

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD HELD ON THURSDAY, 2 OCTOBER 2008 AT 12:00 NOON IN WATERSIDE TOWER, BELFAST

PRESENT:

MEMBERS:

Professor Sir Desmond Rea (Chairman)
Mr Barry Gilligan (Vice Chairman)
Ms Martina Anderson
Mr Tom Buchanan
Mr Alex Maskey
Mr Basil McCrea
Ms Mary McKee
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 Drew Harris (ACC Crime Operations)
Mr David Jones (ACC Crime Support)
Mr Duncan McCausland (ACC Criminal
Justice)
Mr Roy Toner (ACC Operational Support)
Mr Joe Stewart (Director of Human
Resources)
Ms Liz Young (Head of Media & Public
Relations)
Chief Superintendent Eddie Graham, Rural
Region
Chief Superintendent George Hamilton,
Urban Region
2 PSNI Personnel

**OFFICIALS IN
ATTENDANCE:**

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

APOLOGIES:

Mr Leslie Cree
Mrs Dolores Kelly

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Good afternoon Chief Constable, Senior Officers, members of the public and media.
You are all very welcome to this meeting in public of the Northern Ireland Policing
Board.

ACC Jones, this is I think your first meeting, is that correct? Sorry, silence everybody.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr David Jones:

Yes, it is.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Well, you are very welcome and I will not say I hope you enjoy the meeting, but I might
ask you that question at the end, but you are most welcome.

We are also joined this afternoon by a number of visitors to the Board. Peter Holland,
Chairman of the NPIA and he is accompanied by Gavin McKinnen, who incidentally is a
former member of the PSNI, Gavin you are most welcome.

We also have Senior Officers from the Dutch police, are they here? Maybe you could
stand up, you are most welcome, thank you very much. We also have officials from the
Scottish Police Authority Convenors' Forum, the Scottish Government and Strathclyde
Joint Police Board and members of Grampian police, maybe they could stand up as
well, you are most welcome.

I should say that earlier in the year, Members of the Board spent a most beneficial 24 hours in Scotland and we very much found that an interesting and a good learning experience. I also see that a member of Foreign Affairs or is it the Justice Department in Dublin is here and so to is the number 2 in the US Government's Consul in Belfast, so they are all welcome.

Chief Constable, we have a busy agenda today, so a brief introduction by me and then straight to your policing report.

But first, to the issue of TASER which has, as you know, been a subject of substantial debate and discussion over a sizeable number of months. At today's meeting Board Members carried the following motion by majority vote. *"This Board supports in principle the Chief Constable's decision to permanently issue TASER to Special Operations Branch and to Armed Response Vehicles, subject to completion in respect of the Armed Response Vehicles of a satisfactory pilot"*.

There are, of course, opposing views in respect of this and for the record it should be noted that Sinn Fein and Mr Gearóid Ó hÉara recorded opposition to the motion presented and carried. Board Members who supported the motion agreed that this is an operational matter for you Chief Constable. However, in order to provide accountability and assurance to the wider community, the Board considered that the necessary human rights and legal safeguards needed to be in place which included that stringent guidelines govern the use of TASER, particularly in respect of those considered more vulnerable.

Substantial work has been completed over many months in ensuring that human rights and legal safeguards have been put in place in order to provide that basis for accountability and assurance and the Board has reached a decision in principle today on the back of that.

Today, we are also due to receive the latest police performance report. Board Members are concerned around the low clearance rates and as we heard at the public engagement meeting in September 2008, there is a real strength of feeling around the police response to incidents of anti social behaviour.

There have been murders and a number of other serious violent crimes since the last meeting and, of course, the threat against police officers continues. Indeed, a member of the public had an exceptionally fortunate escape. The comments made earlier in the week about the competition of dissidents to kill a police officer are of serious concern, and as a Board, we would urge anyone with information to pass it on to the police.

Chief Constable, we are very aware of the ongoing work of your officers, both in tackling the threat and continuing to provide a normal service to the community despite the threat. I think it is important that we recognise and acknowledge this. Indeed, there are some specific questions today around the impact of policing this threat.

Chief Constable, at this point, over to you.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

Thank you Chairman. As you say it has been a busy month since we met, certainly in terms of some of the headlines. There have been 3 murders, people are charged in relation to all 3 of those offences. These are obviously ongoing investigations so I am limited in what I can say in public but Members will remember Mr Eamon Hughes who was murdered in Dungannon as he made his way home from a family get together. Six people in that case have been charged with offences ranging from murder, attempted murder and high-jacking and it is right also to put on record, the detectives received a very positive feedback from the community as a result of their actions.

Four month old Cameron Leslie from Newtownabbey also died after being taken to hospital. A man has been charged with that murder.

At the weekend, Mr Kevin Doyle died in hospital, a while after being stabbed, and a woman has been charged with his murder. So, all the murders since our last Board meeting have led to arrests and indeed charges.

Also, the Retrospective Murder Review Unit, this is our Unit which looks at more historic cases, is reinvestigating and has been for some time, the murder of Martin O'Hagan in 2001. That is the journalist who was murdered in 2001 in Lurgan and that also has resulted in a number of charges being laid in relation to that offence.

Chairman, we also had a tiger kidnap, this is where a person is kidnapped in order to extort money from a bank and in that case arrests have been made and £200,000 has been recovered.

You touched on dissident republican activity, I can report that that continues, a huge number of operations in the last month by my officers working with Security Services and An Garda Siochana. The main significant arrest was in South Armagh on the 14 September 2008 which you have also touched on. I think that is a highly significant arrest and a man is now charged with very serious offences of possessing ammunition, possession of documents likely to be of use to terrorists, 3 charges of possession of explosives with intent to endanger life and possession of articles for use in terrorism and remains currently in custody.

Attempts to murder police officers continue and in the past month a number of operations have been ongoing to disrupt that activity. The main incidents that Members will be aware of, is the very large bomb placed on the roadside in Jonesburgh. I think that is significant for 2 reasons, 1 we would say that was another attempt to lure officers into a substantial trap. It also showed the reckless nature of these individuals who placed it there. It was placed in an area where children could easily have been the victims had it exploded, and no doubt those who placed it there would have done so in the full knowledge that local people could well have been killed as a result of that activity.

You also touched on the event of the 9 September 2008 when a bomb was placed under a car, belonging in fact to a member of the public, which we believe again was supposed to be placed under the car belonging to an off duty police officer.

Chairman, I mentioned An Garda Siochana, I think it is very important, they have made some significant arrests also recently which we think may well help to prevent attacks and, indeed, help us to investigate some of the attacks that have already taken place in Northern Ireland. I would like to place on record my thanks to the Commissioner and his staff, for the equal determination we are seeing from our colleagues in the Republic of Ireland to disrupt dissident republican activity at every level.

There is another area of concern which I am on record and I will say it again for the sake of absolute clarity, the political vacuum is creating additional opportunities without doubt, for dissident republicans to recruit marginalised and vulnerable individuals to do their dirty work for them. This is not helping and it will be my officers that will take the brunt of this new so called opportunity that is now being exploited and is created by the lack of activity indeed at Stormont.

At operational level we are now seeing other significant impacts as a result of this particular situation. Members will have read in the papers today, the suggestion that the North/South Ministerial Conference which was due to take place tomorrow may be cancelled. It is right to report that a substantial police operation is already underway quite properly in relation to that event to make sure those who are attending, if they were going to attend, were properly kept safe. If it does not take place, I have wasted huge resource, many of my specialists who I have diverted from policing communities and other operational priorities to make sure that could take place in an unhindered way. This will impact on our performance quite frankly and I will not take kindly to criticism levelled at my officers who simply cannot be in 2 places at once. Indeed, delivering 8 targets in areas where the threat remains high will be challenging without these additional pressures.

That having been said Chairman, we are determined to continue to deliver and will not be put off by these small groups who are not wanted by anybody. I commend all my officers and staff for their determination and bravery and would remind everyone in Northern Ireland of their obligation to work with us to finish off these small groups once and for all.

Sadly, it is also the case Chairman we have had to move some officers recently. These are officers who have stood up to be counted, who have joined policing from areas where historically they would not have done so. We are getting substantial community support and support from elected representatives and I would urge them to continue to condemn those who are incapable of moving forward.

Chairman, that is all I intend to say on that particular issue. There is always a concern about talking about these events because of course it gives these lunatics the oxygen of publicity they are desperate to get. It is a matter of balance however, and it is important that people understand the current pressures being faced by my police officers at the frontend of policing.

In terms of performance Chairman, we do have a short presentation for you. Figures cannot give the whole picture, and again I have just illustrated some of the challenges we face around the complexity of policing, but they do provide a snapshot in relation to trends.

Recorded crime continues to fall which is good.....

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Would you hold that maybe at this stage and we will take questions on your opening remarks.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I have not finished yet.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Is this your performance report you are doing now?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

No, that has appeared without my knowledge, behind me, Chairman. I was going to do a very short snapshot, I have got some more things I would like to say which may save some time later.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

That is okay.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

All I would like to say now is overall crime is down, there has been an increase in burglaries which I will touch on when the slides arrive and appear at the right moment.

In terms of finance Chairman, I outlined some of the pressures last month we are facing, these did include announcements by the Home Secretary in relation to changes in the commutation element of police pensions, something completely outwith control but substantial amounts of money. Indeed, we are seeing an increase in claims by serving, and indeed retired officers, for hearing loss from the past, which is having a major impact on our budget. We have made a bid to the NIO for additional funds to deal with these particular pressures. It is also right to point out, that in the current so called 'credit crunch' we may well see an increase in acquisitorial crime which traditionally happens in an economic downturn and that of course means we will have to deal with the priorities we face, working very closely with District Policing Partnerships to ensure that we get the right balance in terms of where are resources go.

