr Barry Gilligan:

Chief Constable, could you outline the factors behind the very worrying increase in violent crimes against children and outline what steps have been taken to reduce these crimes.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

Again I will ask ACC Harris to answer that question. Just by way of observation, an awful lot of crimes on young people are committed by young people and what we are finding is an increase in reporting, certainly of people of school age. For example on bullying and matters like that but I will ask ACC Harris to deal with the detail as he leads for the organisation.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Drew Harris:

There has been a 5.1% rise in reported offences against victims under 18 years of age but this is predominantly concentrated on children in their teenage years. The offences have increased by 229 this year to 4,755.

Amongst these figures, as it has been pointed out, there has been a significant increase in bullying and this seems to be perpetrated via text or via the use of e-mail or the internet. There has also been a reduction low in the number of reported sexual offences committed against children and that has fallen this year by 3.7% which follows a reduction last year of 6.5%.

To respond to the specific issues we are having that identified around bullying, we have launched "Safer Schools" initiative in 2006 and this will be built upon in 2007 and this gives DCUs the tools to engage further with schools through the current programmes and the emphasis is put in place on personal safety and bullying.

In conjunction with the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young Persons (NICCY), we have launched Independent Advisory Groups for Youth and these will be based around Northern Ireland and this gives us a mechanism directly to talk and engage with young people, again around issues of personal safety, violence and bullying.

With the national centred event, the exploitation of children on line, 60 officers from all our DCUs have been trained to deliver their new course on internet safety and this covers issues about how to avoid grooming on the internet and how to report suspicious activity on the internet as well. We have also hosted in 2006 a major internet safety conference aimed specifically at schools and teachers to help educate people to be safe on line.

We have also, as a first I think in the UK, developed a partnership with the chat site 'bebo' to take forward public safety and particularly safety of children in the Ballymena area. In 2006, as a result of work taken forward by Crime Operations in relation to people possessing indecent images of children, 9 persons have been charged with this offence and a further 15 have been reported to the Public Prosecution Services (PPS)

and that compares with none being detected in 2005. So, there is very significant activity going on in order to protect our children.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Question 1 relates to public confidence and I propose to take 2 supplementaries, one relates to clearance rates from Deidre Mac Bride and the other I believe relates to clearance rates from Pauline McCabe. Question 1 Vice Chairman of the Board.

Vice Chairman, Mr Barry Gilligan:

Chief Constable, if you look at the figures so far this year which is for 9 months, the number of crimes recorded is almost identical to the comparable period the year before at 96,000. Could you give us some assessment on the potential for increased public confidence, particularly that increased public confidence as a result of the recent pledge of support for policing. On that confidence, to impact upon the number of crimes recorded and maybe you would talk particularly about any ongoing work you are involved in in the area of crime reporting trends.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

One would like to think we can continue to maintain the downward trend and it obviously gets progressively more difficult as you get to the more hardcore offences. I think our record over the last 5 years has been pretty reasonable considering the challenges we have faced and it is right to reflect that Northern Ireland is not a normal policing environment in which to carry out crime investigations, which does have an impact on our potential certainly to clear crimes up.

There is a hypothesis that the more confidence you get from the communities, the more likely it is that your reported crime rate will increase. The real crime rate will probably not increase, the reported crime rate will increase. I have no particular difficulty with that, but I do think we need to understand it, so if we do think that is really the case, we have an academic basis to that theory. We have, as Board Members will be aware, commissioned an external piece of work jointly with the Board, to try and do some analysis around trends in reporting in areas where historically perhaps, we would not get necessarily the full criminal picture, and we will report back when that work has been undertaken sometime later this year.

My current view, I thought actually this year we might see an increase in reported crime, there is no particular evidence of that however apart from some areas. For example, reported crime in Crossmaglen has increased substantially. I think that is a positive thing. It allows our analysts to get a better picture and if we get a bigger picture then we are likely to be more effective. In areas what we are currently finding is the sort of crime such as domestic violence where there is increased reporting. That of course is extremely important, bearing in mind the potential for domestic violence that leads to serious assaults and indeed, murder. I think if you look at our murder rate this year, probably 6 or 7 of those could be properly seen as domestic murders and, therefore, potentially preventable. So, the better picture we get I think the more we will be able to understand it, but it is work in progress and we will report to the Board when those findings are discovered.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Ms Mac Bride.

Ms Deirdre Mac Bride:

Chief Constable, I am happy that you have reported an increase in the clearance rate by 1.9% today, but can you update us on what are the specific actions being taken across DCUs to meet the clearance targets for 2006/07, given that there is considerable swing across districts.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I will ask my 2 operational colleagues to touch on that, but by way of overview and to give a little bit of thinking time.

Firstly, when we identified the increase we very quickly pulled together all our District Commanders to try and understand what was going on and I think a number of things were going on. Obviously we have competing pressures, be it the marching season, be it other public disorder, be it managing that and managing the crime levels, so I think we maybe took our eye off the ball slightly. What those meetings had to be effective doing I think, was refocusing peoples minds on what was important and what was important was the Policing Board targets that have been set for us and the District Policing Partnerships targets that had been set for us.

I think certainly that I and my Deputy Chief Constable attended every single one of those performance meetings, which are about every 2 to 3 months to make sure we kept the pressure on.

What we have identified is a very clear and definite increase in energy around looking at the local problems from a local perspective far greater or a very impressive use of our analysts, so our officers know exactly what is going on and where they can go and some very good practices, some of which has been shared with the Board. You will remember Frances Nolan and some other people gave presentations to the Board, indeed the Chairman was at one of our performance meetings, so I think from a strategic perspective it has been picked up and certainly pushed.

I will ask ACC McCausland and ACC Gillespie if they want to touch on some of the specific initiatives that they have been running.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

If I could keep it brief because it could take all afternoon to outline the number of initiatives that are running across both Urban and Rural.

Board Members know that you have an open invitation to attend any of the performance review meetings that are undertaken by Regional ACCs and even the Chief Constable's performance conferences. It is very clear that the success we have seen in the last 9 months and the change round in the figures is basically down to, I feel, local officers as the Chief Constable said, identifying local problems with the local community and then targeting their initiatives with the local community to actually get solutions, rather than just deal with the symptoms. I think that has been the critical success in terms of reducing crime and starting to drive up the detection rates.

As the Chief Constable has already alluded to, it will be difficult to make the same success levels and detection rates as we made this time last year due to the Home Office counting rules, but we are hopeful to make a mid 20% to 25% clearance rate and that again is due to clear specific initiatives and targeting. Now I am more than happy to share those initiatives with you on a one to one basis if you wish outside the room, but at this point I would hand over to ACC Gillespie.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mrs Judith Gillespie:

Just to add to what ACC McCausland has said. There are 3 DCUs within Rural Region who are meeting the Policing Plan target of a detection rate of 29%, that is Cookstown, Dungannon and Omagh and there are 2 that are there or thereabouts, but in every case detections rates have suffered from the change in the counting rules.

