

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD HELD ON THURSDAY, 4 SEPTEMBER 2008 AT 12:30PM IN WATERSIDE TOWER, BELFAST

PRESENT:

MEMBERS:

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

POLICE SERVICE OF NORTHERN IRELAND IN ATTENDANCE:

Sir Hugh Orde (Chief Constable)
Mr Paul Leighton (Deputy Chief Constable)
Mr Alistair Finlay (ACC Crime Support)
Mrs Judith Gillespie (ACC Rural Region)
Mr Drew Harris (ACC Crime Operations)
Mr Duncan McCausland (ACC Urban Region)
Mr Joe Stewart (Director of Human
Resources)
Ms Liz Young (Head of Media & Public
Relations)
Chief Superintendent Ken Eccles, Operations
Support Department
Chief Superintendent Brian Maguire, Criminal
Justice Department
Superintendent David Hamilton, Policing With
The Community Branch
3 PSNI Personnel

**OFFICIALS IN
ATTENDANCE:**

Dr Debbie Donnelly (Acting Chief Executive)
Mr David Jackson (Director of Community
Engagement)
Mr Sam Hagen (Director of Corporate
Services)
Mr David Wilson (Director of Planning)
Mr Peter Gilleece (Director of Policy)
1 Board Official

APOLOGIES:

Mr Daithí McKay

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Good afternoon Chief Constable, Senior Officers, members of the public and media. First an apology to members of the public and the media for the delay, business overran. You are all very welcome to this meeting in public of the Northern Ireland Policing Board.

Chief Constable, we will shortly be receiving your policing report to cover the period since this Board last met and there have, of course, been a number of incidents in that period. The issue of most concern is of course the ongoing threat against police officers. It has not indeed been limited to police officers, but I will refer to that more.

The dissident attacks on police officers, a Member of this Board, and a DPP member over the last number of weeks have been roundly condemned from within the community, and as a Board, we are relieved that all of those targeted in the attacks, whilst left shocked, are alive and for that we are relieved as a Board and no doubt you to, because I think it is your considered judgement that the intent was in fact to murder officers. These dissidents are hostile to the political progress that has been made. They are blind to the fact that society as a whole has moved on and that the community as a whole wants to move forward, in fact to be normal.

We have heard the token justification for this dissident activity, but those behind these attacks have no mandate. They do not offer a better way of life, they do not offer a better future. All they offer is a step back in time.

It is time I think for all within our community to engage and challenge these so called dissidents. They have nothing to offer this community and they simply create a climate

of fear to the people living in the areas where violence has occurred and this was very clear following the violence in Craigavon.

I should also mention that Dolores Kelly and Daithí McKay and Ian Paisley Jnr have been subjected to attack, not necessarily attributed to dissidents, and abuse whilst out dealing with issues on the ground at the request of your constituents. These were attacks on the democratic process itself, but it is testimony to their commitment to their constituents that they will each continue in their work and that also goes for all the people who are out working in communities to improve our communities and resolve issues. Just whilst coming in here I was informed that a councillor in Antrim I believe, a Sinn Fein councillor, a Mr Lowe, was subject to attack as well and that should be unequivocally be condemned as well.

This year another relatively peaceful marching season demonstrated the maturity and the benefits of communities engaging and working together to find resolutions to parading issues, and on behalf of this Board I commend all those who have played a part, and I am sure Chief Constable, that you will cover the police resources deployed in respect of this in your report.

And for political representatives returning to work this week, the devolution of policing and justice remains a matter to be resolved. This Board looks forward to the delivery of the final piece of the policing jigsaw.

This Board has already agreed that the role and powers of the Board should not be diminished under any devolution arrangements. That the Chief Constable should remain solely accountable to the Board for delivery of the policing service in Northern Ireland; and that his operational responsibility should not be undermined when the devolution of policing and justice powers takes place. That is in line with the recommendation of the Patten Commission.

The Policing Board was a fundamental recommendation of the Patten Commission, it stated and let me quote, “...*that the powers of the Policing Board proposed in this report, in relation to both Government (as now represented by the Secretary of State) and the Chief Constable, be in no way diminished when the Government role in the tripartite arrangement passes to the Northern Ireland Executive*” and from what I read to

date, it seems that the future Department will protect this arrangement which is essential for independent oversight and we welcome that coming from the Assembly. As a Board, we remain committed to delivering our accountability responsibilities.

There are a number of significant issues that this Board will be considering in the months ahead, including funding pressures and the use of police resources, including the future of the police estate. Issues that impact on delivery of the policing service, issues that are essential to public confidence in policing. Unsurprisingly, the issues that concern communities most relate to service delivery, policing in the community, dealing with underage drinking, dealing with anti social behaviour, ensuring that officers are visible and accessible to communities and where there is crime, solving it. This Board will be looking for delivery on the current year targets and particularly in respect of sanction clearance rates, a marked improvement.

There have been some very serious incidents and attacks over the summer and I have referred to those, and you will no doubt cover those and refer to them in your report Chief Constable. But prior to that, can I commend on behalf of the Board, your officers on the success of an operation with colleagues in An Garda Siochana, the Dutch Police Service as well as Her Majesty's Revenue Commissioners (HMRC) and the Irish Revenue Commissioners. In addition to a number of arrests, a substantial amount of guns and drugs have been taken off the streets so it is clear that a major organised crime gang has been disrupted in its activities.

Chief Constable over to you.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

Thank you Chairman. As you rightly reflect in your report, the marching season this year has now concluded since we last met and it would be right to say it was substantially incident free. That was not an accident and I can now place on the record my thanks and appreciation to all who were involved in the essential dialogue that led to that state of affairs, and my thanks to my colleagues who ensured an appropriate and proportionate response across the province to those events which can be quite challenging.

I think if there was a significant change this year, it was an increased focus on 'on street' drinking, certainly in Urban Region, and I think I see that as only the starting point. I would like to see next year even more activity in that area working with the marching orders, who indeed, were very supportive and provided marshals on this occasion. I think it would be right to say we ran out of space in terms of seized drink and we need to make sure that we got the right capacity to deal with it in the future, but I do think it fundamentally changes the feel of marches and indeed parades.

You talked about the recent attacks by so called republicans and you are right. Since we last met there have been 2 further attempts to commit murder of police. In Fermanagh, community officers were targeted by terrorists using a rocket propelled grenade and last week in Craigavon, members of a TSG who were there doing support for community policing, came under gunfire and blast bomb attack. It is fortunate we did not lose an officer, and I say that yet again, but can I thank Members of the Board and others in a position of trust and leadership, who very swiftly and publicly condemned those attacks. Can I also commend my officers for their determination to continue to deliver an effective policing service, notwithstanding the determined attacks to kill them simply because they are cops, and that is a stark statement, it is absolutely true, and it is what distinguishes policing in Northern Ireland sadly still from policing in the rest of the United Kingdom.

As DCC Leighton said in his letter, he wrote to you in my absence, the support of the Board and of other leaders is greatly appreciated, not just by the officers but by their colleagues and can I thank you for that. If one actually looks at what the officers were doing when they were attacked, it was truly what the Board has asked our officers to do, which is delivering community locally based policing, neighbourhood policing. The team in Lisnaskea was of course, looking at and dealing with anti social behaviour, drunkenness and vandalism, so that ordinary people in the town could live their lives normally and that is exactly where these people are attacking us were they know we are making an effective intervention and contributing to community life.

It is right and as a matter of reassurance to my officers, I know we take and the Board needs to know we take, officers' safety extremely seriously and is central to all planning currently in Northern Ireland. The Gold Strategy for Rural Region, which is currently taking the brunt of this, ACC Gillespie draws up the strategy. It is very much around

prevention and enforcement, but making sure we minimise the risks to officers and the public as we go about our day to day duties. It is a fine balance, but if you need reassurance that we will continue to deliver the service, you have it from me and my senior colleagues.

It is also right to say we are working extremely closely with An Garda Siochana and the Security Services to bring those responsible to justice. Members will have read in the papers yesterday, one individual has been convicted having pleaded guilty to possession of explosives, a coffee jar bomb, detonators and parts for a pipe bomb and that sort of activity will continue.

In terms of the recent attacks in Craigavon, a number of searches have been carried out. A man has been arrested in relation to the hi-jacking of a taxi, no arrests have been made in relation to the shooting incident. Could I particularly thank the public condemnation by Dolores Kelly, it does send a very clear message that people are behind us and we note the consequences Members of the Board and indeed, elected representatives are taking by signing up and indeed supporting us so strongly and we are deeply grateful for it.

In Lisnaskea, a male has been arrested by our colleagues in An Garda Siochana and reported for membership of a proscribed organisation and making malicious telephone calls.

In terms of the threat, well the threat continues to be high. We see it as significant and we see the threat as a determined attempt to kill a police officer, that is where these people are focusing their activity. If there is a need for any more clarity I am mindful of the IMC Report which came out yesterday, and can I be quite clear on this, the threat was currently from so called dissident republicans not from the Provisional IRA. I have read the report and I agree with its assessment, it actually builds on a series of reports that show that any military threat from the Provisional IRA is no longer credible or anywhere in the system.

Chairman, you mentioned finance in your opening address, and it would be right to say that there is some increased pressure as a result of the substantial activity we are putting into dealing with the current terrorist threat. There are other pressures and you

will be mindful that we are currently facing a shortfall this year which we have now managed to reduce to some £12m from a far higher sum. We have bid to Government in the in-year bidding process for £9m which actually deals with issues that are beyond our control, and indeed that of the Board, around pension curtailment settlements, actuarial assessments and the decision around equal pay or increased pay that was a matter dealt with through Stormont, but of course has a knock-on effect potentially for our organisations due to the number of civil servants we have employed who have worked for us, in some cases, for many many years. The outcome of that bid will not be known until the middle of this month.

If we are successful that still remains a pressure of £3m which we are reviewing and we will work with the Board to see where we have to make those cuts, but we have tried to ensure those choices are made with consultation of local communities and their representatives, and the whole focus is keeping the cuts away from the front end of policing.

Chairman, since we last met TASER has been deployed for the first time in Northern Ireland. On 16 August 2008, in line with the protocols and the reassurances sought and agreed by me with the Board, that is now a matter that is under investigation by the Ombudsman. I will not comment on the specifics therefore and it is also worth noting a man has also now been charged for that incident so it would be improper to comment further.

In terms of the policy in relation to TASER, we have had a debate this morning and there is a meeting to seek some further clarification between members of my organisation and the Board next week. If the Board does need any reassurance, it is I will not make a final decision until I have fully considered all the concerns of the Board and those agencies who have responded to our EQIA (Equality Impact Assessment).

Chairman, you raised Operation Snapper which is the issue around underage drinking, 'on street' drinking and the behaviour associated to that. That has been running and during the summer we have confiscated over 9,000 items of alcohol, referred some 250 young people to our Youth Diversion Office, 161 have been reported to local councils and 19 to the DPP. Whilst the Operation may be coming to a close our activity in that area certainly will not. I think it is right to say it is working and I think that is because it

is a partnership approach, it is not just us doing the enforcement bit, it is working with communities and other organisations to make sure we maximise our impact.

The Knife Awareness campaign has now been running for a couple of months and I know there is a question in relation to that so I will not comment on it further, but it is very much around trying to target the high risk group, young males between the ages of 11 and 18 years.

Chairman, you touched on the arrests both in the north and the south of the island of Ireland during this week, and indeed, in Holland. It would be right to say this was a case of immense complexity. It was dangerous, it was complex, it was challenging and it was running for some time. I would describe it as outstanding, it led to the recovery of well over £3m of illegal drugs, a substantial quantity of firearms, I think that is an under-estimation, well over 100 firearms recovered and these are firearms which we know would have been deployed within the criminal community. There is no doubt, no doubt whatsoever, that people will be alive in the Republic of Ireland, in the United Kingdom and probably in Europe as a result of that operation and many serious crimes will not now be committed because the people are now in custody. It is in my experience, one of the most significant operations I can think of in recent history quite frankly. All agencies and all enforcement, all police services involved should be highly commended for working so well together to bring that to a very successful conclusion.

You will also have seen under the organised crime banner, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs working with our officers in Co Armagh have closed another major fuel laundering plant this week. The estimated loss to the Treasury was £3m per annum in taxation and again it shows how working together does have a very major effect. Those are just 2 examples of success around organised crime which have been generated from this jurisdiction.