Chairman, I will draw to a close there, apart from one particular assault I would like to mention because I know there is particular public interest in the assault of a Mr Jeremy Mooney on 19 September 2008. It is right to put on record that 7 people have been arrested and enquiries continue. It is also right to put on record that my District Commander reports he had substantial help from members of the public in the Markets area in relation to progressing that investigation.

Chairman, I will now draw to a close and move to the performance report or questions as you feel fit.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Mr Buchanan, there is a question under Question 12 which relates to the dissidents and could we just take that since you highlighted that.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

Question 12 relates to the closure of police stations Chairman.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Sorry, question 11 maybe you could read it out.

Q11 - Does the Chief Constable, in his opinion have enough resources, both in terms of officers and fiscal resources, to deal adequately with the threat posed by dissident republicans, and policing in general?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

Thank you Chairman, it is a question of balance. We have a budget which Members will know is acquired by the Board on our behalf following representations and costings by us. The bottom line is, we are shifting more of our resource towards dealing with this particular threat, so other things will have to give. The concern of course is, that performance potentially will suffer as we have to make sure our officers are safe when they are responding to calls. An injured or dead officer does not deliver a service to the public, we have to make sure our officers can deliver that service. What I would say is we are determined to do it, our officers are determined to do it, they will not step back from that and they never have, a point made by Terry Spence only recently. This has never put police officers off doing their job and it will not now.

In terms of the particular budget settlement last year, you will know we have cut our overtime by 17% to come in on a balanced budget and it would be right to say, that currently my Crime Operations Department has substantially overspent its budget and we are looking at ways of saving that money from other parts of our organisation as we are bound to do.

I do think it is important that pressures outwith our control, in particular the statements by the Home Secretary which we would see as a cost pressure of some £17m I think this year, (my Director of Finance is not here), is something that we rightly go back to Government and argue our case for. Because I cannot control that and of course if we loose that sort of amount of money and we have to find it from elsewhere, that is a substantial pressure on a budget where 82% of our budget is people. That is a long way of saying we could always benefit from more money, but the reality is, we have got what we have got and we will deliver within that resource. It is a very good reason why collectively the PSNI, the public, the politicians and anyone else that is interested, puts pressure on these people to go away because it will not work, it just shifts the focus from ordinary community policing which we know is what the public want.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Alex Maskey.

Mr Alex Maskey:

Thank you Chairman. Could I make a number of points? Just maybe make reference, I think we had a long discussion upstairs and I think we had agreed that we would not refer to people as lunatics, but maybe the Chief Constable had not heard that.

For me, I think the Chief Constable has made an important number of points in relation to this question around so called dissidents and their activity and the threats that they pose. Clearly we acknowledge entirely, and we have said this publicly, that the PSNI have got to deal with that and deal with that appropriately and the Chief Constable has referred to the issue of the political vacuum which may be there at the moment. I would make the point that there is intensive political activity going on. It may not be resulting in the outcome that we all want, particularly at this time, but I have no doubt we seek to get there. But, I do welcome the fact that the Chief Constable has repeatedly asserted that the police will not be deflected from providing the type of service which the community needs and is entitled to.

I would actually go further and say it is absolutely crucial that the focus needs to be maintained and, indeed increased, whenever we deal with the next section on this agenda in terms of crime figures that we are facing and the detection rates, that the PSNI does significantly focus their attention on making sure that we do provide a civic police service because that will, in itself, along with political activity and leadership from all quarters and community support and all the rest of that. That the delivery of a police service building confidence within the wider public will in itself go a substantial way to isolating the people who do not want to move on from the past. I just want to acknowledge obviously that the Chief Constable has made that point himself and I think it is helpful that it is reinforced repeatedly.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

Chairman just on that, the other point I did not make of course is we are now delivering this service, which feeds into what Mr Maskey has just said, with no military support which is absolutely right we now have a civilian police service delivering an effective

service we would argue, notwithstanding that the current unique threats in the United Kingdom, my officers are facing....

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Could you maybe say by way of background for the benefit of our visitors from Holland why there was military support in the past?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I was privileged to meet with our colleagues from Holland and I am sure they do not want a 1 hour lecture, but the harsh reality was, we needed an additional armed capacity to enable civilian policing to carry out its functions as best it could in what were even more difficult circumstances, by a long way, than we are currently facing.

Our strategy remains the same around delivering the local policing service in the appropriate style, mindful of the threat, and that is around local empowerment. My District Commanders make the decisions on the style of policing and there is an absolute determination to deliver the most normal style of policing we possibly can because that is how, as Mr Maskey rightly points out, that is how you convince people this is working. But we are also very mindful of our obligations to our officers which is why it has to be a local assessment. Members will see a different style of policing in different parts of Northern Ireland and that is simply because it is commensurate to the threat and I am quite happy and I am quite relaxed about that.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Brian Rea.

Mr Brian Rea:

The points that the Chief Constable has been referring to are indeed very alarming in some respects. I will be reporting later this afternoon on the content of the Resources and Improvement Committee where there are real pressures on PSNI finances and those pressures are there and they are significant and the public would need to be aware of them. But they are there because of factors that are outwith the control of the PSNI, and I think the public would need to be aware of the potential impact of this on policing, I just want to reinforce that point.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Would you wish to comment on that Chief Constable?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

We are not bankrupt yet and the reality is that the more money we put into the frontline resource, being in mind our decreasing budget settlement, the more the pressure will come on. Mr Rea is absolutely right. Some of the things that were completely unforeseeable this year are substantial sums of money. They relate to pensions and actuarial decisions or whatever those people call themselves which can shift millions of pounds in a budget our size. That having been said, we have consistently delivered the efficiency savings we have been required to deliver of 3% per year under Gershon and, indeed, we have actually delivered more than has been required of us in some years, but yes, we do face additional pressures and that is why, with the Board's support, we need to go back to Government and raise those issues and have that debate. In the meantime, we will continue to deliver the service as best we can.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Basil McCrea.

Mr Basil McCrea:

Chairman, can I first of all welcome our colleagues from Holland who I had the pleasure of meeting yesterday. It is not the first time we have received reinforcements from there and I can also say it is good to see the Scots here as well.

On the issue I will say that one of the things that came out in that conversation with them, and we had a fairly frank discussion, is that they were very impressed with the professionalism of the PSNI and quite interested in the developments that we have made. With that in mind, can I just touch on the issue that you mentioned about TASER and without going on about it, I am satisfied having been one of the Members that has had a lot to look at this, that there is an agreed legal test which is appropriate. I am pleased and agree with our Human Rights Advisors that there is a capability gap, there are definitely issues where it is right and proper to deploy TASER and that our officers should have that, and furthermore I am very pleased

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Your question for the Chief Constable?

Mr Basil McCrea:

I did mention to you that I did want to say this about TASER because it is important and I will put that point Chairman. I am pleased that the Human Rights Advisors have spent a lot of time looking at the issues and can report now that the guidance and training is appropriate and that that is a method for going forward. I will finish therefore having said that I think this is a decision that the Board should be making. We should be making earlier decisions and getting on time, and when the Chief Constable mentions about a political vacuum, we are aware and I will put it to Members of the Board, this is devolved policing in action and it is time that we started to make some decisions.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Tom Buchanan.

Mr Tom Buchanan:

Thank you Chairman. Can I ask the Chief Constable if the dissident threat continues to increase, does the Chief Constable foresee a time again when he will have to rely on the support of the military forces?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

The short answer is no.

My officers are more than capable of dealing with these people and I think the fundamental and significant difference here is, there is absolutely no broad support for these people whatsoever. They are marginalised to the point where we are facing a specific issue of a small number of determined people, call them whatever you want, they do not really merit any huge credibility whatsoever. It is not the same situation, and at the moment I see and I cannot foresee any reason why I would revert back or seek military support, which of course now that Operation Banner has finished, would be military aid to a civil power. It would not be under Operation Banner because it has finished so my current situation and my professional judgement and that of my colleagues is that, no we do not.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Ian Paisley Jnr.

Mr Ian Paisley Jnr:

Thank you. Again, can I add my welcome to our guests. Can I also thank the Chief Constable for his overview, I think it does indicate that whilst the police are on top of things they cannot be complacent and neither can the public. With regards to the comments that you have made, I know Chief Constable you always avoid trying to make any political comment at all and we welcome that, and we welcome your piety on that point, but I certainly will take the opportunity maybe to say what I hope you are thinking, that is, that you would encourage people to play their full role in politics and to stop all the shenanigans and get on with the job that people expect them to do, whether that is at the Executive or in the Assembly of whatever

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

I do not wish to draw a response to this....

Mr Ian Paisley Jnr:

.... because the vacuum that that has created obviously does give succour to fanatics and lunatics in our society who want to use the vacuum that is there.

In terms of TASER however, could I ask you to make a brief statement about TASER because obviously the Board has deliberated very very carefully on this? We are probably the most informed police authority in the United Kingdom now on TASER in terms of all the reports that we have seen, but how will this make an active improvement to the activities of your officers? Could you maybe outline to that the sort of ability that now gives your officers when faced with threatening situations?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

In terms of your first observation, all I am saying is that my people have the right to have the same political top cover as any other police officer in other parts of the United Kingdom and your observations are noted.

In terms of TASER, the Board's decision once communicated in writing, as Members would know, is part of my decision around the Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA). I can now complete the EQIA. I can then make that decision and report back to Board on what that decision is. So, currently it makes no difference. The reality is we have a pilot, we have 12 devices available to our Specialist Unit. We do not have Armed Response Vehicles (ARVs) yet so nothing will change as a result of your decision today which I duly note and will build into the process.

I think the important thing here is, in keeping with our overwhelming obligation around Article 2 and respecting the right to life, this gives police officers in the most difficult and tense situations, access to highly trained officers and a device that is without doubt and without question in my judgement, less dangerous than a firearm. So, the likelihood is you will see people kept alive by this device and not injured as seriously as if a firearm had been used, so that is my professional judgement. It remains available to officers through the specialist callout teams.

