

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD

MINUTES OF A MEETING IN PUBLIC OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 3 MAY 2006 AT 12:00 NOON IN WATERSIDE TOWER, BELFAST

PRESENT:

MEMBERS:

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

POLICE SERVICE OF NORTHERN IRELAND IN ATTENDANCE:

Sir Hugh Orde (Chief Constable)
Mr Paul Leighton (Deputy Chief Constable)
Mr Duncan McCausland (ACC Urban Region)
Mr Peter Sheridan, (ACC Crime Operations)
Mr Drew Harris (ACC Criminal Justice)
Mrs Judith Gillespie (ACC Rural Region)
Ms Sinead McSweeney (Director of Media and PR)
Chief Superintendent, Command Secretariat
Chief Inspector, Command Secretariat

OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr Trevor Reaney (Chief Executive)
Mr David Jackson (Director of Community Affairs)
Mr Sam Hagen (Director of Corporate Services)
Mr David Wilson (Director of Planning)
Mrs Sinead Simpson (Director of Policy)
2 Board Officials

Apologies

Apologies for non-attendance were received from Mr Cobain and Mr Kennedy.

NOTED.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Good afternoon everyone, Chief Constable and Senior Officers, members of the public and members of the press, you are welcome to the Northern Ireland Policing Board public session.

This, as you may know, is the first meeting in public of the newly reconstituted Policing Board. Since its reconstitution on 1 April 2006, the Board has met in private on a number of occasions, first to elect the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Board; and then to elect the Chairs and Vice-Chairs plus Members of the Board's Committees.

The Committee met for the first time last week to put in place the Board's programme of work for the coming months. As this is our first meeting in this forum, I would like to publicly welcome all Members here today, and particularly those who are new to the Board.

Over the past four and a half years, policing in Northern Ireland has gone through unprecedented change and the Policing Board has been at the forefront of that change. I am confident that the new Board will continue to effect this change and to hold the Chief Constable to account for the delivery of effective and efficient policing.

At the first meeting of the first Policing Board in November 2001, I set out my stall in terms of how I would deliver the Chairmanship and so it seems appropriate that I should reiterate that at this meeting today. I intend to approach the Chairmanship in the same way as I have done for the past four and a half years. I will continue to Chair this Board in an independent and impartial manner. I will not take sides but at all times, I will aspire first to act in the best interests of policing, secondly, to acting on behalf of and in the best interests of the whole community and thirdly, I will seek to interpret the mind and will of the Board in all that I do.

As a Board, we all have a responsibility to build upon the solid foundations laid by the previous Board in securing an effective, efficient, impartial and accountable police service for all the people of Northern Ireland.

So down to business.

During this public session the Chief Constable will present his latest policing report, but before I invite you to speak, Chief Constable, I would like to highlight two incidents that have taken place here in recent weeks which have attracted much public interest and media attention.

The first is the fatal shooting of Steven Colwell at a police checkpoint in Ballynahinch on 16 April 2006, and the second is the murder of James Connor, who died after being assaulted in Belfast City Centre on 26 April 2006.

With regard to the shooting of Steven Colwell, I would reiterate my condolences on behalf of the Board once again, to Mr Colwell's family. This is a tragic incident for all those involved. Irrespective of the circumstances of this incident, we must all remember that a life has been lost and a family is in grieving. This is also a traumatic event for the police officers involved in the incident. Police officers carry a tremendous burden of responsibility in policing our society, as this event clearly shows.

As I have already publicly said, the Police Ombudsman will report into the incident and we will carefully consider as a Board, the findings and any recommendations arising from it that come from the Ombudsman's Office. Members have tabled questions today on this issue.

With regard to the murder of Mr Connor, this was a completely unwarranted attack on a vulnerable member of our society. In recent months, attacks against older people have become a matter of increasing concern within the community and for this Board.

An increasing number of publicly profiled attacks against older people across Northern Ireland have undoubtedly heightened the fear of crime amongst this section of our society. It is unacceptable that people should not feel safe walking the streets of their towns or cities in broad daylight, or sitting in their own homes. We all have a

responsibility to help make communities safer, but the public also needs reassurance that the police are doing everything within their power to prevent these attacks from happening and to arrest those responsible for such attacks. Today, Chief Constable, I hope that you can provide the public, and the Members of this Board, with this assurance.

Could I also make mention at this session today of the death of a police officer, Constable Steven Mervin Campbell was killed in a karting accident at Kirkistown on Saturday last and I know that the funeral is at 1:00pm today and on behalf of the Board we will be sending our condolences to his widow and their family.