Chairman very briefly, the Green Paper on policing no doubt Members will have had a chance to study, it is an interesting piece of work and no doubt, people will be putting their submissions in.

I think one of the areas where I would encourage the Board and us to have a conversation is around how you measure success and how you measure performance,

and I am happy to offer a meeting with the Board, Senior Police Officers from the United Kingdom who are currently pilots around freeing up the frontend to make local decisions without being stuck in the bureaucratic world we sometimes find ourselves in and empowering neighbourhood teams, sergeants, to make decisions around what they record and what they do not record for the good an effective community policing. I think it is a very interesting development, I think it is one that has some applicability over here.

Chairman, finally, in relation to my Senior Command Team, you will be aware of the number of changes we have put into place this month. You will be aware because you appointed David Jones who joins us next week as Peter Sheridan has now moved to pastures new. David Jones becomes ACC for Crime Support taking over from ACC Alistair Finlay who moves to Urban Region, ACC Duncan McCausland as a consequence of that moves to Criminal Justice and ACC Drew Harris is taking over Crime Operations. I would like to place on record my thanks to all my colleagues who have delivered so effectively in their old roles and I know will deliver as effectively in their new ones. I do believe we have a very strong team which is certainly ready and able to face the challenges that we face in policing Northern Ireland.

Chairman, I will draw my comments to a conclusion there, we have a presentation.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Thank you very much indeed Chief Constable. Questions to the Chief Constable, Dolores Kelly.

Mrs Dolores Kelly:

Chairman, I was going to make a couple of questions in relation to the statement of the Chief Constable.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

That is what it is about.

Mrs Dolores Kelly:

Thank you for your presentation Chief Constable. Could I ask, given the increased republican dissident threat in both the Craigavon district and indeed in Fermanagh, are there going to be additional policing resources to those 2 areas in particular?

Can I also ask, following the use of the TASER, whilst you are unable because of charges having been brought against an individual, to refer specifically to that use of TASER, could you tell us whether or not there is going to be an internal review within PSNI of the particular incident? If there are any lessons to be learnt, for example, what level of discussions or co-operation in advance were there with any of the Health Authorities in the north in terms of the aftercare and treatment of an individual once the TASER has been deployed?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

If I could take the TASER issue first. First of all, the Ombudsman's report no doubt and in keeping with the routine of the Ombudsman's reports, if there are recommendations or advice to be taken from those, we will take that advice and I think the history is we have always accepted recommendations from the Ombudsman and progressed them in keeping with the spirit of that particular bit of legislation.

In terms of lessons learned, it is too early to say and I do not want to comment on the detail until we see the outcome of the Ombudsman's review.

In relation to the threat issue I will ask ACC Gillespie to cover resources in specific terms. I am actually meeting with the Senior Management Team from there this afternoon to see what else we can do centrally to give them the additional support, but ACC Gillespie has the control of the resources.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mrs Judith Gillespie:

As part of the Gold Strategy internal reassurance as well as external reassurance is a key strand to the strategy, so as part of that internal reassurance strategy, specific resources have been put into 'F' District and in support of 'E' District as well. That is not just physical police officer resources but additional overtime has been allocated from the regional reserve to up our profile to increase the uniform on the street. Also, in addition to that, there are other internal reassurance resources that have been given to

the Lisnaskea sector in particular, and that is around officer protection. Obviously I do not want to discuss the detail of those in the public session, but I can say that at the Gold Strategy meeting which met last week, we have discussed a number of measures to reassure officers and to reassure Members that there have been additional resources allocated to both 'E' and 'F' Districts.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Second question, the answer to the second question.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I thought I had done it first.

Mrs Dolores Kelly:

It was in relation to the discussions with health authorities.

Deputy Chief Constable, Mr Paul Leighton:

Chairman if I can answer that. There were some gaps highlighted and we have already taken steps to change procedures immediately after that as we always do after any incident where we can learn.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Ian Paisley Jnr.

Mr Ian Paisley Jnr:

Thank you Chairman. Chief Constable, I just want you to take away from the Board the united condemnation across the community that there is for attacks on your officers, it is appalling, it is vile and we wish your officers well in the duty that they do on behalf of all of the people of Northern Ireland and they should know that they have that broad general support.

With regards to 2 issues which you touched on in your statement in terms of attacks on your officers. Can you confirm that officers can use firearms to protect their lives, and that whilst we all hope it never has to happen, and we all hope that it does not happen, but that they are empowered and they are not inhibited in doing their job? Secondly, with regards to the IMC Report which again you touched on in your statement, are you

able to comment on what appears to be a slight difference with the outgoing ACC Sheridan's claim that the army council may continue to meet but poses no threat, with the IMC's assessment yesterday, that it does not meet? What is your assessment of the army council and generally, do you agree that all illegal organisations should cease to exist?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

First of all I thank you for your observations, and I think one of the most impressive things and humbling experiences I have is actually speaking to officers who are still determined to get out there regardless of the threat and we have to be sensible, they are still out there and they are still determined to do their job.

In terms of the use of force to defend an officer, yes an officer has a right to resort to the ultimate use of force if so be it and the circumstances merit it, and of course we still remain sadly one of the only armed services in the United Kingdom.

In terms of the IMC, I am not sure there is a distinction. I think the IMC is pretty unequivocal in the sense of the words actually used now, "withered on the vine" would be the best description. There is no intelligence, I have no intelligence to say they are meeting and the world moves on and I think the IMC's assessment is a very fair and accurate description of where that organisation currently is, and in the absence I guess of someone actually standing up and saying it has gone away, it is as good as we are going to see. The threat to our officers and the threat to the stability of Northern Ireland does not come from the Provisional IRA or the army council, it comes from people who claim to be republicans and see that that means you go killing cops, it is as simple as that and as dark as that.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Alex Maskey.

Mr Alex Maskey:

Well obviously we have had quite a lengthy discussion upstairs in the private session and some of that again will be covered here in the public session through the questions and we will deal with some of these issues as the meeting goes on. Obviously a very

wide ranging report this morning from the Chief Constable and some fairly heavy enough discussion upstairs and of course, some of that will be continued.

If I could refer to some of the other matters on the agenda first of all. In terms of Operation Snapper, for me there are important lessons to be learned from that. Probably a fairly short term operation itself, but one which was designed to tackle a serious problem at local community level with underage drinking and 'on street' drinking which is just a scourge in many areas. People far too often have to complain that there is not enough being done to tackle that, so I think it is an important piece of work and obviously again, lessons need to be learned from that and how do we develop that in an ongoing sustained way. So, I think that is important to bring attention to that.

I would ask for a reference from the Chief Constable, some assessment in relation to a number of threats which have been directed towards my own party colleagues, both in North Antrim, in some cases these have been made quite publicly, Fermanagh itself and elsewhere. So I would like some assessment from the Chief Constable in respect of some of those threats, either the source and the substance of it, because obviously it is a matter of concern that these things are reported regularly in fact routinely, but no-one seems to get to the bottom of whether they are serious or otherwise.

I have to make a point on the question of TASER and obviously as both Dolores Kelly has already mentioned and the Chief Constable has dealt with, we are very aware and we are being told very clearly, that the recent incident in Derry is now sub-judice given that there is a person charged and in fact the Ombudsman's Office also has to deal with this. But it is suffice to say that we will very rigorously here be upholding our statutory obligations and the Chief Constable would accept this entirely that we have a job to do in terms of holding the police to account in respect of these very important matters.

I have to say and I want to place on record our own serious enough concern that the weapon was deployed at all at this time, given the fact that there are still, what we would consider to be very important and outstanding matters. Matters which have been made reference to from a whole range of human rights organisations. The Equality Commission for example and people talk about EQIAs and I understand a lot of people do not always understand the technical finesse of these type of things, but at the end of the day what we are talking about here is how such a weapon can be used, or may be

used against what are described as vulnerable people and certainly this incident would fit very much into that category, it certainly would appear on the face of the report so far. As far as I

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

I think you should be careful in terms of the case Mr Maskey.

Mr Alex Maskey:

My general point is, obviously we will have to return to this issue, it is a very important one. Certainly there are very substantial human rights and equality implications. I think it also has to be said that there is the judicial review pending in this matter and I think it is very regrettable that this weapon has been deployed, given the circumstances that I am outlining. There will be a judicial review as I understand, probably scheduled very very soon. This Board itself had a very clear decision taken last September I think in the Bangor meeting that we had in respect of even without prejudice of what the Board's view would be in respect of deployment of this at all, that there would have to be very very strict conditions adhered to. As far as I am understanding, those conditions have not yet been met. So, again I want to put on record our concern first of all that yes, we do have to protect the public and the police are there to do that and we commend them when they do that, particularly when we are talking about maybe children who may have been vulnerable, that obviously will have to be teased out and very rigorously probed, but certainly it is the case that we would have very very fundamental concerns about the deployment of a weapon, particularly which may be against vulnerable people whenever the conditions for that deployment are not yet met.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Do you have a question on that?

Mr Alex Maskey:

Well again, the question as we put upstairs, I would far rather and our party would wish it to be made very clear, we do not want to see any further deployment of this weapon at the very very least, and this is without prejudice to people's views, our party has a position of opposition to this. I want to say for the record Chairman, we do respect the need to protect people particularly children in our society, but notwithstanding that, what I am saying is that there are a lot of very fundamentally important questions that need

yet to be addressed in respect of the deployment of the TASER weapon, and what we are saying is, that we do not want those deployed and would ask the Chief Constable to give that commitment.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

A comment Chief Constable

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I will deal with the TASER issue and I will ask ACC Harris to deal with the assessment around threats and I will ask ACC McCausland to deal with Operation Snapper, and I agree entirely 'Snapper' should not be a flash in the pan, there is a commitment certainly to keeping it going because it is one of the areas that is consistently raised at DPP meetings.

Chairman, at the strategic end around TASER, we still remain the only police service in the United Kingdom that is running a very limited pilot. As Members are aware, it is only available to my most highly trained firearms officers for deployment called out. So, it is not available in the routine and certainly not as available as anywhere else in the United Kingdom and of course it is a matter of record, that not one person has been killed by the use of TASER operating under United Kingdom guidelines.

The bottom line is, I would like not to have TASER too, let us be very clear on that. Every Chief Constable does not want to use these weapons, but in the absence of alternatives, we could be having a conversation today about deployment of live fire. My experience in policing and my colleagues experience in policing tells me that a TASER is far less lethal than live fire. Whilst it is easy to object to things and I understand the right of a Board to object to things they do not like and do not think are appropriate, my responsibility is to make sure we have the right equipment to use the minimum use of force necessary to carry out what is sometimes an extremely difficult and challenging job with limited information and split second decision making. It remains an operational decision at the moment and I can reassure the Board at the moment, there is no intention to widen the pilot until the other administrative processes have been taken out.

The reality is, as Mr Maskey points out, these sorts of weapons tend to be used against people who one could describe as vulnerable, that is the experience in the United

Kingdom. It is people who may have a mental health issue, it may be deployed in domestic violence issues, it may be people who have other problems and cannot cope, in way that manifests itself in violent behaviour in the street, and that is the experience, but the role of our assessment is, if that is the case and it tends to be the case, we recognise that and we plan to make sure we have proper procedures in place, does not mean we cannot use the weapon. But I am afraid the debate will go on Chairman. I have no plans to increase it, but I certainly will not give an assurance that it will not be used, to do so would deny access to my officers and, indeed, to communities and even more vulnerable people and Mr Maskey mentioned children, and that would be unprofessional.