Noting your observations on Armed Response Vehicle (ARVs) and should I make the decision to issue them to ARVs as well, then all that does is, officers who have had the same level of training and highly specialised, would be able to respond more quickly to rapidly unfolding situations. So, for example, someone in the street armed with a sword or another lethal weapon, would be able to get to their colleagues more quickly which has to be a good thing because otherwise their colleagues, who are of course fully armed, may have to resort to a more lethal use of force which is what no-one wants on this management team and indeed, no police officer wants to be put in that position. So, that is how I would see it unfolding but of course before I do any of that I will report back to the Board.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Martina Anderson.

Martina Anderson:

I took want to comment on TASER.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

That is alright.

Martina Anderson:

I believe this decision taken by the Board today was a bad decision. I think it is a shameful decision. I think that Sinn Fein have already put it on record that we believe that under Section 6 that this Board is abdicating, it is a statutory responsibility and it was a decision that should have been taken for this Board. The judge during the legal proceedings that are taking place at the moment wants to await the outcome of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, which is reporting tomorrow and I think this Board should have at least respected the judicial proceedings that are taking place and waited to see if the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child reports that TASER is actually constituting torture. I think that the capability gap that Mr McCrea referred to, we would not accept that that has been proven, in fact TASER has already been used in a situation in Derry as you know, a domestic situation and whatever the circumstances that took place beforehand....

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Be careful Martina.

Ms Martina Anderson:

... I am not mentioning any names, that they are disputed and the reality is when that man walked out the back door in his bare feet with nothing in his hands.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Be careful here, this has been referred to the Ombudsman.

Ms Martina Anderson:

It is referred to the Ombudsman so this Board should have awaited the outcome of the Ombudsman's decision in order to ascertain if the guidelines and safeguards that have been put in place were actually being enacted upon by the PSNI. I think that with regards to all of the issues that have been discussed around TASER that it is a

confidence issue and within the republican and nationalist community and I think in a lot of working class communities across the north, that they actually believe simply what the PSNI is looking for is another bit of kit.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I think it is important I do respond. I note those observations. The point for me is around tomorrow. We have to be in a position if tomorrow one of my officers is faced with a situation where it will be a person from a vulnerable group. All the evidence shows that TASER has to be routinely sadly deployed against people in very heightened situations of tension, it may well be around domestic violence, it may well be around mental health, these are people who have been TASER'd, but as a result of being TASER'd fortunately are still alive. There is not one death attributed to TASER in the United Kingdom and our rules and guidelines are more strict and far more restrictive than any others I am aware of. I understand the concern, I hope we have done as much as we ever can to mitigate the concern. I accept we are never going to convince some people whatever we do, but the bottom line is, it is my responsibility and the notion that that operational independence/responsibility which rests on my shoulders can be compromised in any way by the Board, I would take huge issue with and I know that debate has already been aired and legal views do exist on it, and I think there is a common agreement that it is my responsibility which I accept.

I cannot transfer the responsibility under Article 2 to Members of this Board, individual or collectively, so to deny access to something which could save a life I think is a fundamentally flawed notion which is why we have pursued this debate which is why we have bent over backwards in my judgement, to try and reassure you. I am saddened if we have failed, but if you want any other reassurance around the fact that we do not like using this stuff, the fact is it has only been used once during a pilot period, on one occasion shows that it is not something officers necessarily want but it is something on occasions, sadly, they may well need.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Could you move to your thematic presentation please?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I was hoping you had forgotten about that Chairman. If we can move on then.

A number of slides just to give you an overview of where we are in terms of crime performance.

The first slide shows crime rates over the last 6 years. The trend continues downwards as it has done over the last 6 years. The reduction currently is smaller, it is a reduction of 2.2% in crime compared to the same period last year, which equates to 1085 fewer offences.

My main area of concern on that and my colleagues is that of burglary, it shows a small increase in burglary, this year to date an increase of 3.5% compared to the same time last year, that actually is 99 more offences over the relevant period which is 7 months now. It is slowing, but I do think we will struggle to meet this year's target within the 3 year target band that you have set us, which means it will obviously get far more challenging next year as we try to get back on to track. A huge amount of effort has gone into dealing with this particular crime which we know is on every DPP's list and obviously it is on the Policing Board's list and targets as well.

Operation Heartbreak has been the subject of quite a lot of publicity and that is aimed specifically at dealing with burglary across the province and all Commanders are taking this very seriously. The operation has worked to some degree. 'A' District for example which was one of our problem children unsurprisingly has had the lowest number of burglaries in July and August for the last 3 years, so we have stemmed the tide.

Operation Heartbreak led to 115 arrests by officers engaged in the operation and that included 6 of the 8 people who you saw published in the local papers. 180 charges have resulted from that operation. Bail checks by way of one example netted 20 arrests for known burglaries breaching their conditions of bail who we put back before the courts to challenge their right to freedom. We do have more to do and I fully acknowledge that.

We are finding on a slightly more bigger picture, the robust approach to enforcing bail conditions is helping. In the past 5 months we have put 349 people before the courts for breach of bail. These are people who we object to bail, conditions are imposed upon them who we then catch breaching those, quite often curfews to stop them

committing crime at certain periods of the day. Of the 349 who went back before the courts, 202 were then remanded in custody which actually takes them out of circulation. In many of the other cases additional conditions of bail were placed upon them by members of the judiciary.

We are also working very closely with partner agencies and a major crime reduction campaign is planned leading up to December when of course we know acquisitorial crime increases, because it is still a fact that about 35-40% of burglaries committed in Northern Ireland are through open doors and open windows so we look to the public for some assistance in relation to that, but that is an area where Members may want to talk in more detail and my Rural and Urban representatives can answer specific questions if it is helpful.

Moving on to violent crime, again a reduction in violent crime of 12.4% that equates to just under 1900 fewer offences and also we are pleased to report a reduction in violent crime against young people, again a reduction of nearly 200 offences over the relevant period. What we are seeing, that having been said, is the more serious category of violent crime, there is not a graph to show that but just by way of information, grievous bodily harm, unlawful wounding, murder those sorts of crimes are slightly up. They have gone up from 664 to 727 offences and increase of roughly 60, so it is about 6 crimes per month up at the serious end of the business.

About half of all assaults are reported between 8pm and 3am and we have been deploying TSGs at hotspots and entertainment venues, working in partnership with local officers and the licensed premises to try and minimise crimes at turning out time. Staggering the end of drinking hours in certain pubs is also having some positive effect in making sure people leave the scene, the areas where these nightclubs tend to congregate, is also having some effect. We are planning of course for Halloween which we know gives us a spike in crime.

In terms of murder figures, mindful of the fact I have reported on 3 murders since the Board last met. Our overall murder rate this year is down. Last year to date it was 13, this year it is 10. Last year during the whole reporting year, it was 25 so at the moment I am pleased to report that whilst we reported 3 this time, all of which have charges attached to them, the murder rate itself is currently down.

In terms of criminal damage which is important for us, it is one of our major volume crime areas, a reduction of 13.2% again nearly 1900 fewer crimes and a commensurate reduction in anti social behaviour which I think is quite interesting, as anti social behaviour tends to be precursor activity for crime such as criminal damage, and as I have said, we are planning for Halloween.

We would say that the alcohol campaign may well have had a major impact on certainly the anti social behaviour end of our business. Members will remember over 10,000 items of alcohol was seized from young people during that particular operation.

If one looks ahead to Halloween, we have identified good practice from last year and certainly looking at all the hotspots which I identified so the analysis is up to date, the focus will be on the illegal use and sale of firework, violent crime, criminal damage and anti social behaviour. One of our main areas where Halloween will be celebrated will be Foyle. Last year over 10,000 people came into the city, a major proactive operation again will be planned with partner agencies and that planning has been going on since June this year. The basic principle is to allow people to enjoy the celebrations without engaging in anti social behaviour and committing crime, and we have been working closely with the local media as well as residents groups and young people to try and achieve that objective. Youth Diversion Officers will be out on the ground during Halloween to escort underage drinkers home safely. So that is just one example. The Fireworks Strategy as I said remains in force which is very much around good publicity and the safe use of fireworks and, indeed, intelligence gathering operations on illegal fireworks.

Chairman, in terms of comparisons which as you know we are grouped by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary with other forces, it is right we are held and judged, albeit we are different against other forces, you will see overall forces are seeing the similar trends to Northern Ireland and bearing in mind our burglary increase and this is mitigation at best, but by way of observation other crimes in our comparator group are seeing an increase as well. I think it is too early to certainly attribute that to any economic downturn but it is interesting that other forces are experiencing a similar challenge, albeit at higher rates of increase than us, but Members will be able to form a view on our success.

What I do not have a slide for, but you rightly referred to at the opening was our clearance rate, which currently is at 18.4%. Now that compares to the most similar force average of 27%, so it is some 9 advantage points lower. If one distils out of that, opportunities which are not available to us, certainly around fixed penalty tickets and certain crimes which we are not allowed to count, but other forces can count around threatening behaviour and minor offences such as that, the gap does narrow. But there is still more work to do and again, I am happy for my Rural and Urban District Commanders to talk to Members about what they are doing to try and narrow that gap, notwithstanding the fact we still do not have for example, fixed penalty tickets which we are very keen to be allowed to use in the same way as other forces.

Chairman, that is the end of my overall summary, it probably would be more helpful if Members asked questions.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Do you want your officers to comment at this stage?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I am happy to ask my Regional and Urban colleagues in particular, it may be helpful Chief Superintendent Hamilton, if you would touch on what we are doing around increasing the clearance rate, the Converter Teams.

Chief Superintendent George Hamilton:

Chairman, the use of the Converter Teams is, within each District a small group of officers with a combination of detective officers and others who basically do the conversion of evidence from crime scenes, that is generally DNA and fingerprint evidence, converting that into arrests, charge sheets and people before the courts.