Cookstown, the DCU Commander Brian Williamson, did a very good presentation to the Chief Constable's Performance Conference sharing good practice with all DCU Commanders so as any lessons learned from Cookstown could be learned in other areas as well.

We are also looking to introduce the Volume Crime Management Model which very clearly talks about dealing with today's crime today and making sure that procedures and processes are fit for purpose to make sure that any investigative lines are followed up as quickly as possible within the new DCU structure.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Pauline McCabe.

Mrs Pauline McCabe:

Chairman, it may simply be an oversight, but I was just drawing attention to the fact that in this month's report, we actually do not have clearance rates reported by District Command Unit, and as has been alluded to several times and as the Handling Volume Crime Report actually points out, we do have very significant variations between District Commands, so I was really just looking for an assurance that in future months we could have that reported by District Command.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

They certainly can be and they do vary. There is some clear explanations in terms of where we get greater co-operation, you tend to get a greater opportunity to clear them up and I will make sure they are, I am sorry if they were missing.

Mr Ian Paisley Jnr:

Chairman, could I have a question on tackling crime performance. Thank you for allowing me to interrupt. I welcome your comments about the debate this afternoon

and indeed, look forward to be able to test the assertion that we do things in a fair way and an unbiased way and hope that we do not create a new oppressed and a new Alabama.

Turning to the issue of co-operation from the community, can I say that I acknowledge these statistics today. Usually I am very sceptical on these statistics, but I think it does show that there has been some very hard work on the ground by your police officers and where that is done, we should acknowledge it and say to them to keep up the good work and keep on resolving these issues

Could you indicate to us in terms of co-operation with the community in tackling crime, if you have had any increased co-operation or contact with senior republicans, with senior people from Sinn Fein at MP level, at council level, at MLA level and what assistance are they giving with crime prevention. What assistance are they giving in encouraging witnesses to come forward on these issues so that they are not molested to give evidence that stands up in court? Can you indicate to us, that since last month when your Head of Special Branch, in an answer to a question, indicated very clearly that there has been no intelligence to show a change in the status or standing of the Army Council of the Provisional IRA? Have you had any intelligence to show that there has been a change since the Ard Fheis?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

It is a bit early to make an assessment, has the world moved on hugely since the statement by Sinn Fein, I will ask my operational colleagues to comment on whether they have seen any immediate response to that statement. There has been some clear statements from the senior leadership in relation to joining the police and in relation to the murder of Mr McCartney but I do not think it would be right to say that any new evidence has flowed as a result of those statements by the senior leadership of Sinn Fein.

I have met with DCC Leighton and ACC Sheridan, I have met with some of the senior players in Sinn Fein, we made our observations very clear. Success for us is, that people at the front end of policing engage in an open way. So, my vision of the way this needs to move forward is that local councillors, local representatives feel able to communicate with my District Commanders because collectively, that is how I think we

are going to make Northern Ireland a safer place. I think to date to my knowledge I have not seen any substantial movement but I do not know if any of my colleagues can add to that.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Peter Sheridan:

Chairman, what we have seen is a continued disbandment of paramilitary structures and the continuation of instructions to members not to use physical force, and the leadership's maintenance of a firm stance against involvement in criminality and the key personal role played by senior members to secure a peaceable parades season last year and work ongoing this year.

We also see that PIRA has not engaged in any terrorist activity such as recruitment, training, targeting, the procurement of weapons, engineering activity or other intelligence gathering. Nor in our view, has there been any organisational involvement in robbery or other such organised crime in the organisation. But in direct answer to your question in terms of the leadership, no I have not seen any change as at this moment.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Question 4 relates to the Raymond McCord Jnr murder report, I have got 2 or 3 questions here. I am going to take 2 with 1 as a supplementary, question 4 Mrs Moore and then question 44 from Trevor Ringland.

Mrs Rosaleen Moore:

Chief Constable, the Ombudsman's Report on the events leading to the death of Raymond McCord mention the fact that a number of retired officers, both from RUC and PSNI, had declined to co-operate with the investigation even though they were deemed to have been of some assistance. Can you inform the Board if any of these officers have been subsequently re-employed as civilian workers and if so, are they still so employed?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

Just before I answer, let me just go back to Ian Paisley's question. I do think it is going to take some time for this relationship to build up, it is going to be difficult for both sides and in my judgement I think if all players give each other a bit of space, then I think we

can move this further on substantially and hopefully that is what we will see, a bit of willingness to allow different parties to manoeuvre whilst they bring on board people, who historically have not supported policing and I think that is very important. I also think a consequence of the failure to secure a deal at the political end of the business, which is not my responsibility, and will have a substantial impact on policing over time which I have already commented on.

In relation to that specific question, I have requested a full list. I have 2 reports as the Board will be aware. I have the public report, I also have a private report which does contain a number of names of individuals. My Deputy Chief Constable has written to Mrs O'Loan to ask for a full list of individuals who have not in her judgement, did not co-operate with the inquiry. Once I have that I will be able to answer your question and I do undertake to come back to you with a definitive answer once we have got that response, but in fairness we only sent the letter this week.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Trevor Ringland.

Mr Trevor Ringland:

Chief Constable, I think in the judgement of a number of those senior officers they did co-operate, but the Policing Board and the Chief Constable had been made aware that the former senior officers referred to in Section 8 of the Police Ombudsman's report on the Raymond McCord complaint, did co-operate with the Ombudsman's Office. As the report gave a contrary impression, it would seem rightly or wrongly, this is could result in confidence in the Office of the Police Ombudsman being damaged.

There are also issues regarding confidentiality and the subjective nature of her interpretation of the evidence which seems to go beyond her remit. As it is vital that police officers, both serving and retired and the public, have confidence in the Office, how are you going to address this issue and were you made aware of the level of assistance offered by the senior officers to the Ombudsman's Office at the time the report was released?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I made some very clear observations which I stand by early on following the release of the report. I have been made aware, through correspondence from some retired police officers that they were in correspondence with the Police Ombudsman and I acknowledge that if they say they are in correspondence, although I have not seen it, I am sure they were. The point I was making was not the issue around written correspondence, the point I was making was, I think as a senior member of an organisation be you serving or retired, in a position of substantial responsibility during an event under investigation, there is an obligation to attend. I understand their concerns which were around how they felt they would be treated, but quite frankly when you are at this level of an organisation, there are many organisations I meet where I am not sure I get a fair deal, but I think it is imperative for us to go and tell our part of the story. I think as a consequence, perhaps of non-engagement at that level, the context was not fully described in the report and I think a context in which our officers where operating was very important. We are now in a very different policing scenario to one which colleagues found themselves in the early 1990s which was perhaps not fully explained because of our non-engagement. They were my observations because I think they were the right ones to make.