I will ask if ACC Harris could cover the issues around the threats and I will ask ACC McCausland then to do Operation Snapper.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Drew Harris:

Thank you. There have been a series of threats made to members of Sinn Fein, most recently threats made to a councillor in the Crumlin area. But just to set it in context around loyalist activity first. Loyalists, UDA, UVF and LVF retain paramilitary structures but rival loyalists remain the most likely target for loyalist violence, along with low level criminals and alleged anti social offenders. It is within that context and the knowledge that there are other disgruntled loyalist groupings, loose affiliations and it is within the context of these loose affiliations of individuals calling themselves loyalists using names such as Real UFF for instance that these threats are assessed. They have been anonymous, they have been anonymous call type threats and they seem related either to media events, media stories other than political progress, or indeed in the Fermanagh case, attacks upon the police. But the judgement we have to make is around the actual threat to the individual and in each case, it has been assessed that it is better to warn the individual who the threat has been made against rather than not to warn. Because, although these individuals pose a very minimal security threat, a threat of perhaps a petrol bombing or a pipe bomb incident could not be entirely ruled out and in that context individuals have been warned of the threat and advised of this. But also then there is our policing response in respect of that around minimising the risk to that person, minimising the risk to the public in general, and then also if there is anything there to investigate, and often there is not, following through an investigation.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

Chairman could I just add, I think a lot of this is around the security of communication when these messages are delivered quite frankly and I am happy to have a conversation outside of the meeting to see if we can fine tune it. But it is around how we can add value to that intelligence before we go out. We have no desire to frighten people but the Article 2 obligations sometimes are overwhelming in terms of keeping people informed, but I do think sometimes the more we can tell people the more comfortable I am, but of course there are sometimes some constraints on that and it may be an individual case we could have done a better job. I am happy to look at that and see if we can do it in a more sympathetic or responsible way, but it is a difficult balance to strike.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

Chairman in relation to 'Snapper', please be reassured and the Board should be reassured, the process is not coming to an end, this is just the end of the operational phase, if you remember I briefed Board Members over the summer period. In fact this weekend it continues and will be the last conclusion. In fact Members may be or may want to be made aware, that the attack in Lisnaskea was actually against a Snapper Operation where the police were out on a Saturday evening actually dealing with young people who were drinking in the main street when this attack took place. We now move on to the next phase and what I would intend to do, with the Board Members permission, is come to the Community Engagement Committee of the Board and continue the update in relation to where we go.

We are moving in now to Youth Action Plan. The DPPs will be heavily involved, both Health, Regional and Junior Ministers at the Assembly are also involved in terms of taking the process forward with young people. We will be pushing on our education, health, reoffending and enforcement campaign throughout the year, because the campaign is not just one year but it is 2 years. We have only started to scratch the surface and intend to continue on with it and I will be more than happy to take any views that the Board would have at that Committee when I come down to give them their regular update.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

I am going to take 2 more questions on this section of the agenda, Mr Jimmy Spratt and then Mr Basil McCrea. Sorry, there was one other, Mr Peter Weir.

Mr Jimmy Spratt:

Just to go back to the dissident threat, can I to join in condemnation of the attacks on the police. Can I ask the Chief Constable, during your remarks you said that the dissident attacks in Fermanagh distinguish policing from the rest of the United Kingdom policing Northern Ireland, and I think that is a very apt comment given that some of the police's transitional allowance is being removed at this minute in time. Chief Constable, could you reassure us that you will join with those of us politically to keep pressure on for that allowance to be retained? Because I think it is a wrong message to send out to police officers, from a morale point of view, at this moment in time that part of that allowance is being removed. There is provision within the agreement that was made at the Police Negotiating Board that it can be retained, so I think we all need, including yourself and this Board and indeed politically, to keep pressure on and can you assure me that you will continue to do that.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

The short answer is yes. The reality of policing in Northern Ireland is certainly different from the rest of the UK, but not obviously as bad, as many colleagues in this room would have experience of far more than I. I think there is a shared view within the Staff Associations and my Senior Management Team, that common sense is, we put on hold any review or reduction until there is a clearer assessment of where we are going, and that is exactly where our position is and it has been clearly communicated to Government.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Mr Basil McCrea.

Mr Basil McCrea:

Thank you Chairman. Can I start of by saying that we agree with the Chairman's view that operational independence is the bedrock of any democracy, and in that regard we note the operation involving TASER in Londonderry, we view this as being an operational issue. We have looked at the matter in some considerable detail, and I

personally was at the training and I was impressed with the level of training and the need to make split second decisions. I look forward to the outcome of the Ombudsman's investigation which will illuminate what went on, but certainly from our point of view, we think it is a weapon that is worth looking at because of its potential to save lives.

Can I also say that as far as Operation Snapper is concerned and ACC McCausland's excellent work in this, that we do think that this is the area that the PSNI and the Policing Board should join to actually improve the whole of society, because there is no doubt, that alcohol does lead to an awful lot of crimes. Can I say also to the loyal orders, that I was impressed having looked at a number of policing operations, how effective it was the absolutely dearth of 'on street' drinking at the field or whatever, I think it is a real credit to them.

Finally, can I say with regard to the IMC report, I note the Chief Constable's view that he thinks that it is 'accurate' I think was the word that he used, can I just ask him, in his position then that the existence of the army council or not is largely irrelevant to the policing environment in which his officers now work?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I thank you for your comments in relation to 'Operation Snapper' and indeed the marching season, I do think it was a step change and do mean to keep the pressure on because I do think, whilst generally speaking across the province there was a lot less drink, I still think we have quite a challenge in Belfast itself to actually reduce it even further.

I note your comments in relation to TASER. In terms of the IMC report, the short answer is yes, our effort is not around the role of army council of the Provisional IRA, it is consistent with the assessment that ACC Harris has given around those people who claim to be republicans who are attacking police officers and that is completely out with that structure.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Last question in this section of the agenda, Mr Peter Weir.

Mr Peter Weir:

Yes, just briefly on 3 issues. First of all on the dissident republican threat, I wonder if the Chief Constable could comment on what his assessment of the level of co-ordination there is within dissident republicans as regards the current threat?

Secondly, on the issue of alcohol and the 12th July. As someone who would be on the parade every year in Belfast, I commend the police for a very proactive approach in co-ordination with the loyal orders, and I wonder could you confirm, because obviously I think Belfast would be assessed as being the area, where in the past, it has been the most problematical. Could the Chief Constable confirm that there will be ongoing discussions with the loyal orders to co-operate to try to ensure that we can stamp down on this?

Finally, as regards TASER, I think what people often forget, while there is obviously a degree of reluctance to deploy TASER, and it is used very much as a last resort, that the alternatives ultimately are either going into situations where there is no restraining equipment and therefore runs the risk of someone committing a violent act which could lead to the death of either a police officer or a civilian, or alternatively going in with live ammunition, so would the Chief Constable comment as to whether the alternatives to TASER is actually to risk life or to take life?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I will ask ACC Harris to cover the issue around co-ordination.

In terms of the 12th July, I do think it was a significant step change and definitely those talks will continue and there is a lot of support and I do not think we would have been as effective to any mark without the support of the marshals from the marching orders, but I do think there is more we can do. The harsh reality is that we actually ran out of space to put the stuff and that did constrain us despite the best efforts of ACC McCausland and indeed myself, to remove alcohol from individuals as we went around the place.

In terms of TASER, well there are alternatives. There are more dangerous alternatives called firearms and there are other alternatives; batons, CS Spray, handcuffs all those shorts of things which actually, in those situations are not only quite often highly

inappropriate and far more riskier to deploy, but are far more likely to cause far more injury to the person you are deploying them against. So, if we do not have the spectrum, the armoury, in terms of a spectrum the equipment as being properly approved to deploy, you run the risk of asking people to take far more excessive risk, and without doubt, in certain circumstances, you do run the risk of putting lives at risk. Where those situations tend to emerge, what you are actually talking about is not deploying a lower type of weapon, you are talking about using something far more serious and far more dangerous which is a gun.

So, it is around having the right level of equipment that can give you a proportionate and appropriate response to the situation the officer faces and it is as described by those who have seen the training. We are not asking people to sit back in a comfortable courtroom and make decisions, we are asking people to make decisions in very tense situations, in very dangerous situations and in very fast moving situations and it is not something that is an easy thing to pull off and they do have the right to have the appropriate equipment available to them.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Drew Harris:

In terms of coherent strategy or co-ordination between dissident republican groupings, really the one theme which draws them all together is their intent to kill a police officer and that is what the main threat from those groupings is around the murder of a police officer.

Beyond that, there has been little in the way of co-ordination or coherent strategy amongst those groupings and so the attacks appear to happen as their capability and their ability to mount an attack comes together as opposed to any strategy overall.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Chief Constable, would you be so good as to request Superintendent Hamilton now to present his thematic report.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

I will ask Superintendent Hamilton to do that and in keeping with the spirit of Patten, of course, it is Superintendent Hamilton's penultimate day in the organisation.

Superintendent David Hamilton:

Indeed Chairman, it is my pleasure on my last couple of days service with the Police Service of Northern Ireland to give you an update on where we are with policing with the community and neighbourhood policing.

You did in your letter to me, ask for certain areas to be covered and during this short presentation I will talk to you about neighbourhood identification, neighbourhood policing teams, vulnerable and ethnic minority communities, and of course, community engagement.

Right away if we look at neighbourhood identification in line with the Policing Plan, neighbourhoods have been identified. It is fair to say that the only area that this has not just been completed in yet is Lisnaskea and, of course, we know there are very good reasons why that has not been done because of the 2 attacks that happened against neighbourhood police officers who were there trying to deliver the neighbourhood policing service in that area and were subject to a bomb attack and to a rocket attack, so that part has not been completed. But throughout the rest of Northern Ireland neighbourhoods have been identified.

The consultation has indeed taken place, it has taken place in a variety of different ways with councils, with DPPs, with Community Safety Partnerships, local community groups and of course, we sent out as a service some guiding principles that needed to be adhered to when we looked at setting up neighbourhoods. We looked at geographic areas and what best serves the needs of the communities in those areas. We looked at consultation and consultation with partners and partnership involvement. We looked at what makes sense to people who live in those areas and expect the police service in those areas, we wanted the areas to be small enough for people to discuss and to develop collective views, but of course large enough to be able to support sustainable delivery of police services in those areas.

Moving on to neighbourhood policing teams, at the moment we are showing a total of 1,323 police officers attached to neighbourhood policing throughout Northern Ireland. I have to say that 761 of those Constables relate to police officers part time so that leaves 430 full-time officers dedicated to neighbourhood policing, along of course with

the 88 Sergeants in the supervisory role and of course the command role of the Inspectors of 44.

You asked to look at training and development and we have developed a new role profile for neighbourhood policing. In that we have sought to meet the needs of the community in that, it is not enough for an officer to be known and to be seen, but they must be seen to deliver and that is why we have performance and staff appraisal targets around the delivery of neighbourhood policing priorities as well. We always have the Patten recommendation 78 accountability meetings where the Assistant Chief Constables do go down into the Regions and Districts and discuss how the targets that are contained within the Policing Plan, and indeed the local Policing Plans, and how that refers to neighbourhood policing and what is being achieved in that.

New training is currently being developed for neighbourhood officers and I have confirmation I am glad to report to the Board this morning, that the Head of Training and Development and forms in the policing with the community, is now a key theme which is integrated through the PSNI's training.

Another key theme is of course diversity and another one is human rights. So along with human rights and diversity, I am glad to report that policing with the community is seen to be one of those key integrated themes developed throughout training.

Of course, when we look at policing with the community, we are talking about service delivery. We are talking about partnership working, we are talking about problem solving, empowerment and, of course, accountability.

On the vulnerable and ethnic minorities communities, you asked me to specifically talk a little about that this morning. I have to say that our Community Safety Branch do have Strategic Independent Advisory Groups that are up and running throughout Northern Ireland in specific areas such as older persons, disability, multi-cultural, lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and trans-sexual community as well as youth issues, and we are glad to report that we do have 4 pilot Youth Independent Advisory Groups that have been up and running and successful and we will, of course, be looking at moving that forward in the coming months as well into all areas of Northern Ireland.

The Independent Advisory Groups are made up of members who represent respective groupings and organisations and provide critical advice and support on a range of different matters, for example, the members have recently reviewed our service Hate Crime Policy as well as the Service Order on Policing Unlawful Public Sexual Activity and of course, they have also been involved in the examination process of OSPRE for our Sergeants and our Inspectors.

Community Safety Branch have also issued the Reassurance Policy out to the Service and of course the main concerns by many minority and ethnic groups is not consistent and does vary from area to area. However we do take those issues on board and we do seek to meet the needs of those groups through different engagement strategies involving the young, NICEM, Disability Action and other such groups as well.