We have, in an attempt to tackle this issue of the clearance rates, a fairly tight performance regime around that, both in terms of the quality of the crime scene investigation, right through to the timeliness of the action and how quickly that is turned around into the forensic science laboratory back out to the PSNI, and how quickly people are then arrested and brought before the courts. That said, everyone of these are followed through, but we also need to prioritise them around crime types and more importantly, around prolific offenders.

This is something in this current financial year we have been trying to tackle with an emphasis on offender management, given that generally speaking, a small number of criminals create a disproportionate amount of the crime. So, linked in with the Converter Teams is this whole idea of offender management, so that we are managing the offender, not just into the interview room and before the court, but bail conditions are being followed up and particularly in those prolific offenders, that we are doing what we can to maximise the harm reduction and to prevent the opportunity for further offending.

This all links in with the Heartbreak Operation for example, that the Chief Constable has mentioned in terms of working right across the Districts, so that we are reducing crime rather than displacing it and it seems to be going in the right direction, but clearly from an Urban perspective at least, there is still a significant way to go with the 4 District Commanders working closely together with their respective teams.

I do not know if my colleague from Rural Region has a comment to make.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Chief Superintendent Graham.

Chief Superintendent Eddie Graham:

Just in relation to general activity that is taking place around crime prevention. The Chief Constable mentioned that we are having significant challenges around domestic burglary. Neighbourhood Policing Teams, with Crime Prevent Officers, are putting in a good deal of work prior to a burglary taking place, but in all of the Rural Districts, post burglary, Crime Prevention Officers are going around targeting areas convenient to where that burglary is actually taking place. What they are finding is, that the same causation factors that created the burglary in the first place, the open door, the keys in the hallway, the open garages, are being found being committed by neighbours. So, we are following that up, and hopefully that will have a positive impact in generating awareness around self protection to avoid individuals becoming further victims. But the Converter Teams have produced some significant arrests in the recent past, fast tracking evidential matters quickly and then getting out and bringing people back into police stations and putting them back before the courts.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Thank you very much indeed.

Let us go through these then slide by slide. Any comments or questions rather on domestic burglary?

Mr Ian Paisley Jnr:

Chairman, what way do you want to do this?

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Do you want to go generally then, it is up to you. Mrs Moore, since clearance rates have just been mentioned.

Mrs Rosaleen Moore:

Just in relation Chief Constable to the overall clearance rates, they are disappointing and also the clearance rates for sectarian crime. I know Chief Superintendent Hamilton has made some reference to it, but may be you would like to comment further.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

Well, it is good news and bad news on sectarian crime. The numbers are low so swings move very quickly. You only have to solve a few more and you get a substantial impact on your overall clearance rate. On the overall clearance rate, one of the things where we are less successful than our colleagues is getting people to admit to offences they have committed for which they have not been yet dealt with.

We have had the best practice. We had officers from Northumbria over, which is where the Converter Teams came from, but it would not be unusual for other forces to have an average clearance rate of 3 or 4 burglaries for every person arrested, because they intend to talk to and are interviewed by dedicated teams, we have reflected that. We put similar cases to them to see if they admit those cases. We look at the forensic links between them, we do all of that now. We are still very much tied up, or the suspects still get advice around "say nothing", so they do not engage or are not prepared to engage despite the tactic which is to point out that if you actually tell us what you have done now you have been caught for one, then when you do get released from prison, you do not have these other unsolved crimes waiting in the back of your mind and

should we get a forensic hit we will come and arrest you again. That is the basis principle.

We are still very unsuccessful, although we are getting better at getting people to talk to us in that way. If we were more successful I think you would see a substantial reduction in the gap. It is important because it enables us to go back to victims and say, 'the person that committed your crime has now admitted that crime' and the feedback from victims who have had that sort of response is very positive. All the myths or concerns or fears that were in their minds about who was it that committed it are dealt with, it is not as if someone is going to come back and rob them again, it is someone who has been caught and is now in prison. So, it is important, providing it is not misused and the temptation if it is not strictly handled is for people to try and encourage individuals to confess to crimes they have not committed, so it has to be properly handled. We are comfortable we have a proper process in place but we are still finding ourselves coming up against legal advice, quite properly given, and to which they are entitled to receive which is "you do not say anything". So, I am not sure we will ever get to the levels of success that other forces have who would say that is not their experience of the legal advice their clients are receiving.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

If it is some comfort to the Board Chairman, 4 out of the 8 Districts are showing either an improvement or about to show an improvement and the other 4 Districts obviously have this as a key area for them to concentrate on. I would be confident that the Board will see this turning green at the end of the year, but not as the Chief Constable has highlighted green to the significant numbers that we would be comfortable with, i.e. around 30% clearance rate. We probably will clear and make an improvement on last year's performance, but it will not be around the area that the Board would want us to be i.e. 1 in every 3 crimes being cleared.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Okay, Mary McKee.

Ms Mary McKee:

Thank you Chief Constable. Could I draw your attention to the prosecution of cases and comment that it is some concern that it is 25% down against the target. Could I first of all ask the question why this is the case and also another question about what you are going to do to actually address this in a different way?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I will ask ACC McCausland to deal with some of the detail. If it helps, I have deep concerns over these figures and I had a meeting yesterday with every single District, Chief Superintendents, or Chief Inspectors representing every single District, to ask exactly that question because I was not best pleased.

An overall observation, last year we came in substantially above the target and I do not think it was realistic to give us an increased target. That aside we are currently not even delivering against last year's target, so I am very concerned about it.

There are some issues still with the new NICHE recording system, and by way of an example, because it probably explains it better than any other way. On 'C' District for example, North Down and that area, on speaking to the District Commander yesterday in just one snapshot he looked at one officer's workload, 15 cases around drink driving, all of which is shown as failures but all were actually dealt with within a matter of a couple of months. What is not happening is the conviction or the outcome at court getting fed back into the system in a way that we then capture because it has to go through a rather bazaar route before it gets back to us, bearing in mind we do not have people at court any more. Now, that will be fixed by Causeway. Once the Causeway system comes on line in its entirety so every organisation links into it, that will be done automatically and I think we will see better figures. What I have tasked is every District Commander to go back and by next month have manually gone through these cases so we get proper figures. I do not think, even when we have done that, we will be at the target frankly because as I said earlier, some of the back office stuff is being compromised because I have a very challenging frontline environment in which to deal with. But ACC McCausland is now an expert in this field having been there for a month so I will ask him to comment on some more detail.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

If it is any comfort to the Board to give a specific example. If we take 'A' District, they are currently showing under custody cases a 12.3% failure rate. When we trawl through the system and actually look at the process it will have improved only 3%.

Increases in bail and the administration time, they are currently showing 12.7% failure. When you actually trawl through they are in the green and achieving. If you look at indictable cases, they are 6% failure rate in the red but they are actually in the green when you trawl through at 4%. So, really this can be summed up that the system the clock is not stopping when the system is being activated in terms of how it joins up as the Chief Constable has said. For example, the cases he related to is a DIC charge case going before the court within 5 days, when it actually comes back into the system it is recorded as 385 days to actually before the clock is stopped. That automatically marks a failure against us when in effect we achieved it within 5 days. So, the system will be addressed when Causeway, and we hopefully will see Causeway linking to its next stage at the end of November 2008, and that will take place automatically.

We do accept there is an issue around people and sergeants particularly taking a supervisory role in relation to checking files and ensuring files are not sent back, and we are looking at that and we are looking at our overall processes. So we would hope that if the Board set to one side these figures this morning, by November 2008 we should be able to give you a far clearer picture of what the actual position is. There is a misleading number of figures being shown here and we are having to manually trawl through and correct those positions, as the Chief Constable said in the next few weeks. So, I would again address this issue if you wish Chairman come the November/December 2008 Board.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

The Vice Chairman of the Board.

Vice Chairman, Mr Barry Gilligan:

Chief Constable, you mentioned drink driving and that brings me to the point about the statistics for killed and seriously injured.

At the July 2008 meeting, ACC Toner referred to the fact that in the first half of the calendar year, we were experiencing a downward trend. My question is, has that continued because we do not have figures here to tell us. Has that continued through since the end of June 2008?

The other point is, ACC Toner you mentioned in July 2008 that there were 3 main causation factors in killed and seriously injured. They were excess speed, inattention and drink driving. Do you have any views on our speed limits as they currently exist, particularly in rural areas where the issue of killed and seriously injured is still a huge problem?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Roy Toner:

First of all, apologies to the Board that we do not have up to date validated figures, but I want to be absolutely certain that we get accurate figures because it is a hugely important topic. I think it also has to be recognised, that officers are still out on a day to day basis with neighbourhood policing teams and those policing officers delivering this service in light of the current threat that exists out there.

The first point is, we have a downward trend on our fatal RTCs (Road Traffic Collisions) on the road. This time last year we had 81 people killed on our roads, we are down this year, if we can say it is a good news story, we are down to 75, so it is a downward trend as we have been anticipating over recent years.

Some concerns in relation to the seriously injured figures which we believe are down overall and I will be able to give a more accurate percentage figures hopefully in the next day or two to the Board. Particularly though we are concerned there might be a rise in seriously injured figures in relation to children and I want to delve into that a little bit more so I can give an explanation to the Board that goes beyond pure statistics to give you an understanding.

In relation to the very valid point about speeding. As you know there is a pilot process in relation to time limited, reduced speed limits around schools down to 20mph. We have always endorsed that approach and it is one that the Department of the Environment (DOE) have been piloting. We hope that consideration will be given to the evaluation of that and that it could be replicated elsewhere.

We do advise in relation to local speed limits and their appropriateness. There is an issue about small rural roads still having speed limits of 60mph and as we do know, particularly in relation to the younger drivers, this does cause some concerns to us. There is a major piece of work that the Minister is currently undertaking in reviewing the Northern Ireland Road Safety Strategy for the next 3, 5 and 7 years and we are heavily involved in that at the moment and one of the elements of that will be looking at speed limits to the future.