Indeed many retired and serving officers did voluntarily give evidence to the Ombudsman's Report, a point I think she would happily make herself. I think were let down, because if you are an officer dealing with handling and routine business at the front end, you may not be fully aware of the strategy. It is the role of the senior officers to explain the strategy and what we were trying to achieve by handling people such as Informant 1. I think that bit was actually missing and the context went because we did not engage.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Mr Alex Attwood then Danny Kennedy and Arlene Foster.

Mr Alex Attwood:

Very briefly, could I just say that I look forward and welcome the conversation that the Board is going to have this afternoon. A conversation that is around standing by the highest standards when it comes to policing in the north and not accepting the lowest standards that some of the British Government try and impose on us.

The question Chief Constable is in respect of the McCord case and given that Nuala O'Loan said at a press conference that around intelligence issues, things are now completely different and that the Oversight Commissioner now says that the Best International Practice applies to intelligence when it comes to the PSNI. Could you comment upon the concern, that given that MI5 will continue to run agents in the north and that MI5 might yet acquire or recruit more agents in the north, how can people in the north be confident that what they are doing complies Best International Practice when it comes to the management of agents and the management of the intelligence that they provide?

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Maybe you could take question 10 as well.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

Am I answering question 10 or a supplementary - I will try and do both Chairman. In broad terms I am the only Chief Constable currently who is responsible for national security, 43 other chief officer colleagues do not have that additional burden and delivering day to day policing. It is right and it makes sense in the world where we are heading hopefully that Northern Ireland is seen as the same, so I provide the policing role, the national security role is provided by MI5. Now there is a very clear reason for that and I think we need to make it explicit.

The current threat to national security and indeed international security is not local terrorism, it is al Qaeda and that has to be a totally joined up intelligence led approach lead by the National Security Agency MI5. We should not and must not think we are exempt from the international terrorist threat just because we still have a latent domestic terrorist threat indeed, one of the first convictions for an international terrorist crime was here in Northern Ireland as a result of some outstanding work by officers from my C3 Intelligence Department, so we need to be aware of that.

I have to be confident that when the handover takes place that I have access to all the intelligence I need that comes into a different agency. We have protocols in place for that and I have said repeatedly, I will not hand over national security until those 5 conditions are accepted and fully established. MI5 are in agreement with that. We will

have access to the material we need to deliver local policing against criminals, MI5 will be dealing with a very different challenge altogether.

In terms of informant handling, I will ask ACC Sheridan to touch on that. In very broad terms I am mindful of what we can say in public around informants, but MI5 are of course subject to their own oversight bodies which is not a matter for me to comment on. What I can say is officers under my command, that is to say PSNI officers be they operating in my building or in other peoples buildings, will be subject to my discipline and indeed, therefore, to the discipline procedures and the investigations of the Police Ombudsman, they will not be exempt from that. They work to me and as a result of that they will be subject to those oversight mechanisms.

I do not know if ACC Sheridan can comment in any further detail, but one final observation I would make in terms of oversight Chairman. The Government has announced Lord Carlile will review the arrangements for handling national security agents here and he will, of course, be obliged to consult me in that process.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Could I suggest that and I will come back to Danny Kennedy and Arlene Foster in a moment but Deirdre Mac Bride has a question, question 42 that really follows logically on from what you have just said. Maybe you could ask it now.

Ms Deirdre Mac Bride:

The question is around what practical progress has been made in implementing and agreeing the 5 key principles with regards to the transfer of national security intelligence to MI5, particularly as it affects the secondment of PSNI officers and recruitment of intelligence officers by MI5 and the sharing of intelligence with PSNI?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I will ask ACC Sheridan to deal with the detail.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Peter Sheridan:

In terms of practical arrangements we have 5 separate work packages ongoing at the minute. One is a Headquarters Desk Structure which looks at what the PSNI's capability will be to collect criminal intelligence, not national security intelligence but

criminal intelligence and that will be designed to provide strategic intelligence for serious crime and strategic intelligence for volume crime and we are well underway in the design of those desks and what that will look like.

In terms of human resources, still a lot of work to be done and given what we will need to have in the security service building to make sure that we get full visibility of all intelligence relating to terrorism in Northern Ireland. We hope to work up a Memorandum of Understanding in terms of human resources with the security services when we are clearer what the work practices, the work processes and how information and intelligence will flow and what that will require in terms of people from our organisation.

We are close to agreement on the management of the CHIS protocols that is agent protocols involved in the security service, we have still some bench testing to do which will ensure the protocols we have set out work to our satisfaction prior to implementation and prior to the handover to the service. The protocols will be agreed to ensure that urgent and threat to life intelligence can be managed by the PSNI as opposed to having to move from PSNI to the security service where it reflects a threat to life. There is still some work going on in terms of accommodation, putting in IT systems, new intelligence systems, a lot internal cabling etc going on.

The PSNI Crime Liaison Unit which will be based at the security service building, again I have appointed a senior detective who will head up that crime liaison desk and his main role will be to have visibility of all intelligence to satisfy himself that anything that requires to be passed to the criminal intelligence desks in Police Headquarters as ordinary crime, will be passed. Other than that there is a lot of information technology work that has to be designed out yet.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Something on informants, were you going to say something Chief Constable?

Mr Alex Attwood:

If it is helpful Chair, the question was ACC Sheridan, given that Best International Practice now governs what the PSNI are doing in respect of agents, how can you be sure that that which MI5 do in the north in terms of those they manage, alleged person

of strategic influence within organisations and those who they might yet manage, how can you reassure people in the north that the same standards will apply?

The second matter briefly is, Nuala O'Loan said in her press conference, that she wanted to see equally effective, that was her words, equally effective accountability mechanisms when it came to national security matters in the future. Now whatever arrangements govern MI5, the Board will not have a role and Nuala O'Loan will not have a role so how can you and the Chief Constable reassure people that the standards set by Nuala O'Loan about having equally effective accountability mechanisms will be in place when MI5 take primacy because I do not hear how people are getting that reassurance.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Peter Sheridan:

First of all, that is why we set down the 5 principles that said that we will have the visibility and sight of all security service intelligence relating to terrorism in Northern Ireland and that includes security service intelligence that maybe from abroad but relates to Northern Ireland. So, we will visibility and sight and that is why I have a detective down there because some of the mistakes of the past was that intelligence was not passed to detectives, that is why we have that person there. We also will continue to manage the vast majority of agents in Northern Ireland. The Police Service of Northern Ireland will continue to do that. All of that still falls within the Ombudsman's remit so she will have access to all of that information. The assurance that I can give people is, that we are working hard at all of the processes, that is why we have not agreed on any process. We have not agreed a Memorandum of Understanding yet with the security services, we have not agreed any protocols until we are satisfied that those 5 principles in detail and we can walk through from one end to the other to make sure we are satisfied that we are getting what we want in those 5 principles.