At this point Chief Constable over to you and welcome to you and your colleagues.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

Thank you Chairman, today is the day we update you on the performance overall of how the Police Service of Northern Ireland has been doing in tackling crime.

If I could go to the first slide which shows a broad overview going back to 2002 which shows that the trend over the last 4 years really has been a good one down 14%, although we have seen a slight increase this year which I will come onto in more detail now.

If we move to the next slide, this slide for the benefit of new Members here shows us and compares our performance in broad terms against forces which we would say are of a similar population and indeed, to some extent similar demography, although we are slightly larger at 1.7million or thereabouts.

The overall crime rise this year has been 4% which takes us to 112,000 plus crimes and is still the lowest overall number of crimes within that comparative group but it is an increase on last year which, of course, causes us some concern. I should say, these figures relate to the last 11 months. Currently I am tied to national statistics, which means I cannot announce the 12 month figure until the end of next week. I intend to break free of that procedure next year so we can update this meeting properly like all my colleagues in other police forces are able to do so at this time of year. It is just one

of those little bits of history we have not quite fixed yet, so these are all figures for 11 months not 12. That having been said, I do not anticipate significant shift in the next 4 weeks, but again, what that shows is that it has gone up slightly.

If one breaks that increase down and across the United Kingdom this year, rises in crime have been broadly flat across the piece, obviously some movement within different categories. The extra crime here, just over 3,000 crimes can be accounted for in the following way.

Over 1,300 of these crimes are new offences, that is to say, crimes that were not recorded last year, so these are new offences so we would anticipate crime going up by 1,355 non-molestation orders. These are orders issued by a court to prevent people assaulting, normally in domestic violence, their spouses every offence obviously by definition is normally an arrest as well so these are crimes that are quite properly now accounted for but were not accounted for last year.

The Whiterock parade which I will not go into the detail again because Members are fully aware of them, an additional 600 offences can be attributed to that particular event, again we hope a unique event in the history of parading in Northern Ireland as we face the season this year.

Six hundred and eighty seven extra victims of domestic violence, now we think that is a confidence issue, we do believe we are getting more people coming forward to give information around domestic violence, so we think this is a very positive sign, albeit it obviously impacts on our overall crime figures. I think people are telling us more which gives us opportunities to move in to protect vulnerable people early in these situations.

A number of districts have run quite substantial campaigns and initiatives in relation to domestic violence which we also believe do feed through into this. If one just takes for example West Belfast, 47% of people reporting domestic violence this year have been victims for the first time and that is a very positive and encouraging trend that gives us an opportunity to do some very good work to make these people safe.

An additional focus on drugs has led to another 256 additional offences, now everyone of those will have been an arrest because the vast majority, 99.9% of drugs offences are detections, that is how they get recorded, so that shows more work, more success

certainly by the Drugs Squad and districts focusing on drugs crimes, which I will again touch on later. Also dangerous driving offences are included in these figures, an increase of 139 detections on last year and Members will be aware, as will members of the public, that there is one very high profile case currently going through the courts. There are more work and more effort in those, we do think it counts for a significant number of other offences, just over 3000 are accounted for in that slide, so we would argue, that whilst it obviously causes us a concern that there have been movements within some of the statistics, the increase has been relatively marginal, that does not mean we will be complacent.

If I could move on again. Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary Baseline Assessment groups us with these forces, which are we would argue, quite different to ours but it is worthwhile I think putting the slide up. Again, the total number of reported crimes in Northern Ireland are far less than in these other areas. The populations are different but what it does show is we have increased by 4% compared to Merseyside 3%, West Yorkshire (Colin Cramphorn, an Ex Acting Chief Constable here) down 1% and Greater Manchester an increase of 1%, but you will see by the overall figures those figures must be taken in context, this is still a safe place to live.

Again, moving on to some slightly more detail around the issues that concern us the most, and are indeed part of our targets. Domestic burglary we are pleased to say is down 1.8% this year, that is the 4th year in a row we have reduced burglary. It is less substantial than increases achieved by other police services but we had some huge decreases in previous years which we are determined to continue. At my meeting this morning with my senior management team, I think we are going to have to redouble our efforts on burglary this year to achieve the challenging target the Board has set, whilst we continue to manage the change process. This we will be committed to doing but it is a big challenge for us and we are looking at all sorts of ways of delivering that, including as we discussed this morning, we are going to have a meeting with all our District Commanders just to redouble our efforts and to see if some districts have some best practice which we can make sure is delivered elsewhere within the other parts of our organisation.