What I am also hoping to do is, that we have based our safety camera approach with our mobile safety cameras around the statistics in relation to killed and seriously injured figures, but there has been some feedback from Board Members, and it was discussed as an aside at the recent Community Engagement meeting at the King's Hall, Belfast in relation to input from DPPs (District Policing Partnerships) about anecdotal evidence at local level, of where there is public assurance needed about safety cameras which do not necessarily always hit the requirement through the killed and seriously injured figures, and that is something that I want to try and work on over the forthcoming 5 or 6 months.

Last but not least, to get this message out and to work more closely with the DPPs. We are offering up Roads Policing officers on a more frequent basis with Area and District Commanders to attend DPP meeting, so that DPPs have the opportunity to get into this in even more detail at local level because I think that is where the message will get through and that is where the benefits will come forward.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Thank you very much.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

Chairman, just on local initiatives. I think it is also right to put on record that many District Commanders are already responding to concerns raised by DPPs by deploying the equipment they have locally. I know this because I have, on occasions, have challenged these deployments, by stopping and speaking to officers because it is not where we would expect them to be and the response has been, "this is a direct request via a DPP member for enforcement in this local area". Quite often we get criticised from people seeing our officers out deploying these devices, a lot of the time it is in a

direct response to requests from DPP members or members of the public who are expressing concern about the road safety in their particular areas.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

I have got 5 more questions to be put in this section of the agenda, Mr Jimmy Spratt.

Mr Jimmy Spratt:

Thank you Chairman. Just to say that we should be encouraged with the reduction in the anti social behaviour because that has a knock on effect for the reduction that we are seeing in the criminal damage as well. I think it was the Chief Constable who referred to the seizure of units of drink and I think that certainly has a big knock on effect for the reduction in the anti social behaviour. Can we expect to see that continued and that activity by the police and other agencies covered in other areas right across the province?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

The simple answer is yes Chairman, it is built into the Halloween campaign and we will be mounting it again for 2 weeks during Halloween.

We also are working with the Minister of Health and the 2 Junior Ministers in terms of bringing forward a Youth Action Plan which will also build in the DPPs and CSPs (Community Safety Partnerships) working together. The next stage will be working with the licensees to try and address the issue of 'test purchase' in terms of ensuring that underage drinking and alcohol is not being sold to people from an underage perspective, so the Board should be reassured that we will be doing this activity and continuing to report back to the Board on the findings of the operation. It is planned to run over probably a 2 year period.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Mr Alex Maskey.

Mr Alex Maskey:

Thank you Chairman. Could I make a number of points.

First of all, I would want to acknowledge from the outset, where there are improvements in the delivery of the service then that has got to be very very welcomed.

I do know there will be a number of examples and I know of at least directly a couple of projects in the likes of West Belfast. I know there are others, which does give a good template if you like, whereby there are a dedicated resource from both within the PSNI and local representatives and other community representatives, dedicating their attention and their time to try and tackle in a focused way, local problems particularly at neighbourhood level. But my problem is, that I do not see that translating across the board. Now, obviously everybody has the time issue and the resource issue and we cannot ignore those, and we have already touched on them earlier on, but again my difficulty is, that where there are examples of good examples if you like, good working practices which are no doubt having an impact for the positive and no casualties, that that programme has not been rolled out in anywhere near a wide enough basis.

I do think it is a little unfortunate because sometimes, in fact every time we come here to deal with these figures, we will take issue with and dispute the kind of statistical nature of them and that is understandable because we can argue over all that and I accept some of the arguments. But the upshot of all of these reports ultimately tell us, that unfortunately that the vast majority of crimes actually go on undetected. That is the problem that the public out are taking note of and when I look at the figures we have in front of us this afternoon, we obviously have, which can only really be described as a spike around the period that we are actually currently sitting in, so when you look at over the year, we are now looking at figures which are increasing, burglaries and so on.

My big worry is, that when I break that down locally to local areas and local districts and particularly the reports of some of the recent DPPs, the explanations in my view are not satisfactory. Where we have for example, a concentration of domestic burglaries, a lot of those have tended to be in certain localities, so we need to have a focused response pre-emptive and otherwise to tackle these issues. I have to say I am very very concerned and this is important to put on record, I am very concerned at repeated reference to the credit crunch as a factor here. I do not perceive all these burglars

sitting reading the Financial Times, so I do not understand how DPP after DPP are now being told, well actually this is something to do with the credit crunch. I think that does a disservice to yourselves as an organisation. It does not bear any credible reference because there is certainly no evidence to back that up and it is far far too early to make that correlation. So, I think we should stop using that type of language because it actually, as I said, does yourselves a disservice and it actually does not help to build confidence so my point would be, I think the focus that the Board has been putting on in recent times and the police themselves is, that this absolute necessity to deliver on the programme of policing with the community, building on the neighbourhood policing network is essential to driving down the crime figures. So, where at this moment in time and a range of areas and under a range of headings, we are recording an increase in crimes and a decrease in detection, we have to start reversing this around because ultimately, and this is a issue of public confidence, area by area a lot of people will tell you they are still fearful in growing numbers at the level of crime which is going undetected. As I said earlier on, I want to acknowledge that where there has been good working practices locally those are the templates to follow, but I think we need a commitment that they are rolled out much more extensively.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Would you like to comment Chief Constable?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

In general terms, crime is down, it is at a 6 year low. I would rather have less crime than clear up more crime frankly because you have less victims. But you are absolutely right, you have got to hit both ends of the equation and we fully acknowledge we need to do more on the clear-up side of the business.

In terms of the credit crunch, I do not disagree with you. I do not think it is a major factor, I think it is a factor. The point in my opening was that we need to look at it in the future, it is far too early to attribute anything to it currently and I am slightly surprised if my District Commanders have been doing it and I will raise that with them.

That all having been said, certainly around good practice, we may either hold a monthly crime conference or a bi-monthly crime conference where best practice is shared across all the Districts. But I think we have got to where we have got to because, for the last 6 years we have been telling District Commanders we are empowering them to make the local decisions and to deliver bespoke policing in what is a very wide geography, and also a geography where different responses work differently in different places, so it is that fine line. What I do not want to do is to start centralising and saying you will do X when actually Y might be better in 'G' District than 'A' District, so I think it is a fine balance. But if you need reassurance around the best practice, we talked about the clear-up rate, we brought people in from other police services which were identified by HMIC as best practice and we made sure every single District at Chief Superintendent or Detective Chief Inspector level was represented. Of course, my Regional ACCs ask the hard questions on their Section 78 visits, if they have not implemented what is seen as best practice, so there is a way of getting some control.

I fully accept we can do better. I think the general message is crime is going down, that does not mean people will be more fearful. People are still fearful of crime and that is a debate I think Chairman we look forward to having at our annual planning meeting around what is the best way of measuring success, is it bean counting or is it actually community confidence, neighbourhood policing and those sorts of issues. I think it is more complicated but I think it adds some value and of course it is touched on in the Green Paper.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Mr Basil McCrea.

Mr Basil McCrea:

Chief Constable, there were 2 statistics that you put forward that worried me. The first is when we looked at violent crime and actually you were good enough to bring it up yourself, that although the overall figures are down, the serious violent crime is up some 10%. I do have a young man in my constituency that was killed by one single blow to the head and there is a real issue here and I would like to know what strategy that we have to try and deal with serious violent crime, because at the moment people think there is no sanction, it was just unfortunate.

Second question, if I can just put this to you when we look at burglaries, someone that has been the victim of burglary twice in the last year, what I look at is, your mentioned statistics that suggest that 40% of these are for people that walk in because there is no doors locked or windows locked. What baseline figures are we going to get? What strategy have we got in place to go round and say, let us report crime against people that are may be not taking these things seriously? There was a time, and I know it is not necessarily modern policing, but there was a time when police officers would walk down a street, knock doors, rattle windows and see if that would happen and the community would like to see policemen on the beat and if you are right that 40% of these crimes can be actually reduced by that, then I do think it is a worthwhile investment of time.

If I could just finish, although those are the 2 questions I would like to put on, I would just like to mention because ACC McCausland brought it up, about youth engagement, anti social behaviour, underage drinking, I would like to commend him and Ms Young for the support that they gave the Stormont Ball in engaging with some of the most disadvantaged people in our community from across the province, they were a credit and I actually know it was a risk and I commend the PSNI for taking that risk with young people.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I acknowledge that and I am grateful to ACC McCausland and Ms Young for representing me at that. I think it is the individual activity at that level or be it at community officer level taking risks is what moves policing on.

In terms of the Violent Crime Strategy, as I reported to the Board, all the violent crimes I touched on have led to arrests. I think the way you deal with it is, you arrest people and you put them in front of the courts and we are getting better at doing that. I also think that in terms of context, we are talking about an increase of 6 crimes per month, we are not talking about a sudden stepped change in violent crime and I will ask ACC Harris to touch on violent crime in a moment.

In terms of burglary, we continue and we are doing it again, to try and bring to people's attention their own responsibility for protecting their own property and we continue to do it. It is best practice across many parts of Northern Ireland where a burglary happens in

one house, houses nearby are leafleted with crime prevention advice, contact details of our crime prevention staff and advisors who can give free advice on how to keep your property safe, but it still remains an issue and so we will do it again and again and again. Again, a classic example to the partnership approach to crime reduction but rest assured it is not something we are not doing, we are doing it. So I will hand over to ACC Harris who will touch on some of the violent crime issues.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Drew Harris:

On the serious end of violent crime, obviously homicide and attempts of that and serious sex crime as well and there has been, certainly in terms of sex crime, a gradual increase over the last number of years in reporting. We in response to that set up a specific Rape Crime Unit within Crime Operations, but also have consolidated the approach in Districts to look at child abuse and then the related which would include sexual abuse, but also the related issues around domestic violence and vulnerable missing persons. So, collectively across the organisation we have focused upon vulnerable people in society, what we can do to protect them and particularly protect them from those who would target them specifically for either sex offending or violent attacks.