On the community engagement side we have issued the PACT principles which is Partners and Community Together principles, these principles have 4 main themes as it were. This is the consultative forums that we are getting involved in at all levels of the organisation. We are asking first of all that they be community led and not police led but we do accept at the start some of these will still be police driven, but our aim is to make them community led, partners and community together meetings. They must be representative of the neighbourhood and the community that the meetings are held in, they must have partnership involvement because we know that policing is much too important for the police alone and we do look to our partners to provide equally as much as the police are providing, in order to make neighbourhoods safe and feel safe, and of course they are meant to be action based and not talk based, we like to see action. We like to see things being drafted by way of objectives and we like to see those being achieved just as we do with the Policing Plan itself.

So to that end we have asked our officers in all Districts to have a look at what engagement methods that are currently running. We are asking them to review those processes. We are asking them to look at the neighbourhood profile and look at where the vulnerable groups are within those neighbourhoods. We are looking them to establish and to plug the gaps wherever those gaps may be, and of course, we are looking to share best practice and what works elsewhere. For example, PACT, the PACT meeting that is currently operating in the University area of Belfast where 15 and

more partners came together to discuss those very difficult areas and the principles were very much involved there.

I am glad to report this morning Chairman, as well as these engagement methods, the PSNI have been successful in the National Policing Awards and they have been recognised for one of the most innovative Policing and Partnership Awards through 'Tilley' and that, of course, being the Glens of Antrim Rural Crime Project, so well done to our officers who have been involved in that very innovative and creative crime prevention initiative.

Of course we do this again in the knowledge that dissidents are still out there trying to kill our officers and we have already talked about the areas of where they have tried indeed to kill our officers.

Moving on then to community confidence, and I have to say that as a man from the North West I never thought I would see the day when police officers would be having a conference in the Creggan Community Centre, after the murder of Emmett Shields in the city. I have to say the co-operation that has been given to the police and the police of course in their investigation to that community and the investigation of that crime, has been absolutely wonderful. I think it deserves note this morning that young people in that area and, whilst I am as surprised as a native of that area to find the police being accepted in such a way and I never thought I would see that time, I am sure the youth there who helped deliver those leaflets after the murder throughout the estate, I am sure they equally are as surprised that they are working in tandem with the police in order to make the area much safer and to try and find and bring those to justice who were responsible for that atrocity.

As well as that of course, when the police officers are invited to funerals of the deceased in St Eugene's Cathedral, that again I never thought I would see the day when that would happen.

Community representatives were very much involved in the assistance of police to that investigation. We saw witnesses walking into the police station in order to give witness accounts of what happened, and of course we saw somebody else call in about the car that was later recovered and of course other items of munitions etc were indeed found.

So coming from that area I think it is tremendous to see the developments that have been made in policing with the community and Chairman if I might say, the investigation of the murder of Emmett Shields has been in true style and in the vision of Patten of policing with the community.

As well as having those areas in Derry that I have mentioned and the successes and the co-operation there, there have also been other good examples of good policing with the community. For example, the flags and good relations forum in Larne and in Limavady. Flags sites were created during July and August, joint protocols were set up between the PSNI, the DSD, DRD, DOE and the Housing Executive and OFMDFM used the framework, that is the framework that was used for the project. Flags were massively reduced, arterial routes were free from such displays, a partnership approach is now available and helped to defuse any issues that did arise in that, and of course a similar accommodation in Larne has been reached in Limavady. I used to be the District Commander in Limavady and I know the difficulties that did surround flags in that area as well and again it is good that we are working in partnership with the community in order to resolve these very thorny issues that we have.

As well as that in Larne they have developed and moved on from the flags and moved on to a Good Relations Forum and they look at resolving sectarian issues and conflict that still exists in some areas of that town. The group consists of community representatives, PUP, URPG, Sinn Fein, Housing Executive, the council, the police and it is facilitated by both the YMCA and Mediation Northern Ireland, and much rumour and community tension and serious community conflict has already been resolved through the use of this type of forum in the Larne area. Personalities and groupings of course can avail of that shared confidential meeting place and to discuss and to move on.

An independent audit and review was carried out of that forum and it has been assessed, 171 to 198 serious sectarian incidents were averted in the Larne area and the person who carried out that report put a cost of £9,000 to one of the incidents. So, not only do we have savings in terms of money and a reduction in incidents, we have of course the better building of community relations in that area as well. Again Chairman, another example of how policing with the community has taken off within the spirit of

Patten and we keep striving of course to meet the spirit of Patten which is, that policing with the community ought to be the core ethos of the police service.

Finally, Chairman the Omnibus Survey and the Monitoring Performance Framework, I would like to see us move forward in measuring the “so what” of policing and neighbourhood policing. For example, the police say that we are delivering a good quality service, that if we are then we should measure that by continually looking at more qualitative targets as opposed to the quantitative targets around policing. The Omnibus Survey has been a good example of that this year where we have seen some qualitative targets coming in and around policing, and I believe this is a good start and we should sit down with you the Board and discuss more qualitative targets, the “so what” of what we are actually trying to achieve. We do deliver the police service but so what, how effective are we at delivering that and how effective are we at measuring and monitoring that right down to neighbourhood level.

Finally Chairman, this has been a brief update of where we are with policing with the community and neighbourhood policing. I think that we have many other examples about what is going on on the ground and may I again extend an invitation to Members of the Board to go on the ‘Seeing is Believing’ visits and to see for yourself all the good work that is being done and achieved through neighbourhood policing and in its widest context policing with the community.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Thank you very much Superintendent Hamilton, I think Members will have questions on this. Dolores Kelly.

Mrs Dolores Kelly:

I would like to thank Superintendent Hamilton for his presentation and to wish him well in his retirement. Could I say that in relation to neighbourhood policing, I think we are only really tinkering around the edges. I do actually believe that many officers do a good job at neighbourhood level.

In Lurgan for example, it is only within the last few weeks that we actually got a neighbourhood team and I must say Chairman, that I was astounded to find that officers had not been issued with a mobile telephone because someone was on leave upstairs

and the form for the invoice was not signed. It just seems quite incredible, because one of the issues in terms of neighbourhood policing is, that the community has a named officer and has the ability to contact that officer fairly swiftly.

I think the numbers that were outlined in the presentation really do illustrate the point that there is not sufficient resources in terms of neighbourhood policing. I accept your comment, and certainly it should be within the ability of every officer with the PSNI to have that ethos. I actually do not think that that has filtered down to every officer yet. I know in having spoken to officers at neighbourhood level, one of their concerns is that they feel that many officers who have established links with local communities are then being poached by other units within the organisation. How do you actually assist in terms of retention of officers within neighbourhood policing teams? How do you provide career and development opportunities to enable officers to go up the career ladder whilst staying within the neighbourhood policing team and certainly how do you do a handover if you like where officers are leaving that particular unit? How do you ensure that all those contacts and information that is held at very much a personal level, is then shared with their successor in that post?

I also know that in a previous question that I had tabled to PSNI, that west of the Bann, neighbourhood policing is grossly under represented because as you referred in your presentation to the huge number of officers who are part time police officers, historically many of those are east of the Bann because that is where they were recruited in the initial stages whenever that level of officer was introduced. So, I really think there is a huge amount of work to be done in terms of resources within neighbourhood policing. I would like to see a real concerted effort from headquarters and certainly by the Chief Constable to put your money where your mouth is in terms of the provision of neighbourhood policing.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I will ask Superintendent Hamilton to deal with the handover issue for there is a process to make sure that we do not lose the corporate memory as best we can. The harsh reality is of course, is not just what we do and to create the conditions to enable our officers to neighbourhood policing you have to do all the other stuff, which is from the top end anti terrorism through to complicated crime jobs we have told you about so we can make a difference and we can impact on the ground.

You have my commitment and I think it is moving on more quickly now than it was and I do think one of the big changes we still face, it is a shame we do not have Police Community Part Time, I think the work of the part time officers is vital and extremely good, but yes we would like to have more regular officers in it. Of course the other point, it is theme of community policing and neighbourhood policing, so everyone contributes to it, not because they are simply badged and I think you are right, I do not think we have convinced everyone yet, but I do think it is changing.

In terms of officers lost, whilst people move on they do not lose their skills. I understand the community element and I do think a commitment for a reasonable period of time is absolutely legitimate. Just by way of example, I visited one of our new Rape Investigation Units yesterday, where I met a number of young officers who had been drawn from Districts, much to the frustration of the District Commanders that I accept, but a group of more highly motivated professional well trained individuals delivering one of the most critical areas that we have all identified as something we could do better at, you could not wish to find. So, it is getting that balance but Superintendent Hamilton you can touch on the technical handover.

Superintendent David Hamilton:

A couple of things Chief Constable. First of all, I am sure Assistant Chief Constable Gillespie has heard the message about the mobile phones, it seems absolutely ridiculous that that should happen in this day and age and I have no doubt that someone will get the appropriate rocket after this meeting today.

In relation to the handover, Jane my deputy is with me today and she has been working with me for the past 4 months, so we have been together going around the DPP meetings and we are ensuring that Jane is absolutely up to speed about where we are from that perspective.

The Chief Constable touched about the career officers of course and that is important and we have asked through the neighbourhood programme, and I know that when Districts were selecting officers, they asked for people to give a 3 year commitment to neighbourhood policing, so we have heard that message before and have sought to

address it in the latest round of vacancies that there were within neighbourhood officers.

I know the numbers say there are 430 full time officers and 761 part time officers, but again you have heard a flavour about who else is supporting neighbourhood policing. You have heard this morning about the Snapper project, you have heard about the Youth Action Plan, you have heard about some of the SURGE Operations that are going on, and some of the office staff that are being asked to give a commitment on a regular basis to go out and do SURGE and visibility operations as well so although the numbers seem small at this stage, there are a host of other people who do support frontline neighbourhood policing in so many different ways.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Could I just say to Members, I would appreciate it if you would try to make your questions/remarks as concise as possible.

The next one Vice Chairman of the Board.

Vice Chairman, Mr Barry Gilligan:

Just a quick follow-up Chief Constable to your answer in terms that you make the point that not everyone has bought into the ethos of policing with the community, but it is changing. Are there any particular initiatives that you are taking to stimulate and accelerate that change in ethos and philosophy?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

Certainly the training is highly relevant and has a part to play, but I also think it is where we are in terms of developing of this organisation. I think the District Commanders are highly focused on it. Things like abstraction rates have now become very important and indeed visibility from this level of visiting and getting out and showing that we are committed to it also helps from a leadership point of view. It will take time and not only that, there are people who sadly have to deal with far harder edge of policing which we also have to, and quite frankly, is less important to those individuals because of the nature of the difficult job they do, are less well briefed than others. I think what you are also seeing and indeed is a point that was made by ACC McCausland or ACC Gillespie earlier, if you look at the attacks on the TSG, the TSG officers are out there doing

community policing, so I do not want to get too tied up on badges and labels and numbers in individual pictures because it is a far more complex picture than that. I do not know if Superintendent Hamilton wants to comment on any particular initiatives in training they do.

Superintendent David Hamilton:

Just to re-emphasise again what the Chief Constable has said on that, you have the Lunney Framework. The Lunney Framework was where you had your own consultant come in and look at how we might measure and move forward policing with the community. PSNI have accepted the Lunney report. As well as accepting it, one of the initial recommendations of the Lunney report was a refreshment of the strategy and I think that the Service is committed to refreshing the strategy early 2009, and we also of course, are awaiting the outcome of the CJINI/HMI Inspection on Policing with the Community and Neighbourhood Policing, so it would not be sensible just at this stage to start doing brand new initiatives without seeing (1) what the outcome of that is and (2) moving forward with the Lunney recommendation that we refresh the strategy and refresh it every 3 years.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Basil McCrea and then Alex Maskey.

Mr Basil McCrea:

Thank you. Superintendent Hamilton first of all a very good presentation and there are undoubtedly improvements, but there are a number of other issues where there is much to be done, anti social behaviour, underage drinking, gatherings of youths, those are the issues that effect many many people in all communities, and when people phone in they find that nobody takes them seriously, it is not perceived as a real issue. When they do get somebody to come around then the officers go out and make friends with them, that is the perception, that absolutely nothing gets done. The biggest concern is that people are afraid to phone the police about anti social behaviour because they worry about getting a brick through their window. How do you think we should be tackling that concern? It is the biggest problem for a community and we cannot get them to deal with it.

Superintendent David Hamilton:

I could quote an example to you of the Dungannon area and I could quote a second example and maybe I should just do that just to demonstrate just what we are doing.