Vehicle crime, again vehicle crime in Northern Ireland is roughly half. As you can see by the figures of that of our comparative forces, there again, down 22% this year, now that is just a huge decrease. I think we would like to claim a number of initiatives that have delivered that to some extent, but also we must bear in mind that vehicle technology has moved on. It is getting harder to steal cars, that obviously impacts on our creeper burglaries because people are stealing cars through different means, but much of that is due to a very clear focus I think at district level on crimes which we have been set to clear targets on and our violent crime clearance detection rate is up on last year and is currently standing at 52% which I think positions us very well within other police services. It would be right to say that the clear up rates in rural region are higher than that in urban region, that is not surprising with the nature of the crimes and the populations in those districts does explain that to a large extent.

The following slide is again just to show by way of other forces on the map, where are we in trying to distil crimes down to a universal benchmark of crimes per 10,000 of a population, you will see we are in the middle of the range of those other forces, with 185 violent crimes per 10,000 people and in total in Northern Ireland, that is just over 31,000 offences.

To break that down in a bit more detail on the next slide. In terms of offences against the person, some interesting figures here, I have asked for some more work to be done on the decrease in sexual offences because that slightly surprises me. It is a minor decrease and a welcomed decrease but we need to look at the underlying facts behind that. In terms of the robberies which are an increase, a substantial amount of those were again sadly as a result of the marching season and vehicle highjackings which are classified as robbery. ACC McCausland will remind me of the number - 167 offences over the marching seasons in relation to Whiterock and the fallout from that in relation to vehicles being highjacked does account for the significant majority of that increase.

In terms of local initiatives, we have picked out 3 where some substantial effort has been put in. Certainly in Strabane in relation to some of the more serious offences of robbery, what we would call the kidnappings where people are kidnapped and then their premises robbed, an awful lot of effort has been put in in relation to that. Likewise, in terms of sadly the more routine day to day domestic violence. A situation in Strabane, a dedicated investigation unit certainly has paid dividends in making sure of a

proper and effective response with people being prosecuted regularly has had some substantial impact.

In Craigavon, a hotspot analysis has certainly assisted in reducing the crimes in that area and certainly working very closely with the council and drugs and alcohol rehabilitation trusts have actually helped, as well as providing a bus to get people out of the way quickly and take them home rather than hang around in the streets after events.

In Castlereagh, we picked that one out because that is very much around a partnership with managers of local licensed premises and the links between drinking and violence, as well as proactive patrolling of robbery hotspots, and indeed I believe even some horses were seen patrolling in that area some time over the last month.

In terms of tackling crime in partnership, Urban region has worked particularly hard and, as I have said, different areas have performed differently but I think it is important to note, that within our largest population areas we have managed to reduce crime by 1.6%, again a variety of initiatives but just a couple we have pulled out. One is around getting people to be responsible around the use of scrambler type motorcycles, quad bikes which do cause us some concern, certainly the use of young people and those and the links to anti-social behaviour and working in partnership with community centres, a lot of work has gone in on that particular initiative.

In Lisburn, working with the Department of Education, a school alert scheme to make sure schools are aware of suspicious people hanging around outside, those sorts of issues to make sure people feel safer and well informed of what is actually going on, that does include text messaging and e-mail systems as well.

Moving on to domestic burglary where I did report a 1.8% decrease in the year to date and we think that will be sustainable. Within that, substantial differences and that is what I am very interested in getting to the bottom of. It is true that our high volume burglary areas are Belfast, North Belfast have reduced it by 40% that is a substantial decrease in one particular part of our city, that is very much around hotspot analysis, focused patrolling and the proactive targeting of offenders through forensic science, DNA and fingerprints in particular and vigorous checking of people on bail. When we

charge people and they get bail from the courts then we have a system in to make sure the conditions imposed by the courts are quite properly, be they curfews, be they areas of exclusion, are policed proactively. So, we check where these people are and make sure they are not out committing further offences. I think it would also be fair to say that in driving responsibility for burglary down to the lowest level, the sector officers have also made a bigger impact in Belfast.

Foyle again, one of our areas where we would be concerned about burglary. Very much intelligence lead operations by the crime team we would say have led to the reductions there. Likewise I think in Newtownabbey, but interestingly again proactive use of Neighbourhood Watch, so it is the police and the community accepting responsibility for crime reduction is what we would say would be very important and to date there are now 8 Neighbourhood Watch projects in Newtownabbey districts and a direct consequence of that we would argue is a reduction of nearly a quarter of their burglaries.