The recent report from Amnesty though sets out some of society's attitudes, particularly amongst young people towards partners and rape, and that is very concerning because we ourselves as an organisation have put in resources and effort into this which is entirely appropriate, be it very serious and traumatic incidents and it is for society also then to fall in behind us in terms of supporting us in the enforcement effort. But, also for other parts of society to really step up the plate and say that violence in terms of sexual violence, domestic violence, violence towards partners and all of that around dysfunctional relationships, has no appropriate place in this society. I think when you see those attitudes being reflected in the recent survey, there is something missing around that. We can do the enforcements and we can protect the vulnerable as best we can, but there is something wrong in society where those attitudes are being reflected from young people setting out in life.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Rosaleen Moore has a question on the agenda today, maybe you could read it out Mrs Moore, question 4 which feeds into just what you have raised.

Mrs Rosaleen Moore:

It just follows on from what you were saying ACC Harris in relation to sexual crime. Recently there was a call from ACPO for a consistent approach to investigating this type of crime so maybe based on that all police forces should set some sort of an overall standard, would you want to comment on that?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Drew Harris:

I am pleased to inform the Board that we have lifted the ACPO standards and applied those to the Rape Crime Units. We have 3 units based in Belfast, Mahon Road, Portadown and Ballymena. All the officers there either have been trained or are in the process of being trained towards the specialism of dealing with serious sexual assault. We have spent in the region of £500,000 in upgrading our facilities for Forensic Medical Officers where there are complaints around sexual assault so that there is good suites for the victims to come into and they can be properly dealt with in state of the art facilities.

We have seen our clearance rate for rape and attempted rape increase from 15.7% to 22% just in the very recent past. The very best forces are sitting at approximately 29% so very much that is what our aim is, and we want to reassure the Board that that is where our intent is, to really try and get a good grip on the problem of serious sexual assault and hammer home at it.

In tandem of that as I mentioned already, the Public Protection Units in Districts are starting to get grip, and starting to really provide traction around the related offences of child abuse and domestic violence. All these crimes are a continuum around violence and subjecting people to some sort of violent attack, and we are noticing patterns already around rape crime and the classic sort of modus operandi has developed and it is now, seems to be around the targeting of vulnerable women, particularly in places of entertainment where they are vulnerable through taking too much alcohol, but additionally, women being targeted through the personal ads in papers for instance and then subsequently raped. So, what we are trying to find is, are there repeat offenders out there and what exactly is the problem we have?

Classically, rape and serious sexual assault is significantly under-reported to the police and we need to get an overall picture of what the extent of the problem is and later this month we are meeting with NGOs (Non Governmental Organisations) and others who have an interest and who have an insight into what exactly the rape problem is so that we can at least gain intelligence about the full extent of the problem and what we might do then to detect offenders and prevent further attacks.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Mr Suneil Sharma.

Mr Suneil Sharma:

Chief Constable, it is a quick question about the very first piece of information that appeared in this police performance summary, the issue of satisfaction and confidence.

Louise Casey in a recent piece of work suggested that this piece of information should one of the most primary performance indicators for the future in the police service.

First of all, would you agree with that? The information that we have got, 84% confidence is in some sense of limited use, in the sense that it does include people who have never had any contact with the police and also, there is no breakdown by district. First of all, would you agree with Louise Casey's analysis that this is the way we should be moving rather than bean counters as you have suggested?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I have no difficulty with that particular observation by Louise Casey. You have to do both in a way. I am very interested in the debate around confidence measures for policing. I do not think, I think it is completely impossible to have a single measure that delivers that which is exactly the point you are making. I also think it is not realistic, I think where she is virtually slightly unrealistic to suggest that the whole of policing should be focused down the community policing route because the harsh reality is, whether we like it or not, and I have expressed this view to Government, that to create the conditions for community policing, I need Crime Operations Department, I need Anti Terrorism Branch, I need all the people that enable the conditions to be created where our community officers can operate freely and unaffected by other concerns, so it is a continuant.

But that having been said, I have written as the Board will be aware, I have written to the Board saying “that is the debate I would value having so we can come up with a view around our annual performance targets”. Are we more interested in looking at qualitative rather than quantitative? Now that does make it more complicated, it needs a far more mature debate. If confidence goes up and down, what does that actually mean? Is it something we are doing or not doing? Is it something politicians are doing or not doing? Is it something that is outwith our control? Is it because there has been some horrendous international quote ‘terrorist’ type attack? All those things feed into that debate but I think it is a debate that is absolutely well worth having, really interested in looking at the local level because I think that is where you get some really interesting feedback and views and some learning can be had, but the notion that you can have one overall figure to indicate what confidence in policing looks like I think is a crazy idea. I do not think you can do it.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Mr Brian Rea.

Mr Brian Rea:

Thank you Chairman. This is just going back slightly referring to reducing the number of people killed on the road and I am sorry to be going back. I was wondering, is the volume of traffic increasing on the roads and, of course, every death on the road is a tragedy for the person themselves and for their families who are left behind. But perhaps if the volume of traffic is increasing and the number of deaths on the road decreasing, the PSNI are actually not getting enough credit for what they are doing, so could someone tells us if the volume of traffic is increasing and is there a better job being done than the raw statistics would seem to indicate?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I will ask ACC Toner to try and claim success to this one.

I think it is too complicated, but if you look at why less people are dying, it may well be a lot of this is around vehicle safety and construction methods and technology, airbags all those sorts of things. It is very hard to distil out our bit. We absolutely know that engineering, enforcement and education are the key strands around reducing crime

and we certainly play it to a major way in terms of educating young people, so I think it is too complicated, but I will ask ACC Toner to put some more gloss on it.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Roy Toner:

Anybody who is sitting on M1 or the M2 on a morning knows that traffic volumes have significantly increased. All the major towns and cities across Northern Ireland have seen major increases in traffic volume over the last 5 to 10 years, and if you actually take a look the projections for that are due to increase as well. So yes, there is an increase in the volume of traffic and that is going to play into the review of the Northern Ireland Road Safety Strategy.

I think there are a number of factors that will show the benefits around the reduction in the fatalities. One is the engineering of the vehicles. They are far far safer than they were historically. Of course, the more experienced driver acknowledges that, the younger driver accepts it as a given fact and feels cocooned inside those vehicles and there is an added degree of protection, but if you are in a small vehicle and you hit a wall at 70mph well the results are clearly obvious.

There are also some benefits around I would say the social view in relation to drink driving is now that it is now totally unacceptable, and that is completely across the Board, across all social strata or opinion.

In relation to speeding, I do not think we have still got the message across society. The really major difficulties there are with excessive speed, and in some case hugely excessive speed, and of course that is the message we want to keep getting out and focusing our speed camera activities in those areas where it is of most benefit, not only to detect but also to deter.

If you look at the SPECS camera systems at Newry and the one that we currently have also out towards Bangor, that has had huge benefits in reducing the number of detections there and really has slowed down traffic and made it a lot safer.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Thank you very much indeed.

I am now moving to the questions on the order paper and I would ask Members to be disciplined in their supplementaries because we have a number to get through and I hope to finish promptly at 2 o'clock.

Question 2, is a question for the Human Rights and Professional Standards Committee, it is in the name of Martina Anderson and it is on the screen. Chief Constable.

Q2 - Can the Chief Constable assure the Policing Board that the investigation of the informants de-registered by PSNI in 2003 on the ground of intelligence (per Recommendation 3 of the Operation Ballast Report) by the HET Complex Inquiries Team personnel will not involve former or serving RUC/PSNI officers in any capacity?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I will ask ACC Jones to deal with that please.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr David Jones:

As people are probably aware, the Historic Enquiry Team (HET) is structured in a fashion that includes both external and internal staff and they are deployed on specific teams.

The specific team that is dealing with the Operation Ballast on behalf of the PSNI is the Complex Enquiries Team which is exclusively external staff. Obviously, the investigative response is being structured so that priority is given to the recommendations 1 and 2 within that report which deals with the most serious of offences which were highlighted within that report.

I think the issue is that, if I can think behind the question, is that certainly the decision making in relation to investigative strategies, the most senior decision making is actually taking place within that investigation involves not only myself, I have only just recently arrived, but also the Director of HET and the Deputy Director both of whom are external individuals.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Supplementary.

Ms Martina Anderson:

Thank you. It is not just basically decision making we are talking about here ACC Jones, the issue of independence is very very important and this is about integrity and confidence in the community dealing with the past. Without making reference to what report, but obviously there has been information out there recently in the media around HET so the concern within the community or some sections of the community, would be HET may be polluted in so far as you would have ex Special Branch or former Special Branch and ex RUC involvement in it. So, could you give an assurance to this Board that not just in the decision making process, but the 5 stages of investigation that would be taking place around intelligence gathering, resolution panel and assessment of exhibits, that throughout all of those 5 stages that there are no former Special Branch or ex RUC involvement?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

Chairman, it is appropriate that I deal with that. The Historic Enquiry Team to reinforce the independent nature of it still overall answers to me and that will remain in place and as you have observed, it is slightly unfair to ask ACC Jones a question when he has only just taken over. It is independent. Let us just go back a bit here. We set up the HET because nothing else was happening in terms of historic cases, and it has now become a focus for an interesting campaign externally suggesting we are not independent. Well, we fully accept we are not fully independent, we never said we were. The way we structured it was to make sure that (a) it had independent leadership and management which it does, and ACC Jones is another manifestation of that determination, and (b) within the investigative teams we would have those that were completely independent of Northern Ireland. That is no observation on the quality of colleagues who work here, but also many members of the community are more than happy and are very grateful to the work of retired colleagues who do work within the HET on other teams who have given very valuable feedback to those victims families on the murders of their loved ones. These of course include many of my own police widows and people from the Protestant community who had confidence in the police service and have had a very high quality of service from the HET. So, I do not want to get dragged into some debate of are we polluted or not, no we are not polluted, I

actually take slightly exception to that word. We are determined to deliver a free and independent service as best we can within the constraints we face. This is a unique challenge, I have presented this to Strasburg and I await with interest the observations of the Council of Ministers on their view on whether we are independent or not and I suspect that will come out fairly shortly.