I think the wider question that you are asking is about the oversight of the security service and that is not frankly a matter for the police. We are consistent in our view that our role in this is to make sure that we deliver on our 5 principles. Whether there is sufficient statutory oversight of the security service is not a matter for the police, there are statutory rules as to how they are managed currently in terms of their oversight but frankly it is for other people, it is not for the police service.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

I will take you back now to the McCord case, Danny Kennedy and then Arlene Foster.

Mr Danny Kennedy:

I too will look forward to the later session. Looking at the process of appointments by this Board, with particular reference for appointments that will have to be made in the future, and perhaps outside adverse influences.

Could I ask the Chief Constable to return to the issue of the input that was presented to the Ombudsman, in relation to her report, by the former chief and retired officers. If he would share the view that all reasonable assistance and accept the view that all reasonable assistance was given and offered by retired officers and if he would also indicate that, in the acceptance of any failings, that those failings were not an indication of systemic failings or institutionalised attitudes within the RUC George Cross at that time?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

In relation to the first question I think I have made my views clear. I do think that the obligation on senior officers is to physically attend and have a conversation with the Ombudsman's investigators or staff, if only to set the backdrop and the context in which the officers who were interviewed were being questioned may not have known, I think that is an obligation. I do not think I can accept the fact they took all reasonable assistance because for me reasonable would have been turning up regardless of ones own personal views of body that is set in statue.

In terms of the systemic failings, I think indeed even the Ombudsman has made the observation. First of all we need to be clear, informant handling is and remains a deeply difficult piece of work. It requires very high levels of expertise and in the current world, extremely high levels of training before anyone is even allowed to be considered as a handler. Our officers are trained to national standards and national procedures. Also of course, since the time the report was investigating, we have a Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act. We now have a statute which defines how informants will be handled so substantial work has moved on. There is no evidence to my knowledge to suggest that there were systemic failings or this was to quote "the thin edge of the wedge".

Firstly, the numbers of people engaged in handling are very small and even were very small then, so the notion that there are hundreds of officers out there who may have been involved in handling in the past is completely and utterly flawed.

Secondly, of course, a large number of officers have retired. Officers who provided an extremely good and valuable service and without doubt, kept people alive in the Troubles. I can say it with some authority having spent some 2½ years looking at another case where clearly, there is substantial and indeed overwhelming evidence that the vast majority of Special Branch operations were designed to save life, that is notwithstanding the observations which we have accepted in relation to the Ombudsman's Report. So, I have difficulty with the notion that this is primary evidence of a systematic failure, there may be some other cases if we continue to look backwards and pick over these things in a piecemeal way. I do not want to elaborate on my views on history, people know them very well, I think senior officers should have actually turned up and spoken to the Ombudsman's staff.

Mrs Arlene Foster:

Chief Constable, you have made a lot of comments in relation to the retired police officers and they would have been able to give indication to the Police Ombudsman's Office in relation to policy and strategy at that particular time that they were serving. How could that have been the case when, as retired police officers, they would not have had access to policies and documents which would have rightly remained with the police? They would have been going along on memory and on memory alone and in relation to that, as I understand it, through their solicitor they asked the Ombudsman's Office for specific charges and what she specifically wanted to know in relation to the investigation and those specific charges or questions were not put to them. I think it is very easy for us all to forget that these people have rights too, they are entitled to due process and when they asked for specific charges and questions they were not forthcoming, so I just want to reiterate what Mr Ringland has said in relation to this.

You have made a lot of points about context but in her Report, she did not even report the context of the fact that the Chinook helicopter disaster had taken place, and that a lot of Special Branch intelligence at that time went down with the Chinook helicopter. I think that that should have been in the Report, should have been contextualised but was not there and I would welcome your comments in relation to that.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I think that is exactly the point. I think if more people had engaged, those comments would have been put forward in a way that she would have had to have considered. I cannot speak on how she decided to construct her Report but I do think that was very reasonable.

In terms of policies, these could easily have been made available and frankly at senior level, this was without doubt a part of the business where senior officers would have been engaged, certainly at that time, every day so the practices would have been well known but policies can be made available.

There has also been observations that other people could have given this information who are currently serving. It was an investigation that we were not leading on and what I can say, if any of my officer's senior or junior had been asked to give some information they would, of course, have done it but they were not asked.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Mr Willie Hay, supplementary.

Ms Arlene Foster:

That is the point, they were not asked. That is entirely the point.

Mr Willie Hay:

Chairman, it is on what the Chief Constable and ACC Sheridan have said on national security and MI5 and the future of all of that. What are the implications for all of this especially on the Prime Minister's statement on 10 January 2007? Has anything changed and has there been any implications on the Prime Minister's statement on what the future role of MI5 might be in the future?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

The short answer is no, I do not know if ACC Sheridan wants to elaborate.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Peter Sheridan:

I will go back to the point Mr Hay that we set out 5 principles. The Prime Minister's statement and Annex E makes no difference to our requirements from the security

service in dealing with those 5 principles because if we cannot deliver on those 5 principles then I cannot give Alex Attwood the assurance from within the PSNI that we are getting visibility from the security service of all intelligence, so it makes no difference from that point of view.

The overall trust of those principles makes it clear, that the PSNI must have sight of all intelligence relevant to national security threats from terrorism which could impact on our policing responsibilities. So, it is therefore essential that for a number of PSNI officers to work closely in liaison with the service, to make sure that we are both co-ordinated in terms of any executive police action that we will be required to take on the background of any information they provide. So, if we have seen the intelligence and seen the information and are required to take executive action, then we are clear in our minds what we are doing. But if we cannot see that and the only way we can see that is if I have people who can work alongside the security services to provide me with that.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Back directly to the McCord report, question 5 Mr Ringland.

Mr Trevor Ringland:

Chief Constable, first of all can I just say that I agree with your comments on how to deal with the past. I think we cannot continue with a selective investigation of the past, we have to find a way of dealing with it and that places a responsibility on all of us.

Can I also say just in reflecting and listening to your report on tackling crime, what a privilege it is for us all to appreciate the modern environment in which policing can operate and I think the large part of that goes down to the good work of you and your officers and the work you have done on policing to create a more stable environment in Northern Ireland.

One of the statistics that you come out with is in 1983 Interpol assessed Northern Ireland to be one of the most dangerous places in the world to be a police officer and we look at how that environment has changed and it is down to the leadership shown by you and your officers and the difference they are making.