We believe if we do neighbourhood policing effectively, and that is if we work the police, the partners and the community together and we put the necessary resources in from all of those 3 angles, then we can tackle anti social behaviour effectively. An example of that was a 37% reduction in the Ballygawley Estate area of Dungannon where they did have those areas, they worked them together, they worked in partnership and solved them. If you could go right down to the North West and you look at Ballymoney area, you will see some initiatives that were brought in there, you saw a 57% reduction in reported incidents of anti social behaviour and other incidents involving disorder that you have described. So I think if you put the necessary resources into it and you get the commitment of partners to work with the community then you will make a difference.

Finally of course, part of our neighbourhood programme was about giving people access to their police officers through main points of contact. That is vital for us as a service. When I was a young cop 29 years ago wandering the streets of Cookstown, everyone knew who I was and I knew who everyone else was, that is where we want to get back to. That people do not necessarily have to ring the police station all the time, what they need to do is ring their neighbourhood officer, who is committed and who will have targets of reduction of anti social behaviour in their neighbourhood and area of responsibility, so we are tackling it in a number of fronts.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Alex Maskey, then Ian Paisley Jnr.

Mr Alex Maskey:

Thank you Chairman. Thank you Superintendent Hamilton for your presentation and I acknowledge that you certainly are a passionate advocate for policing in the community, and might suggest that some of the good examples you have given to us you maybe could take some of your colleagues on a 'Seeing is Believing' trip and maybe learn something.

Obviously there are some very good examples, and you have already given them here today and in other presentations of a number of your colleagues who are very committed to this. But I think on a serious basis, what we need to be doing from today onward in a way, is that both from the PSNI and the Board, we need to generate to the public that we are committed together to delivering policing within the community and it is actually delivering the concept right into practice.

As you well know, and I welcome obviously also the Chief Constable's remarks, that it is not just about a badge or a certain number of individuals categorised into neighbourhood police or whatever else. I do have to say that we will obviously be putting much more focused attention on this later this month and in the weeks and the months ahead because clearly policing with the community is a core element of delivering good policing. We have all acknowledged that top team who are sitting here today with the Board Members, we are all agreed that it is an essential ingredient to getting policing with the community right. I do think the police have to come forward with particular strategies. We mentioned a number of communities there which we have targeted or identified for the need to outreach to, and that includes working class communities, both republican and loyalist and other working class communities who have been estranged from police. I think the Derry example is a good example, where people in the community or a given sector see a commitment on behalf of the police, they are more than willing and glad to be able to work with the police and that has been the experience. That is not something which should be lost on any of us, so therefore I think we need to convey to the public that we are combined in our commitment to get this policing with the community right.

Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Question Alex?

Mr Alex Maskey:

My first question and my main question for this afternoon would be, can we have an absolute commitment and indeed a timeline, when we start to roll this programme right out because at the end of the day, it is far too compartmentalised? We have too few officers engaged in this and unfortunately, given the hierarchical nature of the PSNI, people who are in the work at neighbourhood level actually the first thing they want to do is to get promoted to move on and that is understandable for an individual's career

path, but we need to make much more value attached to the role of community officers to allow them, to enable them and to encourage them to stay where they are delivering policing with the community.

Superintendent David Hamilton:

Thank you for your remarks Mr Maskey. I have to say I believe we are committed, I believe the Board are committed and therefore I believe the police are committed. You will know that for the first time I think in my service, that neighbourhood policing has appeared in the Policing Plan in a vast quantity, more than it has ever done before. You look at the Policing Plan, it starts with the Chief Constable's introduction to neighbourhood policing, the first target in Part 2 is around neighbourhood policing and the delivery of it. You look at the Part 3 target and there is a complete annex devoted to it at the rear, and I have to say, that I believe we have now started.

The Policing Plan is a 3 year plan, there is another one year plan and therefore I think that we will continue to be committed as a service, and I think the Board will continue to be committed. I know that you have sent out to your DPPs and they have a reporting framework now on neighbourhood policing and I think that is great, because you are going to get from grass roots level what is going on in relation to the implementation of the targets contained within the plan for neighbourhood policing. So, I believe we are committed, I believe this Board is committed and I believe as a service we are fully committed to that and I believe in the concept of neighbourhood policing as you have quite rightly said. I think it is the way ahead, I think it will reduce crime and disorder and incidents of crime and disorder and I think it will do it if we give the commitment to it that it needs and takes.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Ian Paisley Jnr, David Rose, Suneil Sharma, Martina Anderson and then I am going to cut this section. Mr Ian Paisley Jnr.

Mr Ian Paisley Jnr:

Can I also add my congratulations to you for your many years of service and wish you a very health and happy retirement.

Can I ask you specifically to maybe amplify a bit on the flags policy which you touched on there? This is where the cutting edge of policing is in terms of community policing and neighbourhood policing and, undoubtedly, when flags go up which do not represent a community or in a mixed area, it does cause significant problems and it does spread fear and spreads concerns. I certainly have problems with that in parts of my own constituency in Ballymena which are mixed areas and yet there is an idea to target them and mark them. Could you maybe expand a bit on how the flags policy is working? Is it delivering in your view? Do you intend to roll it out beyond Larne and Limavady and what sort of resource would my local commander, say in my own constituency, actually require above what they have, to make it work and to make it bite?

Superintendent David Hamilton:

I think like most problems that need resolution, it needs a joint in partnership resolution. I do not think it needs an enormous amount of police resources but I do think it needs commitment from the police service to get around the table to start discussing where and what the problems are.

The successes of it have been rolled out to other areas, not just Larne and Limavady, those are just 2 very good examples. The Limavady one came on board this year. It has been a problem as you have stated for many years, but it is about getting the relative political parties on board and it is about getting the local residents on board and it is about reaching an agreement, a mutually acceptable agreement. When we look at Larne, arterial routes, tourist routes, places of worship and sensitive areas, the agreement is that that will be respected and will be free of flags and I think having those basic principles in line will help it to be developed and moved forward in other areas, so I do not think it needs a huge resource. I do think it needs a real partnership approach and I do think it needs commitment from political representatives as well as from community representatives to say enough is enough, here is how it will happen, here is how it will work because we take pride in the area that we live and work in and want to see people come to.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

David Rose.

Mr David Rose:

Very briefly. Do you think we will ever reach the day where a newly qualified young police officer with ambition and drive will look upon neighbourhood policing as potentially the sexy option?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I think we are there. I am been out with numerous community officers and I have to say they are world class. Superintendent Hamilton referred to some of the nominations for awards, there are a number of other people who are up for awards yet to be decided and most of them are around policing in the community. If one was to step back and say "why are we where we are", it is because frontline neighbourhood policing officers have gone that extra yard, as have members of the community, gone the extra yard in the other direction to meet up and have those conversations they would not have had before, because that is where your grass roots police officer has driven it, so we do our best. We certainly have our own awards structure, our own awards system and we get numerous examples from across the board and Members of the Board have been to those awards, so I think we are there. How you embed it and make it something that you aspire to become I think is a challenge that has faced us for the last 30 years and longer, so we are not there yet in that sense and career planning, those sorts of issues, balancing officers desires to progress with the community's desire to keep the same people. Those are all challenges which are not unique to here, but I do think it is a step change and I do think we should not fail to recognise the delivery of a service, the neighbourhood, the full-time officers, the part time officers is already going on and it is significant and, indeed strategically significant actually.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Suneil Sharma.

Mr Suneil Sharma:

Thank you for the presentation first of all. I want to talk about numbers, the whole issue of neighbourhood policing is about numbers and would it be fair to suggest, that after 6 years of implementing the Policing with the Community Strategy with anywhere between 400 and 800 neighbourhood officers represents either a lack of management commitment, inertia, a cultural failure in implementing what is a core theme of Patten?

Superintendent David Hamilton:

That is interesting. I have always said that Patten has been around since 1999, but the spirit in which the police are now working in is different in the past year than it has ever been. I think that is a real challenge for the police service in moving forward with more commitment towards that. Remember, it is about partnership as well, it is not just about the police. It is about getting as many partners committed to neighbourhood policing as it is about getting the number of police officers committed to neighbourhood policing, because it cannot be done by the police alone. It does need support, it does need investment of time and resources as well from others as well as the service.

Deputy Chief Constable, Mr Paul Leighton:

Chairman, just if I could add to that slightly. There is a fundamental difference and a fundamental distinction between policing with the community as a concept, and neighbourhood policing teams as one of the elements of policing with the community. What was up there was the number of people who are in neighbourhood policing teams, not the number of people involved in policing with the community, which is the concept in Patten. I, like the Chief Constable, visited a Rape Team this week, I visited a Roads Policing Team, both of whom in part of their chats with me and they were informal chats, they did not know I was coming, where talking about elements of what they are doing within the community to try and reassure, to try and engage with members of the community, that is what policing with the community is about.

Please, please do not be misled and think that those numbers up there are the only people involved in policing with the community, those are neighbourhood policing teams dedicated officers and yes I agree, we need to grow them, we need more people in them but we have to grow all sorts of things like Public Protection Teams and everything else that there are requirements on us to do at the moment, so we have a limited resource, we have to use it as best we can.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

Chairman, if I could give a very practical example. If Mr Maskey refers to 'Street Safe' in West Belfast, there is a small neighbourhood unit which would be counted on the board in terms of the Lower Springfield Road area, but during the 'Street Safe' process, we augmented them with 25 additional officers from the Public Order Units who were doing policing with the community, so there is a perfect example. Those 25 officers

would not be counted on the board, but they were delivering as I hope Mr Maskey would agree, policing with the community and neighbourhood policing on a very practical level.

In the Ops Surge we are looking to surge in each of the Districts where we will take officers up to 4 days a week out of administrative tasks and functions and put them on the streets. In East Belfast during the month of July 2008 we were able to increase the patrolling in East Belfast in neighbourhood units by between 85 and 100 additional officers per day on the streets raising visibility. Those were officers who would not be counted as neighbourhood officers but were policing with the community.

Mr Suneil Sharma:

Could I just add another important aspect to this. Maybe the Deputy Chief Constable could clarify this. Could you clarify the position of PSNI regarding the delivery of policing, particularly in respect of PCSOs (Police Community Support Officers), and are PCSOs still really on the radar when it comes to delivering policing with the community? In the light of an article of a paper that I am ashamed to have read recently, the Daily Mail, it basically said that PCSOs were largely ineffective as an addition to the policing family, that there were not highly regarded as accepted by rank and file and that even if they were within constabularies within GB, their abstractions were huge and that they were not actually doing policing with the community or neighbourhood policing.

Deputy Chief Constable, Mr Paul Leighton:

I do not think we have made any policies based on what the Daily Mail has reported as yet. I am not saying there are not people who think that is the right way to go. My experience of PCSOs, and I know I have done a lot of work with the Board, other people have done a lot of work with the Board to try and educate and to bring PCSOs over here from the forces where it is working. I would be the first to acknowledge it is not a universal picture of success, but there are areas where PCSOs have made a substantial contribution to neighbourhood policing. We believe we could manage such a system. They work well where they work integrated with the police, dedicated to neighbourhood policing.

You are quite right, some forces in England and Wales have got them doing all sorts of jobs and have allowed them to be abstracted, that was never our intention. The training

programme that we developed would not have allowed them to be used for other jobs because they would not have been trained to do those other jobs. They would have been trained solely to be neighbourhood team members, so I think we could have managed it Mr Sharma. I think we could have made a real difference. They are not off the agenda by any stretch of the imagination, but as we have had discussions with the Board about the budget, they are certainly not within our current budgetary provision.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Could I ask the Chief Constable and in passing I think the point that you have made about definition is important and I would ask Mr Maskey, as Chairman of the Community Engagement Committee, to take on board so that there is clarity about the distinction that you have made. Could I ask the Chief Constable, what do you consider is the impact of the policing of the dissident threat, the policing of a loyalist threat, although it does not appear that that relates to the killing of police officers, on the delivery of policing with the community?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I think the impact is actually far less than one would expect and that, as I said, reflects the determination of police officers to go out and continue to do it. I remember and it is not that long ago, I was standing on the actual site of the attack in Rosslea and I was standing over the local community team who were still out there, still patrolling, and still determined and were not being put off and were having a conversation with a local farmer. I think what was different was, there were 3 officers and support nearby. When we talk about the numbers and DCC Leighton rightly points out, sometimes to create conditions to allow those officers to patrol here is uniquely different to the rest of the United Kingdom and the TSG officers providing that protection and support are as important in delivering neighbourhood policing here as the 2 community officers who own that bit of territory, and so, if you want a commitment it is without doubt there.