In relation to the specific case of Ballast, it is independent and I do not know if I can reassure you any more. You referred to a draft report which is currently sadly available on the internet which we have some issues with, which we are going to deal with through a Committee of this Board and I will have fairly robust observations to make in relation to it, but I do think it is a testament to our transparency that we allow researchers in over a 2 year period to see what we are doing. It was a learning process, no-one has come up with anything better. It stands on its reputation and by that I mean, the judgement of the people we have looked after, that is victims.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

I should say as Chairman I have seen that report. I have read the report and I have asked for copies to be circulated to all Board Members. It will be considered at a Committee of the Board and the Chief Constable has agreed that he will come to that Committee and we will question him on that report.

Alex Maskey, supplementary to that.

Mr Alex Maskey:

Thank you Chairman, just to be very brief. I do not intend to open up a whole debate around the efficacy of HET or any other methodology, but the point that we were trying to make and I want to repeat again. I am personally on record even very recently, acknowledging very much the right of anybody to go to HET and acknowledge also that there have been quite a number of people, some of whom I have spoken to, have had some succour, comfort and solace from their engagement with HET. But the question that we are trying to address is, that there are quite a number of people out in the community who cannot have the same degree of confidence.

I know Chief Constable you have already agreed with this, so it is not something that we actually need to combat over, so the question we are trying to get at is, that there are a number of stages within your process, 5 in total. You have already acknowledged personally that there is a question of public confidence at least within certain sections of the community, and even within the structures, you have certain teams that would not have former members. I appreciate that people may well take exception, but the reality is, there are people out in the community out there who do not have confidence because they feel that it is not an independent process. Now, I do not think the HET actually even makes a point that it is totally independent, and in fact Dave Cox has made a recent presentation and made the point that cost is a ...

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Question Mr Maskey?

Mr Alex Maskey:

The question is, is the Chief Constable both cognisant of and I know he has already made the point himself, but can there be further steps even within the confines of HET to address the concerns of those people out in the community who have not availed of HET and who will tell you that they do not want to because they do not accept it as independent and that is the point. So, it is not a matter of combating or comparing one person's satisfaction with another's.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Do you want to say something further Chief Constable?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

We said from the word go we knew it was not going to work for everyone and I still stand by that. I think where you could take it, and certainly we are not precious in the sense of it being under police ownership, and if one looks at what Lord Eames and Dennis Bradley are reviewing at the moment, if for example it went in that direction I would be more than happy to see it transferred to a different independent oversight body or whatever they come up with. I have been very clear and told Lord Eames and Dennis Bradley and his people I am not precious about it.

We accept that it will never work for everyone, if it would help around the specific issues around Ballast for David Cox or Phil James to come back and brief individual Members, no problem with that at all, we can go through it chapter and verse and in some detail. What I would say is, I am quietly confident that I think there are some developments in those investigations which will probably do far more to reassure Members of our determination than anything I can say or do.

A point of information Chairman, I am not sure what you are going to circulate. As I understand it, it still has a draft status and we have sent submissions to it expecting, due to the inaccuracies in it, that some of it will be changed before it reaches its final form.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

All I can say is that, as I understand it, it was on the internet, so it cannot be confidential.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

It is also not a final product.

Mr Ian Paisley Jnr:

In light of that Chairman, it would be useful for us to have circulated the Chief Constable's corrections to the inaccuracies in that pretty atrocious report.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Question 3, and I should say for the benefit of our visitors, these 2 questions basically relate to this society struggling with the past and unsolved cases. Question 3 again relates to the HET and Operation Ballast, it comes from the Human Rights and Professional Standard Committee, it is in the name of the Chairman, Basil McCrea and it is on your slide.

Q3 - Is the Chief Constable satisfied with the HET Complex Inquiries Team position that the investigation required under Recommendation 3 of the Operation Ballast Report will remain outstanding for some time to come on the grounds of its prioritisation of investigations in relation to Recommendations 1 and 2?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

Hopefully we have covered most of it. I will ask ACC Jones to give some more information.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr David Jones:

Just reflecting on what the Chief Constable has just said really. I think the fact that Recommendation 3 has not been put aside, but has obviously been assessed in relation to Recommendations 1 and 2 in that report which focuses on the most serious of offences that arose out of the Ballast report. That we will see some positive outcomes in the not too distant future which again will endorse in what the Chief Constable has said should we assure not only Members, but the community, that there is a determination that where the evidence is available that we will obviously bring people to justice through the court process and regardless of whether or not they are informants or not.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Okay. Mr McCrea.

Mr Basil McCrea:

Can I say first of all, because it was probably missed at the start, that you are very welcome to Northern Ireland and actually this is Northern Ireland, it is not only policing going forward but policing going backward.

The reason for my Committee asking this question is to make sure that people get every opportunity to actually put out and have confidence, and that is the challenge that we want, and I would like an assurance, or just confirmation from you, that that is utmost in your mind about bringing this forward.

Just before you respond to that, can I just say for the record, that there were many, many, many fine RUC men and women in Special Branch that defended this community when the chips were really down and I reject any slur, that just because you were in the RUC does not mean to say that you cannot serve with integrity on any of these issues.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr David Jones:

I think just to respond to that, certainly conversations I have had with the senior management of HET is about trying to reach out to all members of the community about the work they are trying to do. We are certainly working closely with Lord Eames and Denis Bradley about the way the future may look.

I also think that what we need to do is, to be as open and transparent as we can be about the processes and what is actually taking place within, what is a unique concept within world policing. I think the other thing about the report that has mentioned, and the Chief Constable made this point, which I think is a really good one. There are not many organisations that will allow somebody with unvetted access for 2 years to come within their organisation to what appears to have been done, is a 'warts and all' view from that particular individual. Perhaps when we get before the Committee we can explain in detail some of the concerns, that not only the Chief Constable has, but also myself about the nature of that report.

I think the issue for me is that it is great to be in Northern Ireland. I think one of the issues for me is that my eyesight might be going trying to understand 40 years of history, maybe a bit longer, but one of the things I think as an observation is, that I am determined to follow the evidence wherever it leads, regardless of who that individual may or may not have been in the past.

I certainly echo the comments of the Chief Constable in relation to those individuals who work within HET, who may be part of PSNI who were ex RUC officers. There are systems and mechanisms in place to make sure there are certain propriety and ethical standards that take place.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Question that relates to disturbances that occurred in the Ardoyne area of North Belfast in 2005, it is in the name of Jimmy Spratt. Question 5 on your order paper Chief Constable and it is on your screen.

Q5 - To ask the Chief Constable if he believes that restricting the access to the Health and Safety Executive Report on the disturbances that occurred in the Ardoyne area of North Belfast in 2005, is in keeping with the policy of open and transparent policing; and to ask the Chief Constable if he can explain to the Board the reasons why he failed to release this report, given that he had received it in June?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I will deal with that in the first instance.

This is one of 3 reports Chairman in relation to the events of 2005, 2 of which are published and one of which remains to be awaited by the Police Ombudsman. Obviously, there is the Policing Board's own report which obviously you will all have read.

There is the Health and Safety one which was actually not commissioned, I do not own it. It was commissioned as a request by the Police Federation to look into a particular aspect of that disorder. It was produced, I have had it, the Board has it and the Police Federation obviously have it. It is not down to me to circulate it, I do not own it.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Jimmy Spratt.

Mr Jimmy Spratt:

Chief Constable, given that there were 195 police officers injured in this atrocious rioting on that particular evening, 5 of them permanently left the service, another 11, I understand still off with various degree of injuries, and given that the Health and Safety Executive is the agency that is tasked with investigating health and safety issues under an Act of Parliament. Given that the Human Rights report is already in the public domain, it seems absolutely ridiculous that this report is not also published. It appears

that it is not published at your behest and that of the Chief Executive of the Health and Safety Agency. Now, I think the officers who have left the service, the officers who were injured and the officers who had to wait 42 minutes to be allowed to use defensive baton rounds on that particular day, have a right to see that their human rights are also of paramount importance to this Board.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Mr Spratt, we do not want to get into detail on this because we will be debating it as a Board as you know.

Mr Jimmy Spratt:

I understand that but it is a matter of public interest and I would like an answer in public as to why this particular report is being suppressed because I think that is actually what is happening.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I am certainly not suppressing it. I will ask Mr Stewart to talk on the national dimension of this.

In broad terms, I know it is being discussed in another place. This was 2005, I was involved in the event. I was involved in the debate that followed the day after, and frankly I did not have to wait for a health and safety report to implement changes. I have had long conversations with the Police Federation's senior leadership. I have had conversations with Central Committee, they have the report. I am not sure what publishing it in a wider sense actually achieves but by way reassurance, let us be absolutely clear, I take the safety of my officers very seriously indeed and I have done since I have been here and any suggestion that I do not I would take exception to.

This was an extreme riot at the most serious end of the business, but I do not think one can take snapshots. I think if the debate is to had and I know it is at the Board and I intend to be there, we need to look at the Health and Safety report, we need to look at the Police Ombudsman's report and indeed, we need to look at the Human Rights report because they actually deal with different bits, so to 'cherry pick' is I do not think is particularly helpful. I do not know if Mr Stewart can just touch on the national picture.

Director of Human Resources, Mr Joe Stewart:

I lead for the Association of Police Chief Officers' in England and Wales in health, safety and welfare in the workforce. All I can say is that this report is a report of the Health and Safety Executive in Northern Ireland (HSENI). It is their report, it is up to them to publish. I happen to know that the Health and Safety Executive in England and Wales because I am dealing with them at a national level matter at the moment, sought access to the report themselves and were told by the Health and Safety Executive it was not their intention to publish the report. Hence, it is not for the Chief Constable to publish the report either, so it just exemplifies the way in which this matter has been dealt with by HSENI.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Ian Paisley Jnr as a supplementary.