Could the Chief Constable confirm how many lives were saved in incidents prevented through intelligence obtained by Special Branch of the RUC from 1969 to 2001?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I will ask ACC Sheridan to deal with that question, but in broad terms it is impossible to say. If one simply looks at the interception of a large bomb, the potential success in terms of keeping people alive from just one event like that is, of course huge. I know ACC Sheridan has some detail which may help inform Members of the sort of successes achieved by Special Branch during that time.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Peter Sheridan:

I would have to say, it is probably one of the frustrations of people who work in the intelligence world that they can very rarely be publicly recognised or acknowledged for the work that goes on in gathering intelligence and I have to say, they put their own lives in danger regularly on that basis to protect people and sometimes it is not appreciated because that information cannot be made public as to what they did.

We have said in the past that 4 out of 5 terrorist operations were prevented in the past mainly through intelligence. When I looked at 2006 this year, there were 80 Special Branch operations that were mounted on a successful basis. When I look at the detail of those it was clear to me that yes, lives were saved in some cases. Some of those operations resulted in arrests, some led to the discovery of drugs, weapons and other illegal materials, so it was clear that they did save lives.

I took a look back at 1988, 1989 and 1990 and just picked some of the intelligence operations that were going on. In May 1989 intelligence led to the discovery of an 800lb bomb in Coalisland, I do not know how many lives that saved. Again in May 1989, intelligence led to the recover of 4 weapons and ammunition in Dundonald, I do not know how many lives that saved. An intelligence operation early in 1988 police stopped a vehicle in Lisburn and recovered 15 rifles, 12 handguns, rocket launchers, 13 RPG7 warheads, 20 hand grenades, detonators and ammunition, I do not know how many lives that saved but it is clear that intelligence saved lives on that basis. Now I could go on with a list after list about successful police operations based on intelligence and hopefully Chairman that demonstrates the points and the benefits of good intelligence.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Question 11 relates to civic police force and the interpretation of that, Trevor Ringland.

Mr Trevor Ringland:

Could the Chief Constable define what is meant by a civic police force and is it the same as the police service envisaged under the Patten report which retains the capacity of any normal police service, including the ability where necessary to enforce the rule of law?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

Civic policing Chairman is not a term I tend to use. My understanding of civic policing is very much a police service that is accountable, fully representative of the community and one that works with the community to protect people. In other words what we are describing is very much Patten's vision of a police service which of course is what the Police Service of Northern Ireland aspires to be, so I think that is what was meant when that particular phrase was used.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Question 17 and 18 from Mrs Moore, these 2 questions relate to the merger that we were informed of recently between the Assets Recovery Agency and the Serious Organised Crime Agency, Mrs Moore.

Mrs Rosaleen Moore:

Chief Constable, you expressed some reservations about the timing and indeed the amalgamation of the Assets Recovery Agency (ARA) with the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA) and it is hard to understand the logic of this, given this a reasonably embryonic agency but has had tremendous success especially in its collaboration with the Criminal Assets Bureau in the Republic of Ireland and the real gains that will be made. Are there any more representations to be made or is this decision making over in relation to the amalgamation and if that is the case, do you think that SOCA will be able to offer as effective a service, will the evidential rules be as flexible in relation to assets recovery? Indeed if the merger does go ahead, what structure do you think meets the needs of policing and obviously there will be financial implications associated with it?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I am on record as saying “ if it is not broken why are we fixing it”. I think the ARA here, led by Alan McQuillan, has been hugely successful for a number of reasons. One is they take most of their work from us and we have a sort of seamless transfer system which enables those we cannot pursue criminally to be pursued on a civil or indeed a tax basis. I also think it is important here because the threshold that Mr McQuillan was prepared to accept, i.e. he was prepared to operate against people who would be below the normal threshold in terms of value because of the impact they have on communities, and I am far more interested in community impact as it is as important as monetary value and they have also been very successful. I will ask ACC Sheridan to do the detail, what we need to do now I think, is to make sure that we do not have any gaps in the new system and my big concern will be around “will the Serious Northern Ireland Crime Agency operate at the level which we need them to operate to, to make an impact on communities”.

I think it is also fair to say that communities see it as a highly valuable tool, not just us and therefore we need to reassure them, that if there is a gap we are going to have to fill it and of course, there is potentially a financial implication there.

In terms of whether it is a done deal, this was led mainly by the Home Office because of course the vast majority is Home Office business. I am not sure if we were fully considered at that time so I do not know if politicians would feel it necessary to make representation that of course is a matter for them. I think the system we have here is fit for purpose, I think it works very well and from my perspective I was very happy with it, so just need to make sure the new system, if it comes in is equally effective.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Peter Sheridan:

There is probably not much more to add on. The Bill has still to go through so it depends on what the Bill looks like when it goes through the various stages. The Home Office have given assurances that resources that would currently have a Northern Ireland on their assets recovery will remain in Northern Ireland for the purpose of proceeds of crime work. There is a potential that it could enhance what we have currently, but it will take some work to do that and we will have to wait and see what the Bill says. The gap that the Chief Constable may well mean if SOCA are not prepared to take on all of the cases that the Assets Recovery Agency currently take on, then who

fills that gap and do we need a civil recovery agency that is part of the police, some of that will have to be discussed in the future.

Mr Willie Hay:

I think the line from this Board is, that on such an important issue neither the Chief Constable or Senior Team or ourselves were consulted, that is the issue for this Board and the Chief Constable.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

We have made the Minister aware of that.

Two questions relating to an advertisement by the Gay Police Officers' Association, questions 12 and 13 Mr Ian Paisley Jnr.

Mr Ian Paisley Jnr:

Thank you Chairman. Reference the advertisement which many people found to be offensive, intolerant and just inaccurate. I understand that there has been a general apology issued by the English division of the GPA, can you tell us if the Northern Ireland division of the Gay Police Officers' Association has agreed never to rerun this advert. Have they acknowledged that its meaning and its implications were in fact inaccurate and indeed offensive. That it caused hurt to many people who believe that the bible was wrongly used in an advertisement and have they issued an apology to a senior officer for that? Can you indicate to us which officer that apology was issued to?

Deputy Chief Constable, Mr Paul Leighton:

I think we need to clarify that the Gay Police Officers' Association does not exist as a body in Northern Ireland, there are officers who are members of the Gay Police Association nationally. No officers in Northern Ireland who are members of the Gay Police Association or other officers that I am aware of, were consulted or in any way involved in the placing of the ad, although the Gay Police Officers' Association represented itself as the Gay Police Officers' Association of England, Wales and Northern Ireland, therefore no apology has been asked for and no apology has been given. My own discussions with those officers are that they remain just individual members there is no structure as yet for them to be able to say, we in Northern Ireland

did not agree with that. They may individually make representation but that would be better addressed by the Gay Police Officers' Association nationally.

Mr Ian Paisley Jnr:

Have you then addressed the fact that in the advert that appeared nationwide, it actually said Gay Police Officers' Association (Northern Ireland).

Deputy Chief Constable, Mr Paul Leighton:

It has been pointed out that no-one in Northern Ireland was consulted over that ad or had anything to do with its placing or any knowledge of it at all until it appeared.