In terms of the impact in terms of dealing with them as an issue, well of course there is an impact in terms of finance, an impact in terms of numbers of people deployed, particularly in ACC Harris' Department, trying to bring these people into the judicial system so we can lock them up and get on with the job without that sort of fear and intimidation and there is a cost implication in terms of the overtime and stuff that is diverted to enable him to do that. I think if people seriously think officers are going to

be put off delivering policing because of these people, it has not worked for the last 38 years and it is not going to work now. It sometimes does create frustrations within communities as expectations now are far higher and sometimes we have to take a sensible approach to things where we would like to go more quickly. So, there are those sorts of impacts. It will not stop community policing. It does divert additional resource into creating the conditions for it to take place in the current situation which we face, all of which is truly unique to here.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Superintendent Hamilton you have given us a very helpful and informative report and you delivered it very effectively. On behalf of the Board thank you very much indeed and we wish you well also in your retirement.

Superintendent David Hamilton:

Thank you Chairman, thank you Members for your kind remarks.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Can we go to the questions Chief Constable? Question 1 is a question from the Resources and Improvement Committee, Mrs Kelly is Chair of that Committee.

Q1 - Can the Chief Constable advise if he is reviewing his current plans on the PSNI Estate and DCU structures in view of the 11 areas proposed under RPA, rather than the current 8 DCU structure?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

Thank you Chairman. My personal view is I think the Review of Public Administration got it right for what it is worth. We had to move for operational reasons and financial reasons. What we are now doing is looking at the potential implications, it does not mean we are going to change the number of Districts, but I am certainly looking at it. I have asked the CORE team to look at a number of options because co-terminosity is important and whilst even if we went to 11, which is not something I see as achievable physically or in my professional judgement, we would still not have complete co-terminosity of course with some of the other agencies we like to work with, but it certainly is something we are looking at and I certainly will report back to the Board with what options we come up with.

Mrs Dolores Kelly:

I just wondered what the timeframe was for that?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I would have thought in the next couple of months we would certainly have some initial thoughts. It is important, it is not something that has missed us. I think there are ways of delivering it and, indeed, I discussed it with my District Commanders yesterday.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Question 2, these are questions from the Human Rights and Professional Standards Committee, question in the name of Mr Ó hEára.

Q2 - Could the Chief Constable comment on the number of cases PSNI has referred to the PPS following this year's marching season concerning breaches of public order and public processions legislation? How have the number of referrals changed in recent years?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I will ask ACC McCausland to deal with that.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

Chairman, in relation to Urban Region there have been 22 referrals to the Public Prosecution Service this year of which 5 were breaches of Parades Commission determinations and the remainder were in relation to public order offences, that is specifically in relation to parades. That compares with last year 8 referrals in relation to 11 files in total to the PPS in relation to breaches of Parade Commission determinations and public order for last year.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mrs Judith Gillespie:

After the largely peaceful marching season in Rural Region, we had 8 arrests in 'G' District which are at various stages of preparation for submission to the Public Prosecution Service and there are 2 cases I referred to the PPS from 'H' District, but there is ongoing investigation regarding video evidence at a number of potential

breaches of Parades Commission determinations within 'H' District, so they are at various stages of examination at the moment.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Another question in the name of Mr Ó hEára, question 3 and it relates to good practice between the Prosecution Service and the police.

Q3 - Would the Chief Constable consider that there are any elements of good practice in respect of the relationship between prosecution services and police in other jurisdictions which could potentially have application in Northern Ireland?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I will ask Chief Superintendent Maguire to deal with that. The short answer is yes, and we have offered and I am anticipating a reply from the Board in relation to an offer from senior colleagues from other jurisdictions come over and describe how speedy justice is delivered in other parts of the United Kingdom. I will ask Chief Superintendent Maguire to touch on some of the issues.

Chief Superintendent Brian Maguire:

Chairman, the key point I would make here is that the development of the PPS, as Members will realise, came about as a result of the Criminal Justice Review and the members of that review team certainly took into account best practice of criminal justice systems throughout the world and have recorded that fact within the review. Certainly the PSNI and the PPS have already established a very good working relationship.

We have a protocol drawn up which ensures that good working relationship is kept regularly under review, in fact, it is currently being reviewed again to take into account the latest developments. The PPS of course have responsibility for all prosecutorial decisions on cases sent to them by the police, but we can and frequently do, seek free charge advice from the PPS and we can consult a prosecutor at any stage about criminal investigations.

We have established a PPS Liaison Team led by an Inspector, these officers are co-located in PPS offices and they work closely with Prosecutors and indeed, the current case management managers in Districts.

As a service we are always open of course to new ideas and in new ways of doing business and any way in which we can improve the criminal justice system.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Yet I keep being told that the relationship is not as close as across the water?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

Chairman, for example when I was visiting one of the units recently, a colleague from another force, described to me how it would be routine for CPS lawyers to be in police stations in some other parts of the United Kingdom which enabled them to, for example, take a case, seek advice and be told for example, this is never going to go to court and it is 'signed off' there and then which sometimes creates far less paperwork than a situation where you have to formally send the work over in a more structured way.

I think it is worth looking at for example, the project in 'E' District is showing that we can knock down some of those barriers and those issues and I would hope to see that pilot rolled out very quickly. There are differences, there are differences in legislation, for example, we do not have Fixed Penalty tickets, if we did technically under the current legislation I am not sure my officers can make a decision because this is a prosecutorial decision so there are frustrations around that. The trick really is to, without interfering in people's individual rights to a fair trial, there are ways of speeding up the system. I still think frankly we are 'behind the curve' on some of this which is why I thought, as a way of informing the process, it may be helpful for one of my senior colleagues who leads on this for ACPO, to come over and describe or go through how it works in other parts to see if there is any learning we can take to discussions within this jurisdiction.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Mr Gearóid Ó hEára.

Mr Gearóid Ó hEára:

Just to comment on the second one. There did seem to be failings in the process and what I was looking to do was to see if there was ongoing work to improve that. I am happy for the answers on the first question and I would not mind having those figures in writing if I could. What I was really looking for was the number of referrals to the PPS

which are proceeded with and not proceeded with, and I wanted to see if there was a trend over the last number of years on those.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Question 4, in the name of Mr McCrea the Chair of the Human Rights and Professional Standards Committee.

Q4 - Would the Chief Constable outline the circumstances when ACC Urban and ACC Rural will authorise the use of stop and search powers under Section 44 of the Terrorism Act 2000 and when the PSNI will instead use its stop and search powers under sections 21 and 24 of the Justice and Security (Northern Ireland) Act 2007?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mrs Judith Gillespie:

The grounds on which an authorisation for Section 44 of the Terrorism Act 2000 Stop and Search can be given, are where either ACC McCausland or I consider it expedient for the prevention of acts of terrorism and that is based on an examination of the information, the intelligence and the threat assessment. As I mentioned earlier, prevention and reassurance are key strands in our efforts against dissident republican activity, so Section 44 is central to all of this. We would evidence the justification on proportionate, legal, accountable and necessary grounds and that would follow a Comprehensive Community Impact Assessment which is based on the community impact within the area for which we are applying, so it would be bespoke to various areas throughout both Urban and Rural Regions. Therefore, for a specific area and for a specific time period, usually 28 days, the authorisation provides the power to stop and search for any item which could be used in connection with terrorism and it is authorised by an Assistant Chief Constable, usually ACC McCausland or myself and then notified to the Secretary of State.

Powers to Stop and Search under the Justice and Security Act are more reactive. Section 44 is more preventative and proactive and Justice and Security Act more reactive. They are not limited to a defined area or timeframe. They can be exercised by a Constable in response to operational circumstances, or indeed, an operational incident, for example, in case of the Lisnaskea incident.

Use of these powers are documented and captured by way of statistical return and Section 21 of the Justice and Security Act confers the power to stop and ask certain questions, including identity and movements. Both of these powers are scrutinised by District Commanders. They are reported on at Recommendation 78 accountability meetings and they are available to the Board.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

Chairman just following that up. In terms of authorisation of Section 44, it has to go to the Secretary of State's Office and we have to show and attach clear usage in relation to Section 44 in the documentation and, a justification both in terms of the intelligence and the information as to the reason why we are issuing Section 44. An ACC can only do it for 72 hours, before then it must be formally approved by the Secretary of State or the Secretary of State's Office and the Board get on a regular basis, through Jane Gordon, your Human Rights Advisor, the various statistics in terms of the stop and search under PACE and the emergency legislation aspects which is there and scrutinised on a quarterly basis.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Could you send that both of you as a formal reply, if you would not mind. It would be useful and could then be sent on to the Committee.

Question 5, Mary McKee.

Q5 - Is the Chief Constable satisfied that his officers are adequately aware of their stop and search powers under both the Terrorism Act 2000 and the Justice and Security (Northern Ireland) Act 2007?

Chief Superintendent, Ken Eccles:

Chairman, specific training on the Stop and Search powers contained within both Acts is provided now to every Probationer Constable and that is re-enforced at District level by virtue of which all operational police officers receive refresher training on the application and use of that legislation. There is also a training package available online to also increase officer awareness.

As you can imagine, all our training is kept consistently under review and, indeed, following a recent internal audit an action plan has been agreed to further enhanced the level of knowledge and application of the entire legislation, and that action plan will be progressed through the college and supported by a new Corporate Communications Strategy.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Question 6, Mr Ian Paisley Jnr, it is a question from the Human Resources Committee and relates to sickness absence.

Q6 - Would the Chief Constable provide the Board with the sickness absence levels for student officers and probationary officers separately over the past 3 years? I would invite the Chief Constable to advise the Board on the actions he is taking to address this issue?

Director of Human Resources, Mr Joe Stewart:

Chairman and Members, I will be dealing with this in greater detail towards the end of the month with the Human Resources Committee, but for the purpose of today's meeting the position is a bit like the curate's egg, it is good in parts.

As far as student officers are concerned, the average days sickness per officer has dropped over the last 3 years by 75% from 9.3 days to 2.1 days per student officer, which frankly is classed leading and is unlikely to be replicated anywhere else, either in the private or the public sector and that is as a result of very close management in the college.

The story with probationer officers sadly is not quite so good. In 2006/07 we saw the average days of absence reduce by 25% to 11, but in 2007/08 it has popped back up again to a level of absence on average of 15 days which is ahead of the baseline figure we are seeking to achieve. It is clearly not satisfactory and across the organisation we have introduced, as Members will know, a new policy directive on absenteeism and we have commenced across the patch as well the application of what is known as the Bradford Factor. We are seeing very encouraging trends in 2008 as a result of that particular introduction.

On top of that there is now with the new District Heads of Human Resource in place, a very rigorous approach being adopted to absenteeism within the Districts and I think that will intensify as the years goes ahead.

On top of that we are still working on some research methodology around this centrally, and I would be sure that we will see a considerable improvement in this in the time that lies ahead, but I am happy to debate that in greater detail with the Committee later in the month.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

I think that the question about the probationers is well worth pursuing and so we will leave that for the Committee.

Mr Ian Paisley Jnr:

I am not asking for the details today Mr Stewart because I do not think it is possible, given the day that we are discussing the issue of Civil Service sick pay, it is actually very timely your answer.

Maybe whenever you do come to us, could you indicate to us if the community background is relevant in those statistics, is there any difference in those statistics, it would be interesting to see if there is, I doubt if there is but it would interesting just to look at that part.

You mentioned the Bradford issue, LARP (Local Absence Review Panels) I think it is called, are you finding that that is causing any problems within the Service as an actual procedure? Criticism has been put to me that it is a rather blunt instrument with regards to policing, in terms of measuring a person's sickness.

Director of Human Resources, Mr Joe Stewart:

Well, we have to start somewhere. Local Absence Review Panels are in my perspective very very successful and I would not have achieved the reduction in absenteeism we have without the utilisation of those Local Absence Review Panels. Any policy can be blunt depending on the way in which it is applied and in some cases we have reasons to review the decisions that have been taken because they have been applied perhaps without full factors or without full attention to the context. We have

actually revised the Local Review Panel procedures in light of some concerns that have been raised with us and again we can go into those in detail at your Committee later this month.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Question held over from last time, question 7 in the name of Mr Tom Buchanan and it relates to the closure of Aughnacloy police station.