Moving on to drugs, again the target has changed here but I think 2 things strike me on these figures. One is, if you look at the opiates and problem cocaine users per 1,000 population, Northern Ireland is in a different league to the rest of the United Kingdom in terms of it is the lowest but what worries me is the increase in cocaine. I remember when I came here we hardly saw any cocaine in Northern Ireland, we are now seeing a reasonable amount, what is important is we are seizing more of it through the effective intelligence lead operations from our Drugs Squads, but that is an area that concerns me. What we are not seeing here is crack cocaine and that is quite interesting, again that is an issue for major concern but we will continue to deal with all levels of drugs and we have a specialist unit that focuses specifically on it as you are fully aware.

Finally, the custody bail figures which have been a constant thorn in my side since I have been here, I am pleased to report we are almost at the targets we have been set, that does not mean we are complacent, I think much of that has been down to the successful implementation of new technology to speed up the process. I think working far more closely with the Prosecution Service so we know what we need to provide them with before we send the files up, getting the files right first time. I think it is also fair to say, additional training for our supervisors to make sure that they we have been recently training all our sergeants to make sure they supervise these very effectively

and very quickly, has got us to a situation where I can almost report success, but not quite.

That is really the overview Chairman, I am happy to take questions on it or if you want to do any more detail I am happy to go into it.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

I will take you in a moment Mr Paisley.

First question arising from the Performance Monitoring Statistics, Mrs Moore.

Mrs Rosaleen Moore:

Chief Constable, the question relates actually to the projected increase in violent crime by 4% over the 2005/06 period and, while you have covered quite a bit of it in your presentation, is there anything else you would like to add in relation to the action being taken to redress the trend.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I would ask ACC McCausland to come in on what he is doing in relation to violent crime and then ACC Gillespie or the other way around.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mrs Judith Gillespie:

If I speak about Rural Region first and then ACC McCausland will speak about Urban.

Violent crime has increased in Rural Region by 2.7%, that is 416 crimes and the clearance rate has also increased, that is from 55.1% to 59.4% so that is a welcome increase on the clearance rate. Violent crime includes offences against the person that is common assault, occasioning actual bodily harm, grievous bodily harm, sexual offences and robbery. In Rural Region, whilst robbery and sexual offences have seen a slight increase, the main increase in violent crime is in the offences against the person classification and interestingly, we are also seeing quite a substantial increase in offences of harassment. The largest rises are in assault occasioning actual bodily harm which is up by 2.9%, harassment up by 39.7% and assault on police up by 12.3%. Some of this might be explained by a continuing change in the political climate and a move towards normal policing, especially in the area of assault on police. Police are

more often to be seen, especially during the night-time economy periods, out on foot in yellow visible jackets and intervening in violent situations at an earlier stage than perhaps we might have been able to do before.

Another very important trend, as the Chief Constable has already referred to, is domestic violence. Reported domestic violence incidents in Rural Region are up by 14.14% and offences are also up by 11.9%. Again, the Chief Constable has already referred to the fact that many of those victims are first time reporters, and if I can illustrate that by a number of examples from districts. In Fermanagh, 380 out of 523 domestic violence victims are first time reporters. In Newry and Mourne, 592 out of 920, that is very much to be welcomed that people are feeling confident enough to come forward and report those offences to the police.

Assault on police I have already mentioned and a number of steps have been taken across the region in an attempt to tackle violent crime. Media and awareness campaigns around domestic violence have been run, and it has certainly impacted on aggravated assault and harassment figures. Many districts have initiatives in response to the night-time economy violent crimes by developing partnerships with the local councils, fast food outlets, club owners and door staff. Initiatives include the erection of public conveniences, training of door staff, use of CCTV, public transport to get people home and as I have already mentioned, officers patrolling in high visibility gear.

I am sure my colleague from Urban Region will also want to add to those initiatives as well.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

Thank you Chairman. To very briefly summarise Urban, we show a 5.3% increase in violent crime which is approximately 900 more victims. ACC Gillespie has highlighted most of the key areas which I will not look to repeat but again for my region, it is offences against the person up 5%, robbery offences are up 18.6%, assaults on police offices up 10% and intimidation and harassment offence is up 21%. Taking away the issue as the Chief Constable has mentioned in relation to Whiterock where there were 600 odd offences, there is still an increase which is a concern for my commanders and highlighting specifically on how we are going to tackle that issue, we are looking at, as the Chief Constable has highlighted, crime pattern analysis where we are looking to

deploy our officers and resources at the right time to make the greatest impact, both in terms of reassurance and visibility, hotspotting of crimes and identifying hard core offenders to take action against them.