Mr Ian Paisley Jnr:

I presume you have taken the complaint then to the national association and asked them to apology to the officers here?

Deputy Chief Constable, Mr Paul Leighton:

The members of the Gay Police Association who are resident in Northern Ireland have already raised this with the national organisation.

Mr Ian Paisley Jnr:

Have you heard of the outcome?

Deputy Chief Constable, Mr Paul Leighton:

I have not heard of an outcome that is a matter for the association.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Question relating to policing capability in Fermanagh, question 21 Mrs Foster.

Mrs Arlene Foster:

As you are aware, the community in Fermanagh went through a painful process in mid 2000 in relation to the closure of a number of police stations. At a public meeting of Fermanagh DPP on 17 August 2005, the District Commander advised the policing teams currently in those station areas being closed would remain in the area. He additionally indicated that he would enter into a Service Level Agreement with the local community. At the last Fermanagh DPP meeting on 10 January 2007, the same District

Commander indicated that resources could not be included in those Service Level Agreements. It appears that promises made about resources are now being broken and the quid pro quo for the closure of police stations was that the officers would remain. This is not now the case and the community are, understandably, disappointed and frustrated about this and I would welcome your comments in relation to same and obviously ACC Rural's comments as well.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I will ask ACC Gillespie to deal with that. Members will be aware obviously of the financial situation the organisation faces, that was raised earlier but I will ask ACC Gillespie to deal with the specific detail of this particular case.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mrs Judith Gillespie:

Policing teams have remained in all of the areas in which they existed at the time of the station closures. But adjustments have been made in that, within each sectors, specific named officers now have dedicated beat area and responsibility and as it happens, today as we speak, mobile phones are being issued to the last of these beat officers, the intention being to issue them with calling cards which will have their mobile phones published on them to make sure that they are more accessible and more visible to members of the public in their specific areas of responsibility.

Service Level Agreements (SLAs) have been prepared as you rightly say Mrs Foster and they will be the subject of discussions with the respective local CPLCs. The first meeting is to be held on the 19 February 2007 at which those SLAs will be specifically discussed.

Now the initial SLAs did include details of resource strengths and it is proposed that the exact numbers will not be included, but the revised documents will be the subject of discussions with the CPLCs. The reason why the exact numbers will not be included was, any change would require further consultation and going back to the CPLC each time and we wanted to avoid that, but the proposed amendment will be fully discussed with the CPLCs.

What I can say is that the new mobile police station so far is proving to be a very effective resource. We have had 33 beat patrols since its launch in November 2006, 33 beat patrols from the mobile police station. We have had over 50 visitors, 13 incidents reported, 8 of these were local crime issues requiring further investigation and 5 local issues actually resolved by the police officers on the mobile police station at the time.

It has also been used in the reconstruction relating to a missing person so we have used it for local issues. The schedule will be published and visitation plans will be advertised in other towns.

In summary, there are named dedicated beat officers working closely with local people, the strategy of providing police officers with business cards and mobile phones is aimed at making them more accessible and more visible, and the CPLCs will be fully consulted in the rollout of these plans.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Question 22 relates to the security arrangements at Stormont, Mr Trevor Ringland.

Mr Trevor Ringland:

Could the Chief Constable confirm that the security arrangements at Stormont will now significantly reduce the risk of any further incidents occurring such as that involving Michael Stone, bearing in mind that rightly or wrongly the PSNI will be blamed if they do occur.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I am not sure we were blamed but I will ask ACC McCausland to deal with the detail.

Assistant Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

Police resources agreed between the PSNI and Assembly staff perform duty at Parliament Buildings each day that the Assembly is sitting, in doing so, an armed presence to security arrangements is capable and there.

The Assembly which is responsible for the security arrangements at the Parliament Buildings has commissioned a review of security arrangements and we await the result of that review.

As was discussed the last time we mentioned this at the Board, we will be seeking full cost recovery from the Assembly and I am led to believe that that will be forthcoming. Obviously we will enter into discussions with the Assembly and the Speaker in relation to what sort of a unit we will place at the Assembly, but it will be monitored and it will be agreed totally with the Speaker and the Assembly staff.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Question relating to road traffic accidents involving police vehicles, Mrs Dolores Kelly, question 24.

Mrs Dolores Kelly:

Would the Chief Constable give us a report on the number of road traffic accidents involving police vehicles, the cost thereof both in terms of repair, replacement and compensation.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I will ask David Best to deal with that question, it is fairly complicated but we will do our best.

Mr David Best, Director of Finance and Support Services:

Looking at the previous year 2005/06 there were 914 collisions and briefly the breakdown of those was major 323, minor 194 and slight contact 397.

In the current year, after 11 months to the end of July 2006, we had altogether 707. If we pro rata that through to the end of the year and compare it to last year, that is about 5% down. The breakdown - major 219, minor 196 and slight contact 292. Of that 707 this year, the number requiring repairs 366, there is a difference there because some of these are very very slight, the cost of those repairs was £306,000.

The number of vehicles that were withdrawn is 44 out of 366. The net loss for the cost of the vehicles withdrawn is their value at that point in time, was £72,384. It must be borne in mind, that police vehicles travel approximately 20million miles annually, this means that the cost of repairs and loss on the vehicles withdrawn is approximately 2.7p per mile. Some of this cost will be recovered through insurance claims by PSNI and the other parties insurance but this could take a number of years depending on whether there is a dispute of liability or not. It is not possible to determine who is responsible for the above collisions.

We have introduced recently in the last couple of years, black box recorders and to date about 650 of those have been fitted. The effectiveness of that, and I think it is early days, but certainly comparing to last year it is down about 5% at this point in time.

Compensation claims against PSNI totalled £147,000 in the year 2005/06 and in the current year to date, at the end of 9 months £413,000, now that is up a fair bit but that includes one substantial court award for £224,000.

Just to note that the claims are analysed and lessons are learned and that information is communicated across the organisation. Also to note, compensation figures only include officers who were injured while a passenger in a police vehicle. Any claims from the driver and/or members of the public are dealt with by our insurers. Just also note, that recently it is now policy of the police that police officers should wear their seatbelts, that is a recent policy change, they are required to wear their seatbelts unless they can demonstrate there is good reason for not wearing them and we also think that is probably helping our figures as well.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Question 25 relating to keeping clearways clear, Suneil Sharma.

Mr Suneil Sharma:

It would seem important that during times where and when clearways are meant to be clear, that they are kept clear and since fines do not appear to be a deterrent, what is your view on that, should these vehicles not be impounded?

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

I will ask ACC Toner to answer that question.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Roy Toner:

During 2005 the Police Service of Northern Ireland issued over 6,200 fixed penalty notices for the offence of parking in a clearway. Up to the end of October 2006 over 5,000 were issued and indeed on the 30 October 2006, the parking in a clearway was decriminalised and passed to the Department of Regional Development, Roads Service and they have an enforcement contractor in NCP Limited who have primary responsibility now.