Q7 - To ask the Chief Constable to outline the reasons for the proposed downsizing of Aughnacloy police station, given that the station was recently refurbished and portrayed as an example of “new” policing; and to ask the Chief Constable to provide a breakdown of expenditure on Aughnacloy police station in each of the last 5 years? Is this move clearly not a waste of fiscal resources by the PSNI?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mrs Judith Gillespie:

The District Commander there, Chief Superintendent Michael Skuce, is satisfied that we need to retain a police station in Aughnacloy and Aughnacloy station is not included in the current estate review for 'F'. It currently houses a small local neighbourhood policing team, but in days gone by, it was required to accommodate up to 60 soldiers and police officers. Now we do not need that size of accommodation. We certainly agree that we need a police station in Aughnacloy and it is not proposed to completely get rid of a police station there, but what we do propose to do is have a smaller 'fit for purpose' neighbourhood police station in Aughnacloy.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Other general questions. Question 8 is deferred, Mrs Moore has had to withdraw from the meeting for a moment. Question 9 is in the name of the Vice Chairman and it relates to the Borders Agency and its implication for Northern Ireland.

Q9 - Has the PSNI had any discussions with the UK Border Agency? Is Northern Ireland within the national e-Borders Centre? Given that Northern Ireland has a common land border with the Republic of Ireland, is the PSNI aware of any discussions with respective Governments on border security? Given that Northern Ireland has 2 ports with independent police forces, and given the

importance of strengthening border security, is there not a strong case for merging both of these forces with the PSNI?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I will ask Chief Superintendent Eccles to deal with the bulk of it because there are a number of developments nationally.

In terms of joining police forces Chairman which is the final part of that question. There is some historic learning around trying to bring forces who have been created for different reasons together in a generic sense, and I have no current plans, or to encourage and I would not wish to do that. We have a very good relationship with those organisations and they have very specific roles for which they are employed. I do not see any particular value emerging certainly until we see where national developments go, it is something to keep an eye on but it is not something that I see as top of the PSNI agenda. If Chief Superintendent Eccles can do the detail then we can take any questions that people may have.

Chief Superintendent Ken Eccles:

Chairman, the Border Agency is very much in its infancy and it will take the operational lead, we believe, around April of next year. However, so far we have opened up a very good line of communication with the Agency on an ongoing basis and that is at various levels, we work and talk to them virtually every day. Those meetings and discussions take place around custody facilities, joint operations, illegal immigration and drugs, and we are going to continue to develop that in relation as to how we are going to work together and interact at ports.

In closing I would also say, that we also seconded a number of officers who work with the Agency on an ongoing basis. The relationship is working extremely well and that level of discussion will continue to develop.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

David Rose, do you want to follow that up?

Mr David Rose:

Could I just ask one very simple question? Do you ever see a day emerging where there would be such a thing as a border police force?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

Certainly, in current Government thinking of how you do organisation around the whole of the United Kingdom, indeed, Lord Stevens has been tasked by Government to come up with that, it is possible. You could have a new service which in essence would be an amalgam, for example of Customs and Excise and those sorts of people drawn together under a different leadership.

Mr David Rose:

Could I just voice a bit of caution around that? I think that the concept of territorial policing whereby police forces, in this case, PSNI polices right up to the border, should be the organisation that deals with that. I have encountered border police forces elsewhere and in my experience, whilst there can be very honourable intent at the start, the long experience is that it actually begins to restrict the movement across borders of the population that it is there to protect because of the structure that tends to build up. Whereas with a territorial police that goes right up to the border, I think that enhances the freedom and protection. That is just a personal opinion and just when I saw the issue come up and as my experience elsewhere has not been positive of border policing.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I think this is a debate which can, I think EC member countries, and all sort of agreements around freedom of movement which will make it a fundamentally different issue. That having been said there needs to be joined up approach, certainly in light of a new terrorist threat which I think what the main focus of Government was on and we certainly will be part of that debate, because we of course have the only land border within the United Kingdom. Currently, it is a matter under discussion. What I would not want to do is to try and get ahead of something which may go in a direction I have not even anticipated. So it is interesting, but it is not something that causes me a concern.

We are quite unusual in committing dedicated resources to support the Immigration Service in terms of UK policing, but I think that is a positive step rather than a negative one.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Could you say something about the second sentence in the question and the third?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

We are part of e-borders. In terms of discussion with the Government, I am not aware of any specific discussions on border security between Governments. Of course, I deal with the Commission on a regular basis about issues which cause concern around the border but in fairness, the vast majority of those issues are around cross border crime and terrorist crime rather than the border itself.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Question 11, it is in the name of Martina Anderson.

Q11 - Chief Constable in relation to the use of TASER in Derry:

- (a) Were operational guidelines adhered to before the decision was made to use the TASER in Derry?***
- (b) Were all post incident procedures adhered to in this case?***
- (c) What post care procedures were in place in relation to the injured party in the case?***

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

Chairman, as I said before it would inappropriate for me to comment in relation to TASER as a man has now been charged. Indeed, it is under investigation by the Ombudsman, which was part of the reassurance package put together to reassure Members of the Board that when this was deployed, in keeping with other lethal things, in keeping with things like firearms, it would be subject to independent scrutiny and we will of course respond to the Ombudsman's findings when they come out.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Martina Anderson.

Ms Martina Anderson:

Notwithstanding that, TASER was deployed in Derry in my city with human rights issues remaining outstanding. It has not yet, we as a Board have not yet concluded that TASER is human rights compliant and neither has the Human Rights Advisors. So, notwithstanding the offence that happened before the man was TASERed and some of those have been contested and obviously that will be investigated and looked into, but what steps were taken to ensure that the operational guidelines that had been given to this Board, that they were adhered to? Because within the guidelines and I specifically refer to 9.4 of the guidelines, which says that "TASERS will be used to prevent the risk of death and serious injury", noting your comments earlier, are you informing this Board that on 16 August 2008, had you not have used TASER, you would have used live firearm, that that would have been the alternative?

I also would refer to the Code of Ethics in Article 4 of the Code of Ethics which is about planning and controlling of operations and seeking to minimise the use of force, particularly TASER, and I would like to know what cognisance was taken of that when the operation was being planned and controlled and what other methods was going to be used to try to resolve that situation in Derry.

In relation to the post care procedure, DCC Leighton, you mentioned the gap and learning that would emerge as a result of that. Can you confirm that the information that was given to the hospital previously, hospitals across the north, stated wording to the effect it is believed that the normal practice in the US for the removal of TASER is XYZ and starts to explain how to remove TASER. That the barb was stuck in the man's chest when he went to Altnagelvin Hospital. The doctors nor nurses could not remove the barb from his chest, no-one knew how to remove the barb from his chest. So what follow-up procedures were given when that information was given out to the hospital to ensure that it was understood, and since that incident and since you know that the hospital could not remove the barb effectively or efficiently, because they did not know how to. What has been done since then?

I believe in relation to this whole TASER incident that this has been a cheap, calculated attempt to railroad TASER in with total disregard for a finding or a hearing from the courts. I think it is a disregard for this Board and a disregard for the courts given that

you know that the papers were lodged for an application for a hearing for a judicial review later this month, and I think that the whole way that the Impact Assessment has been handled by you as being somewhat shambolic that here we are a year after this Board made a decision about an Impact Assessment on TASER on vulnerable groups, that we are still not yet able to conclude on that. I think that the handling of this whole situation calls into question your ability to pursue this in so far as I think that you handled this in a way that I just really do not understand that as a Chief Constable you have allowed this to be processed in such a way that the world and its mother is questioning what is going on with the use of TASER.....

Mr Peter Weir:

Point of order. I respect people have very strong views on this, but if this is supposed to be a question session we should be asking questions not making statements, and clearly there have been a number of occasions when that has been strayed from.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

I was getting around to asking, do you have a question?

Ms Martina Anderson:

Excuse me, throughout that I have asked a number of questions with regards to the operational procedure. I have asked a number of questions with regards to the post care procedure and I have asked the Chief Constable if he is going to look at his management of this situation with regards to TASER.

Mr Ian Paisley Jnr:

Mr Chairman, before the Chief Constable is allowed to answer that, the Chief Constable must be allowed to know that the rant that we have just heard does not reflect the views of the vast majority of views of people on this Board.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Chief Constable.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

Chairman, it is very hard but I will try and distinguish what I can answer and what I cannot answer. I will not answer questions about that case. It would be highly

inappropriate, it would be contempt of a judicial process, something that has been reflected already in the question and it will run the fullness of time.

In terms of the Ombudsman's investigation, I have yet to refuse to accept an Ombudsman's investigation on anything where we think we can develop learning at a particular incident and I have no intention of changing that approach. I cannot comment on what I have not seen, and I certainly cannot comment on a case that has yet to be heard, that would be grossly improper.

In terms of the facts of TASER one is, we need to distinguish very clearly US procedure to UK procedure. We have developed the policy to date with all the learning from the United Kingdom, where it is of course a matter of fact, that not one individual has died as a result of TASER, sadly the same cannot be said for the deployment of lethal force, that is to say firearms by police in other circumstances, so it is a less lethal weapon.

Every other police force in the United Kingdom has endorsed its use and it is used and is deployed and is available far more frequently and far more routinely to frontline officers than it is here, and I think if that does not reflect the seriousness with which I take the Board's concerns, I do not know what does. My biggest concern is I find myself in front of this Board because one of my officers has had to resort to lethal force because this facility was not available as the process we are currently agreed to and signed up to goes through. So if Board Members are looking for reassurance, I take this Board very seriously, that is it.

In terms of what I can confirm, as I have said, no officer would possess TASER unless they are fully trained. The only officers that have access to it here are our most highly trained firearms. It is not available to anyone else, unlike the United Kingdom where it has been in pilot sites given and been made far more freely available to police officer colleagues in other parts of the UK.

I do take issue with the fact that we are not taking our human rights responsibilities seriously, we take them extremely seriously, and of course I have to rely on and look at the human rights of all, and that includes my officers, they must have the right of access to the right equipment at the right time, and indeed the people we are trying to protect. That does not necessarily mean that the person we find ourselves having to deploy this

device against, it may well be people we are protecting by deploying it against a certain individual, and that is a general statement and certainly not a statement about the one case in the whole of Northern Ireland, one of the largest police forces in the country, we have deployed it once. So, the notion that we are using this 'willy nilly', it has been available in the pilot for some months now, the suggestion we are cavalier about using it, I do take exception to. If people have issues about the way I have handled it then that is a matter for the Board. I am happy to take those and have that conversation with the Board.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Dolores Kelly and then Gearóid Ó hEára. Dolores Kelly.

Mrs Dolores Kelly:

Chairman, I respected earlier comments about this matter being sub-judice and then confined mine more to the principle of TASER. I think our party's position in relation to TASER is well documented, our opposition to that. However, Chief Constable, a press release following this particular incident stated that an individual was detained under the Mental Health Act. I understand that that was not the case and would ask for that matter to be investigated and clarified and a retraction, if necessary, be published in the press.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I think we may have clarification on that.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mrs Judith Gillespie:

The individual was arrested for criminal offences, threats to kill and assault. If we have put out something that is inaccurate in the press, then obviously we will address that, but the initial arrest was for threats to kill and assault, not under any other legislation.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Mr Gearóid Ó hEára.

Mr Gearóid Ó hEára

I actually was going to mention that, that the press release is misleading and without going into the details, there are 2 versions of what happened, one is the police version

and the other is the community on the ground and eye witness version. I am happy enough that in the fullness of time, we will get to the bottom of it and I do not think it will just be an Ombudsman's report. I do not think it will just be a prosecution from the police which I think may be dropped some time in the future, so there may be other legal proceedings which illuminate this.

I feel as a Board Member who voted at the Bangor meeting that we should not proceed with a pilot until there was an EQIA that that comment was noted and ignored and my wishes as a Member of the Board, and other Members of the Board, it was the majority opinion, was noted and subsequently totally ignored which I think did not help any of us or the relationship with us all on this issue.