Mr Ian Paisley Jnr:

There are a number of issues and I think Mr Spratt has touched on some of the most important ones. But first of all, could you actually maybe give us an update on the state of your officers, post this report, especially those who have been injured? I understand that there still are some very serious injuries to those officers and some of them are still not back to duty, maybe you could comment if that is the case?

The other issue which concerned me was the wider principle, that Gold Command that day was being observed that day by politicians, the most senior politicians in Northern Ireland. This has emerged as a result of reading this report, that the Secretary of State was perhaps even in the Gold Command Room. Now, that has been alleged. I want to know if your officers felt in any way restrained in having to do their duty because of this excessive observation. I believe that this a distinct line between a political action and a police action, and having the Secretary of State watching over your shoulder when you are doing your job I think is obsessive and if that is the case, I think that has to be examined.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

Again, it is a matter for the meeting we are going to have Chairman. It was not revealed in the report. It was not a secret that people visited the Gold Control Room during these extremely serious riots. I was there as was indeed the Deputy Chief Constable. It was commanded as everyone knows by ACC McCausland. A hugely difficult challenge and I think in my judgement, and my judgement is clear, I thought he did extremely well in what were very difficult circumstances. We have had the debate, a very constructive forward looking debate with the Federation the following day and if that is not a commitment to taking to listening and taking the views of ones officers very seriously indeed, I do not know what is. What came out of that debate, a number of things, one was clearly the historic idea of Gold controlling the deployment of baton rounds needed reviewing, which it was very quickly, but equally and fully accepted by a number of my TSG colleagues at that debrief, that some of the requests to deploy were far too early, so the notion that 42 minutes wait was a reasonable wait I think is a bit flawed.

In terms of the senior politicians, yes they were there. The only way we can get people to understand the complexity of policing is for them to have an opportunity to see what I am expecting my people to do. If anyone seriously thinks that the presence of the Secretary of State in a corner of a room being minded by me and the Deputy Chief Constable, interferes with the operation of the Gold Command which rested fully with ACC McCausland, then they do not know me, the Deputy Chief Constable or ACC McCausland very well indeed. There was no interference whatsoever. What there was was huge learning at every level. Indeed, the Secretary of State met and spoke to many of the TSG officers himself and as a result of which, understood far better what we ask our people to do and that was just after the morning when it was the lifting people of the roads event, so I think it is a fine balance.

To reassure our colleagues in the Federation, and this came up at their conference, they are now very much involved in the planning of these events to make sure they are reassured from the word go pre-event. That is another useful I think hugely constructive piece of learning. We have managed to create almost a goldfish bowl, a remote control room where members of the political community, indeed Members of the Board would be most welcome indeed. I know Members of the Board have visited, can sit and observe proceedings with another senior officer who can explain what is going

on, again to deal with the perception that there was interference, so that has been dealt with. Now, we are very good at looking backwards. I think the constructive debate around the Health and Safety report, the constructive debate around the Whiterock Parade Human Rights report has enabled us to move forward and again, I look forward to a full debate. I do think, however, it would be useful if we had the Ombudsman's report as well Chairman and I have made enquiries and I am told it is due in the near future. I think that would then give us the total view of other people who look into our world on a daily basis.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Will you find out formally when we are likely to receive that?

Question 9 relates doctors engaged in forensics and the degree of threat to them, it is in the name of Tom Buchanan.

Q9 - To ask the Chief Constable what level of threat is faced by doctors who work with forensics; and to ask the Chief Constable if there are areas of the province which they are prohibited from entering?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Drew Harris:

Just very simply, there is currently no intelligence to indicate that there is any form of dissident republican threat to doctors anywhere in Northern Ireland, and particularly those doctors who would have the title of Forensic Medical Officers who work within police establishments, so there is no threat whatsoever with regard to the intelligence we hold.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Any supplementary?

Mr Tom Buchanan:

I find that strange because I have been contacted by someone who said that there was certain areas that they could not go to until they first of all got security clearance.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Drew Harris:

That is entirely new to me. It may be a local arrangement, but if we can converse afterwards and find out precisely where that is happening and in what circumstances but that is not what we have within our information systems.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Question 20, relates to the area of alleged breaches of bail conditions over the past year, question 20 and it is on your screens now and it is in the name of Martina Anderson.

Q20 - To ask the Chief Constable to provide a breakdown by command area of the number of cases the PSNI have taken to the Courts for alleged breach of bail conditions over the past year, and whether or not the bail was subsequently revoked, (ii) to further detail the number of such cases which were repeatedly brought before the Courts and what the outcome of that process was on each occasion?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

Chairman, the Chief Constable has already referred to this in his opening summary and I can only repeat the figures, that there are a total of 349 cases have been brought before the courts for breach of bail conditions. 202 of these cases resulted in remand in custody and 147 resulted in persons being released with revised bail. Ms Anderson has asked for it in written context and I think that would probably be the best way because I have the breakdown here for each District in terms of total new bail and remanded in custody...

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

I think that would be helpful.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

....and rather than delay the meeting I think it would be better done that way. But if I could emphasise Chairman in closing, the comment I made about Causeway and the links across to Causeway, starting in terms of the Criminal Justice system on the

30 November 2008 will be critical because there is an issue in terms of potentially people being released on bail and then reoffending, and that is a concern that we have also.

The Chief Constable meets on a regular basis with the Lord Chief Justice to discuss such cases which are brought to his attention from District Command Units, and for example, if you take one example 'Street Safe' in West Belfast, there were over 157 detections for breach of bail conditions, 5 individuals were serial offenders and those were brought directly to the attention of the Lord Chief Justice. After this meeting, the Chief Constable and myself have a meeting with the Criminal Justice Board in relation to dealing with such events, but I will certainly put this in writing to the Board.

Ms Martina Anderson:

Thank you for that and I appreciate the fact I am going to get a more substantive answer in written form.

I have been dealing with a particular case in the city, and I know other people have been dealing with it and I know the PSNI locally, which I have been engaging with, are very frustrated about alleged offenders who are getting bail, breaching those bail conditions and then repeatedly getting bail even though they are going up before the court and not understanding, and the families do not understand, the community do not understand that the PSNI are frustrated as to why they set bail conditions and then, even if you get breaches of those bail conditions, someone can still get out. We are dealing with very very serious offences here. In one case, actual murder, and the family are distraught at what is going on with repeated breaches of the bail conditions, and still then the offender is getting bail again. So, I think, despite the fact that we have been hearing, and Mr Paisley Jnr made a comment earlier about what needs to happen in the Assembly, despite the fact that we have had comments over the last week or 2 or more, that police and justice is not an important issue, I think that with regards to what is happening out on the ground in our areas, and I include that across the north, that this is a very very serious issue. I know that the PSNI are equally as frustrated about the fact that we do not seem to have a system in place, where those people who are breaching bail conditions are going to jail, there seems to be a 'get out of bail' card as opposed to 'go straight to jail'.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

We would not disagree with you and certainly if any Members around the table or MLAs around the table can get us legislation that makes a breach of the bail a criminal offence, we would be more than delighted to support that. Like you and like the community, we at times are extremely frustrated when people get out in the revolving door of the criminal justice and the court system, and being the public face of the court system then we have to deal with the victim and explain what has happened. But, I know the Chief Constable has a very active discussion at times with the Lord Chief Justice and I will ask him to comment in a minute on that and I am sure it is brought up on a very regular basis.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

Thank you ACC McCausland for that introduction. This is a hugely complex issue. The point you make about murder, under current legislation the seriousness of the offence is not necessarily a good enough reason and in fairness to the judges, and I do raise individual cases with the Lord Chief Justice who does pursue them on our behalf and always, always reports back. The legislation does make it difficult on the basic principle of course of the right to freedom before you are convicted, so it is a complex mix. We have to make sure that we get our act in order in the sense that we always object to bail in appropriate cases, and I think most of the time we now have that pretty much sorted. I would not be surprised to see the odd case where we should be objecting perhaps when we are not objecting. But overall it is a complex issue, and we continue to raise it, but ACC McCausland is right it feeds back into the community very negatively and then impacts on us which is somewhat unjust but simply the reality of the situation, but we will continue to pursue these cases.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Question 25 relates to a question on something you spoke about earlier Mr Maskey.

Q25 - In identifying neighbourhoods within each area, how have PSNI engaged communities and has there been a consistent approach across Northern Ireland?

Mr Alex Maskey:

Thank you Chairman. I think that the correspondence the Chief Constable is having with the Lord Chief Justice is now under the pen name of 'angry mother of five'. But I think that certainly question 25 Chief Constable, and I know we had some discussion earlier on previously about this, but again we would like some understanding from yourselves, although we had an earlier presentation from Chief Superintendent Brian Maguire a week or 2 ago, just how important it is, that in identifying these neighbourhoods, these particular neighbourhoods, that that is done in consultation with people within those neighbourhoods.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

Chairman if I can address that briefly? The Chief Constable has already referred to the fact that every community is different and there are significant differences across Northern Ireland. The simple answer to Mr Maskey's question is in short, no. We do not have a set process. What we actually do is, we identify the uniqueness and that we ignore the 'one size fits all' approach.

Community Superintendents in each District, who are responsible for the implementation for the neighbourhood policing framework, decide on the form of engagement with the communities and the voluntary and statutory agencies in those unique communities. This is carried out in each District and has led to a detailed production of neighbourhood assessments across each District.

We have reported to the Community Engagement Board, which should be before the Committee next month, the issues in relation to the Policing Plan in demonstrating the progress and the implementation of neighbourhood policing framework. I believe I am before that Committee to discuss that, so I am more than happy, if Mr Maskey is happy, to refer the detail in this to the answer that has been written down and to discuss that at that Committee.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Thank you very much indeed. That concludes the business Chief Constable. We thank you and your officers for being here today and taking our questions and we thank the members of the public who have attended and the journalists.