In exceptional cases, where a vehicle is parked on a road and there is a likely cause of obstruction that could cause a danger, police can revert back to their powers under Article 48 of the Road Traffic (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 and they have still the power to impound or remove a vehicle if required and the owner would have to pay for recovery. This is only in exceptional circumstances, the reality is now that the responsibility primarily falls on the Roads Service and indeed their enforcement contractor NCP.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Questions 27 and 28 I am going to take together, Trevor Ringland to lead and this relates to the use of baton rounds, question 27.

Mr Trevor Ringland:

While it is certainly tragic that there is any injuries arising out of the use of baton rounds and particularly those who have been killed in the past, can I confirm that they are vital to protect the welfare of his police officers in riot situations and the best way for this community to avoid there use is to understand that in a democracy, there is a right to lawful assembly, but there is not a right to riot.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I think as we move to an increasingly more normal society where it becomes more tolerant, inevitably the potential to use AEPs is minimised and as I have said very clearly recently, success for me is when we fire no AEPs in relation to anything because we do not have to. That having been said, they are quite a legitimate use of

force where necessary to deal with an escalating threat, as evidenced only sadly too well in 2005, where a number were fired in extreme situations of public disorder, all of which of course have been overseen by the Police Ombudsman, whose reports have consistently exonerated officers who have fired them. Indeed, on many occasions, they have been commended for showing incredible restraint in extremely dangerous circumstances.

The policy remains the same, the AEP has never been designed as a use in crowd control, that is to say, indiscriminate firing into crowds. It is available to deal with individuals or an individual who poses a serious and substantial risk to other members of the public or indeed, police officers and that is exactly the situation as it stands today. It is as clear and as straightforward as that.

Mr Alex Attwood:

Thank you Chief Constable and I also think it is important, as I have said before, to acknowledge that in recent years the use of police force generally, whether it is batons, live fire, or plastic bullets has significantly reduced. I think that is a consequence of new leadership, new approaches and the accountability mechanisms of the DPPs, the Ombudsman and the Policing Board. But I just want you to confirm that, as you have just indicated, that there is no recent change or any change in respect of the deployment of plastic bullets and that it has been the case and it remains the case, that plastic bullets are not used for purposes of crowd control, in order to create certainty and avoid any doubt in relation to that matter.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

As I said, we do not use plastic bullets. The AEP is a far safer round as in fact commented on recently by some doctors. I do not think I can be any clearer, they are not used in crowd control as in indiscriminate firing into crowds, never have been. They are subject to serious constraint and indeed oversight and at authority levels it requires an Assistant Chief Constable to authorise their deployment and indeed your own Human Rights Advisors have observed that process through the Gold Control Room when they have been observing it.

I also think, that in addition to the practices we have in place, the more we get communities to talk to each other and actually have debates around where marches can go and where they cannot go, we get increased tolerance and we get less surprises. We continue to minimise the need to use them and success for me, and indeed my officers who do not want to use them, is we do not have to use them because the conditions have been created where we have far more tolerance and far more understanding of peoples rights and responsibilities.

Ms Dawn Purvis:

Chairman, can I interject?

Would the Chief Constable agree, that in order for us to create a safer and more stable communities, that we need to get communities working together. We also need to get the communities support for policing and I think all party support for policing has to be welcomed but it does not naturally follow through, that that support would be visible on the ground. Would the Chief Constable agree that in helping communities who were traditionally opposed to policing in Northern Ireland, would the Chief Constable agree that a spirit of political generosity from other political parties in Northern Ireland would actually help for communities to come on board in terms of policing?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

Yes I would and I think it is a very well made point. A huge amount of effort goes into the marching season already behind the scenes from all parties, community leaders, police officers, some of the marching orders etc, the more that continues the happier I am because it minimises our risk and more importantly, it allows us to deploy police resources to protect communities rather than to line routes and to keep warring factions apart.

I made the observation earlier, I think where we are politically, we will deal with the political situation from a police perspective, I do think that if parties give each other a bit of space I think the potential for moving the world on is hugely increased and if we do that then I do think genuinely that we can become effective because we get more engagement and the more tolerance people show each other, I think that is also reflected in the streets in terms of how people behave towards each other.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Question 30 relates to future shift patterns, Mr Brian Rea.

Mr Brian Rea:

In the light of recent publicity relating to the effectiveness of policing for both the business and the residential community, could the Chief Constable clarify the current position in relation to future shift patterns following the outcome of the vote conducted by the Police Federation which resulted in the majority of Police Federation members voting against the 10 hour variable shift pattern as recommended in the Best Value Review of Patrolling?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I will ask ACC Toner to deal with the detail. My briefly a bit of history around this.

Currently response teams have a 12 hour shift system which gives them 4 days working, 4 days off. Hugely expensive and not sufficiently responsive because, by definition, half your resources off on any one day and Members will be only too well aware, the varying demands overtime. So, a huge amount of work went into trying to get the correct shift system and indeed, recognising the obvious rights of officers in terms of a reasonable work/life balance but I will ask ACC Toner to go into the detail of what went on after that.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Roy Toner:

Chairman, with effect from 1 April 2007, response officers, that is the officers who respond to calls, will be operating an 8 hour variable shift pattern. Specifically the benefits of this are that between 7pm and 3am on Friday and Saturday evenings, we will have more people on, which has been a constant cry from this Board and from District Policing Partnerships. Unfortunately, the 8 hour variable pattern is not as flexible as the 10 hour variable and we hope to re-engage with the Police Federation and colleagues in the organisation to review that again to see if we can get the support for the 10 hour variable shift pattern. We also think the 10 hour variable provides a greater work/life balance for officers, but the point is as the Chief Constable rightly made, a 4 on 4 off 12 hour pattern is very inflexible and indeed not very cost effective.

What we would be saying is that we are also looking at potential variations in shift patterns for other parts of the organisation. TSGs currently work a variable shift pattern within Urban and Rural Regions and indeed, ACC Harris is looking at what appropriate shift patterns would be required for Neighbourhood Policing Teams within the new districts structure. So we will be introducing the 8 hour variable pattern from the 1 April 2007 and indeed will be re-engaging with colleagues in the Federation and throughout the organisation again to review the 10 hour variable pattern, because we still think it is the best option for operational policing and for the work/life balance.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Supplementary Mrs McCabe.