Then we moved to the pilot, and then we moved to deployment, and then we moved to a situation where they are being used in a controversial situation, so I do not feel that this has helped the status of the Board or the status of the police service or the project that we are all involved in which is trying to build relationships between all of ourselves in our communities. So, I just think that this has been a backward step and the point that I am coming to is, that in the light of the incident in Derry and the controversy surrounding it and what may come out in the future, I would ask that you have a moratorium on the use of TASERs until such time as we have done the whole human rights compliance within the EQIA and that we see the outcome of the situation in Derry.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

Chairman, I have no intention of changing or stepping back from the pilot because I owe it to my officers. I know as a police professional and my 43 police Chief Officer colleagues tell me, it is highly effective and it does not result in long term injury to people who are behaving in a way that is at the top end of dangerous, otherwise it would not be deployed and I have that responsibility to my own organisation. The notion that I do not take it seriously, I take deep exception to. I do not ignore the advice or views of the Board, I have to consider the advice and views of the Board and the bottom line is, as we all know, on current legal advice this is my decision, not the Board's and that is all around operational responsibility and the independence of Chief Officers.

I am of course accountable for the action which is why I am here today and why in the last 6 years and 3 days I have only missed 2 public meetings of the Board, that is how seriously I take this Board.

We do need to get this into context. This device has been used once in an area of 5,500 square miles, it has been fired once in a population of 1.75million, if that is deemed excessive by the Board, notwithstanding individual cases, then I am happy to have that debate. My personal view and my professional judgement is, it may be I am still exposing officers to risk and criticism by respecting your concerns and listening to the views of the Board and holding back on what, perhaps my professional judgement tells me I should be doing. I will not step back from that because that is a commitment I gave to the Board and I have no intention of changing it, I live with the consequences of it.

The Board may want to reflect on, and heaven forbid should we find ourselves in a situation where my officers do not have that gap, and not one Board Member to my knowledge has come up with an alternative to fill that gap, the Board will reflect on this conversation should they feel free to criticise me or my officers who have had to use a 9mm to deal with an issue rather than an electrical weapon of a wattage of about 1amp which people get up from very quickly indeed, and in this case as I understand it, to the best of my knowledge we are not talking about long term injury.

I do not think I can take this debate much further this morning Chairman.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Can I just say for the benefit of members of the public and the press, that the position of the Board has been and is that it awaited the completion of the EQIA. When it received the EQIA it would debate and decide on the issue of the employment, in terms of its opinion of the employment of TASER in principle, and it would then vote on that. We still are waiting for the EQIA and once we receive it and I hope we will receive by the next meeting of this Board, we will debate and vote on that and therefore this Board does not have an opinion. The parties undoubtedly do, and individuals will have about the employment of TASER in principle, but this Board has not got a position on that and until it has that debate and takes that vote.

Mr Alex Maskey:

Chairman, since you are placing that on the record, I think it would have been much better if you had read the motion that was passed by the Board last year....

Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

No, I did not have that....

Mr Alex Maskey:

..... because this Board took a very clear decision in respect of the deployment of the use of TASER with a number of conditions set against that, not only an EQIA, so I think you are actually very wrong and may be misleading the public here.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Then I will repeat what was stated then goes into the minute*. Is that agreed? But I think the substantive point is, that we have not made a decision on it.

*[*The motion stated:-*

“That the Board notes the advice of its Human Rights Advisors, which has been issued to all Members.

That the position of the Board is outlined without prejudice:

- *to further communications and discussions between the PSNI and the Equality Commission, between the PSNI and the Board and between the Board and the Equality Commission; and*
- *to the ultimate decision of the Board and the results of the EQIA.*

The Board understands that the PSNI are currently carrying out an EQIA in accordance with advice provided by the Equality Commission. It is the view of the Board that there should be no deployment of TASER prior to the completion of the EQIA.

Further, the Board would expect that, consistent with undertakings the PSNI have already provided and in the time period required to complete the EQIA, that the Board's Human Rights Advisors are consulted and satisfied with respect to outstanding concerns, namely:

- *agreement on the proper legal test for the use of TASER;*
- *identification of the 'capability gap' based on the agreed legal test;*
- *efficiency of the policy guidance and training regarding the use of TASER.”]*

Mr Gearóid Ó hEára:

Could I make an observation which was the point I was getting at, that anyone looking in from the outside at the deliberations of this Board, would say that it is absolutely irrelevant whether we reach a position on this or not, because they are being used on the streets.

Mr Ian Paisley Jnr:

Chairman, I just find it rather ironic that by virtue of opposition to TASER, we have certain nationalists on the Board appear to be supporting a 'shoot to kill' policy. I think that is the irony where we are at today going by what has been said. I must say that the Chief Constable is damned if he does and damned if he does not. That, here we have an operational decision which he is entitled to make and should make, and by virtue of the generosity of the Command Team coming and discussing with us before they put in place a fully fledged operational policy, we then tie his hands and his officers hands, I think that is a ridiculous position for us as a Board to be in. In fact, I must say the Chief Constable and his Senior Team should take away from this, that probably in the future the best policy they should adopt is one where they take command decisions, take operational decisions and just take the flak afterwards, because when they have tried to involve the Board in a mature adult discussion, we have the sort of rant and ravings that we have had around this table this afternoon, and I think he would be far better just going ahead and taking his operational decisions and we will hold him to account.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Question?

Ms Martina Anderson:

I think it is important, I am not going to respond to anything to that Ian Paisley Jnr says there, but just for the public to know that Sinn Fein on the Board has challenged the operational procedures with regards to this and actually believes that this Board has the authority under the legislation and we should be exercising our statutory responsibility, because the Chief Constable acts, on our name, the name of and on behalf of the Board, so with regards to purchasing of equipment of which TASER is one, that we have actually challenged that position that this is purely an operational matter, that this Board should be authorising the purchasing of this equipment.

Mr Ian Paisley Jnr:

You are just wrong.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Mr Cree.

Mr Leslie Cree:

There seems to be an item of selected amnesia here. Whenever this issue came up in Bangor it was quite clear that a lot of Members of this Board saw this as an operational matter and, therefore one solely for the Chief Constable to decide. Now, a majority thought that was not the case, but whenever the Chief Constable came in and you advised him of the majority decision of the Board, he told you and quite rightly so, it was an operational matter. It is still an operational matter, whether some Members of this Board like it or not.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

I suggest we move on from that. Question 12, Mr Peter Weir.

Q12 - To ask the Chief Constable to comment on the figures released by the PSNI detailing the rise of punishment attacks and to ask the Chief Constable if he is concerned about the evidence which suggests that paramilitaries are continuing to exert influence over their communities?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Drew Harris:

Thank you. The overall level of punishment attacks have been falling each year since 2003, and despite this reduction both dissident republicans and loyalist groups continue to carry out attacks. The statistics, rather than taking a small snapshot in time, if we take the recent years 2006/07 - 74 such attacks, 2007/08 – 54 and this year since 1 April 2008 – 18. So, there is a steady decline. But these attacks, as the organisations involved with them, have moved more towards criminality. There undoubtedly is an element of score settling around criminality involved in some of these attacks but there is never any justification for them. We will do all that we can to prevent them and fairly investigate those that take place to bring assailants before the courts. However, this is only possible with the co-operation of victims and with the full support of the public. But in general with the paramilitary groups that still exist, this is more now around criminality than it is around paramilitary groupings and the attacks are along that vein. Statistics recently quoted are around various months and the increases are between 2 or 4 or none and 1 or 2 but overall the long term trend is for decline.

Mr Peter Weir:

I thank you for that answer. In terms of these heinous attacks that as you say has been a shift towards protecting criminality and presumably criminal empires rather than community influence. You mention loyalists and dissident republicans, would that same shift be the case in both loyalists and dissident republicans or there is difference in terms of the pattern of their behaviour of those two elements.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Drew Harris:

Loyalists is one where we speak more authoritatively because the numbers are so small but we can look further back in terms of the trend around loyalism and that is very definitely a distinctive more towards criminality and criminality which we have already outlined today be it around drug dealing, extortion and intellectual poverty crime. It is around controlling those criminal networks.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Question 14 is in the name of Alex Maskey.

Q14 - Can the Chief Constable detail the total number of violent crimes in Belfast since 01/01/08 till 31/06/08 and what action is being taken along with the 2 District Commanders to prevent such attacks?

Mr Alex Maskey:

Thank you Chairman. I would be more than happy to take this answer in written fashion but I could just make the point, the reason why I tabled the question is that there is a gap in this moment of time in respect of the Belfast area. Now I have discussed it with the Chair of the Belfast DPP, this is in relation to the fact that we now have the area DPPs and then the Belfast body itself. In my view there is a gap as to how we look at the city in a strategic basis. I have spoken to the Chair of the DPP and would be keen to have that with the senior police team themselves how do we intend to close any perceived gaps there may will be about dealing with the issue on a citywide basis?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

Chairman, I have to point out to Members that that gap was filled for many years, because ACC Urban attended every 6 months and gave a strategic overview of the city, A and B district together. Again that was offered to the current Belfast DPP and they declined.

Mr Alex Maskey:

It is just that the Belfast DPP does not want to be replicating or duplicating the work of the area boards and nobody wants to do that

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

Definitely that was the reason for introducing it initially. That we did not duplicate and every 6 months, ACC Urban went down for a clear, cross-Belfast presentation on what Belfast DPP wanted. I have to say and I say candidly, I was surprised when Belfast DPP turned it down this year because I thought it was a means potentially of doing actually of what you say and I am certain that my successor will be more than happy to go down and I was going to say interrogated, talk to...

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Okay, 18 is in the name of Peter Weir. Sharing of police stations with public facilities.

Q18 - To ask the Chief Constable what criteria will be adopted when determining if a police station qualifies for the proposed strategy of sharing the police station with other public facilities?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mrs Judith Gillespie:

Members will be aware that there will be a full presentation to the Resources and Improvement Committee of the Board, at the end of the year. The top team have set aside a full day next week to consider the Estate Strategy prior to presenting it to the Board. Sharing of police stations and other public facilities has not been a central feature of this strategy but we certainly will consider all possibilities for delivering a quality local policing service to the community and I think that ACC McCausland wants to comments on some specific initiatives in Belfast.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

Chairman, the Board are aware of the Crumlin Together Initiative which we are working in harmony with the Board and with the local community and with the NIO to try and bring forward a redevelopment of the Crumlin station where the Crumlin community will build a community centre, possibility a library and a police post in what is our current police station. We are also looking for example in relation to Dromara Station, the viability of potentially, if it was to offer part of the space to the local play group to actually come in and use it, or the Ambulance Service. We are looking at constant alternatives of how we can in effect use police stations together with the whole community as a means of potentially utilising them for everyone.

Mr Peter Weir:

I appreciate obviously as well in certain areas it will not be particularly applicable in that regard but certainly with the RPA rolling forward, I think there will also be a greater emphasis on ensuring that there is efficiency resources both within the police and within the wider context of public service, as we move towards much more one stop agencies. I am just wondering if the police have any plans or can have any plans to liaise and discuss in a much more strategic level with public bodies and in particular for instance the discussion perhaps say some of the new councils in terms of public service to

ensure them that there is the best possible use of public resources and it may also feed in if you like to the Estate Strategy as to providing efficiency resources which may mean that in certain areas.....

Assistant Chief Constable, Mrs Judith Gillespie:

It is a consideration, yes.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

We already have plans in Carrick, for example, a police station, a fire station, parts of the local council being put in together in to an entirely new build for the community of Carrick.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Sorry there are 3 questions. Would you defer 25, 26 and 27? They were late Trevor.

Mr Trevor Ringland:

I make only one simple point on the questions because I think it is appropriate at this time. I think Northern Ireland is a safer place to live in than most places in the world and sometimes we tend to forget that and also for people to visit here. But murder does carry a life sentence and I think it is maybe apt that we should remind those who are trying to take the life of a police officer that those are the consequences for them. But also too often in the past it has been the case that that life sentence has not been a life sentence, but maybe it is time that having given people a second chance in 1998, that we re-enforce we are not giving them a third chance and that life should mean life for the murder of a police officer.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I totally agree. When you look at what we are asking officers to do currently for example and they are doing it, I think that they have the absolute right to expect that should we be in this awful situation where we loose an officer that anyone convicted of that never comes back out and sees the light of day, I have no difficulty and I would expect every Chief Constable would say actually the same.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

I think that concludes the questions on this session and could I say thank you to members of the public and also those journalists who are left. Thank you very much indeed.