Mrs Pauline McCabe:

I think this is a really important area because probably, more than anything else, it impacts on the ability to deliver an efficient and effective service. I would like to ask for reassurance that particularly when we are looking at Neighbourhood Policing Teams that at the end of the day, the decisions we make will be customer focused. I think it is really important that we have happy police officers, and it is really important that we take account of peoples preferences wherever we can, but there is a huge amount of evidence that demonstrates that the most efficient shift pattern for Neighbourhood Policing Teams is an 8 hour shift pattern and District Policing Partnerships have told us repeatedly, that the decision we made to implement a 12 hour shift pattern, which at the end of the day was an officer centred rather than a customer centred decision, has probably been the biggest obstacle to us providing effective policing and certainly the standards of customer care in getting back to people. There are an awful lot of people who would like to be able to work other than an 8 hour shift system but the bottom line is, if you serve customers, very often your shift pattern is defined by what those customers need. So I am asking for an assurance, that whilst we do everything we reasonably can, of course to take account of the preferences of our officers, that the decisions that we make really will be customer focused this time round.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

That is exactly the point of what this was undertaking. The experience, certainly of colleagues in other police services around the 10 hour shift for response was, that it was a very effective way of getting that balance. That having been said, it is a legal

requirement. Officers have to agree to work a 10 hour shift system because of the law. The statutory requirement is, I have to offer an 8 hour shift system. My personal view on the current 8 hour shift system for response is that it is a lot better than a 12 hour shift and actually more effective and more cost effective, but not quite as good as the 10 hour which was the finding of the Best Value Review. I do not know if ACC Toner wants to comment on the other particular issues.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Roy Toner:

The Policing with the Community Team currently working within Criminal Justice and which ACC Harris and the Deputy Chief Constable are involved in, is currently looking at shift patterns and they are looking at shift patterns for Neighbourhood Policing Teams specifically in that role, particularly in relation to what we call the “mixed economy” teams of Full-Time Police Officers, Police Officers Part-Time and Police Community Support Officers and indeed that model is very customer focused and very problem solving.

The reality is, that currently in the districts at the moment, quite a few of the existing Neighbourhood Policing Teams have moved away from the 12 hour 4 on 4 off because of customer demand because they are working with local communities and with District Policing Partnerships (DPPs) and local Police Liaison Committees so the reality is, that we are moving away from that, but we will be looking at very much a customer focused shift pattern for the Neighbourhood Policing Teams that have a good work/life balance or the best work/life balance that we can possibly put into them.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Question relating to training, question 34, Mrs McCabe.

Mrs Pauline McCabe:

Just to ask on the back of the Handling Volume Crime Report and particularly given the discussions we had on clearance rates today, could the Chief Constable firstly please confirm by what date all of our investigating officers, particularly at district level, will have completed the Professional Investigation Programme (PIP) and whether or not he is happy with the date that we can achieve there.

Secondly, given the work that we have done previously on Training Needs Analysis, can the Chief Constable comment on the fact that the Criminal Justice Investigation (CJI) report found, that an exercise is required to identify the skills and knowledge required by officers carrying out investigations at DCUs, and that this does not currently but needs to, inform the training delivered to student officers by the Police College.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I will ask ACC Sheridan to deal with that question.

On the second part, the whole idea of signing up to PIP was to deliver the Level 1 training which is delivered by the Police College so I am not sure I am too content with what CJI said but I think ACC Sheridan can go into the detail of that.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Peter Sheridan:

There were 2 targets, the national timescale set by CENTREX for investigators to commence the accreditation pathway for PIP, the Professional Investigation Programme, were for new officers to investigative roles by March 2007 and officers already in investigative roles by March 2008. In effect, that would mean that all investigators within a compliance service, a service that has signed up to PIP would have completed PIP by March 2009.

In relation to the first target, the PSNI have significantly exceeded that. All student officers commencing training in the Foundation Facility since the 20 August 2006 have received training that complies with and in fact, exceeds, because we had CENTREX over to test it, the standards set out by PIP and upon graduation they will complete the workplace assessment and will complete PIP with a completion of their 2 year probationary period.

All CID trainee investigators commencing their probationary period since 3 April 2006 have completed PIP compliant training and are now undergoing their own workplace assessment and they will have completed PIP by the conclusion of their 1 year probationary period.

In relation to the second target, existing senior investigating officers within the organisation are currently registered as undergoing the PIP level 3, 12 month development and accreditation pathway.

Existing detective sergeants are now being given training as is also compliant with the requirements of PIP but I would have to make it clear that the second target is much more challenging for us in that, there are 3,800 investigators within the PSNI who will need training and assessment. Now we are working hard to try and achieve that date but it is an uphill struggle. The priority in rolling out PIP was to make sure that it was a robust process and it was a meaningful process, it was just not a tick box in terms of training. We could achieve the national timescales but to try and undercut the benefits of it, I think would be false economy but nevertheless, we are hoping that we will meet that target and certainly the drive is to meet that target.

As the Chief Constable says, in terms of the training needs analysis that is exactly what PIP was about. These are the very standards that PIP was built on and to which investigative training now complies.

I have Head of Crime Training here and if any Member of the Board wants during the lunch period to have a conversation and more detail around PIP training but we are well on the way on this and in fact, probably, further ahead than most colleagues in England and Wales.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Question 33 relating to drink driving of officers, Mr Ian Paisley Jnr:

Mr Ian Paisley Jnr:

Chief Constable, you will be aware of a radio programme called the Nolan Show and as you that show has carried some stories recently regarding police officers and drunk driving. One story emerged where a police officer had apparently assisted a member of the public but was also under the influence. Now obviously that sort of story if it emerges and is left hanging out there creates an impression that is very very poor for public relations. I am sure you would want to take the opportunity to address those stories that have emerged.

Deputy Chief Constable, Mr Paul Leighton:

I am sorry I was not available on the day that the Nolan Show covered this story because I had been on before about drink driving.

There is no truth whatsoever in the story that was carried on the Nolan Show about the police officer being drunk in charge of a police vehicle when he was working. The story actually relates to a person who was arrested for drink driving and as is customary, the police officer was moving that person's car when a slight damage only accident occurred. As is our policy, anyone involved in a road traffic collision is then tested for excess alcohol, as was that police officer, the reading came back clear but it just shows that we are rigorous in the application of our policy that even a police officer, moving a member of the public's vehicle or a police vehicle for that matter, when on duty if they have a minor collision will be tested. The officer in question was totally clear, there was no alcohol in his system.

To go further and just to bring Members up to date, 2 police officers were arrested during the Christmas drink drive campaign and to put it into context, since I made my announcement in May 2006 about drink driving and the penalties that officers could expect to face, we have arrested 7 in the remaining period of 2006, so from May to December 2006 we arrested 7 police officers. In the corresponding period in 2005 we arrested 18 officers.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

Chairman could I just clarify as well. Senior officers were available to go on the Nolan Show on the day in question to clarify the story and to correct it and that was declined and our press office did clarify the story very strongly and again that was past to the Nolan Show.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

I think that provides an opportunity to bring this session to an end. Could I say Chief Constable to you and your colleagues a very sincere thank you on behalf of the Board for taking our questions today. To members of the public and the journalists present an apology for the fact that the heating system in this room on the coldest day of the year is not operating.