ACC Gillespie has already mentioned media campaigns both with local DPPs at the local level and across the whole of the country. We want to continue in Belfast our efforts in relation to building up relations at community interfaces across Belfast to reduce tension and disorder. ACC Gillespie has already highlighted domestic violence and we are piloting in a number of my districts, a new risk assessment for the Service in terms of potentially tackling domestic violence but again, emphasising the proactive arrest policy.

We have a number of areas where we are promoting community safety zones in town centres, for example, both Larne and Belfast are award winners which the Board will be aware of and we are looking to expand that out further.

There is ladies and gentlemen, a growing public confidence to report incidents of violence, down I feel to the professional investigation that is being delivered, the Service standards of the Chief Constable is talking about and also the Service drive to maximise our forensic strategy.

I have already mentioned the partnership development with District Policing Partnerships and Community Safety Partnerships working to reduce crime, for example, that we will be coming this month to use your aware and your involvement in the Night Crime Awareness Campaign, when we will look to tackle the issue of night crime together as a community and that will put the emphasises on education, enforcement and surrender.

In conclusion, ACC Gillespie has highlighted the Night-Time Economy. In Belfast, you are aware of our Tilley Award Winner "Get Home Safe" which is looking to be refreshed and renewed. We have now introduced a new scheme in Bangor – "Bangor against night time disorder" which emphasises a night bus scheme linking CCTV, door registration scheme, a bar radio scheme, the proof of age scheme and joint patrolling with council enforcement officers and we are looking to take that across, not just my

region, but into ACC Gillespie's area as well and it will hopefully be piloted soon in Lisburn and Banbridge.

We feel putting all that together and with the help of the community that we hopefully will be able to show a reversal of this trend next year when we sit before you in 12 months time.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

A question relating to the welcome trend in clearances, Ms Mac Bride, question 2.

Ms Deirdre Mac Bride:

Chief Constable, the overall number and percentage of crimes cleared is likely to show an increase this year 2005 – 2006 compared to last year 2004 – 2005, could you outline some of the factors that have contributed to this welcomed trend please?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

Again my colleagues from the regions may wish to comment but very briefly, I think it is around increasing the focus and responsibility. It is about empowering districts to get on with delivering local policing and to accept the responsibility for solving the crimes in local areas I think has increased, that is one of the reasons. I think increased skills in detectives, our detective training rollout is a huge programme but it has certainly given us more skills in terms of people with the right skills to interview people when they are arrested and to solve the crimes. So in broad terms, I think it is just around increasing professionalisation of the Service but I do not know if there are any specifics that ACCs McCausland and Gillespie may wish to touch on.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mrs Judith Gillespie:

The crime clearance rate for rural region is currently at 34.3% that is an increase of 1.9% on the same period last year and I think that would compare favourably with any region in the rest of the United Kingdom.

As I mentioned previously, violent crime clearance has increased by 4.3% and a lot of that is down to partnership working and the measures introduced to encourage domestic violence reporting and investigation as well.

There have been significant cross-border and other multi-agency operations resulting in the seizure of vast quantities of counterfeit goods and those seizures are generally accompanied by arrests as well, so continued proactive police action against fuel laundering and counterfeit goods has contributed to the clearance rates as well.

The Policing Plan target to increase the quantity of drugs seized has also a two edged effect, in that the more proactive operations we run against drugs generally the more detections and the more arrests we get, therefore the clearance rate also rises.

Dangerous driving detections have seen a significant rise as well, an increase of 31% and that is again a function of proactive and robust policing on the roads. I have already mentioned domestic violence clearance rates have increased significantly by 5.7% and they are now at 79%, I think the fact that some DCUs are reporting a significant drop in repeat offenders is a measure of tangible success in relation to police action around domestic violence.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

Very briefly Chairman, in relation to Urban I am showing a 1% increase in my detection rate from this time last year, up to around 25.5% which in real terms is 500 more crimes that have been solved. The key for us has been a number of key issues and ACC Gillespie has highlighted some of them. For example, the whole Service, we feel we are working smarter. The development of the National Intelligence Model and producing clear focused policing, it has led to greater resources being deployed in a more efficient manner and to better results being produced. The Board will be aware of the partnership working that we have taken forward with the DPPs but over 100 Neighbourhood Watch schemes now exist in Northern Ireland which is a great assistance to us with the community helping in policing.

Many districts have created Volume Crime Units to pursue evidential forensic leads such as DNA and fingerprints that have been recovered from the scenes of crime and then help compile the prosecutions to maximise bringing offenders before the court. We have looked to link our CCTV footage from commercial premises which are dotted across the province in with police CCTV to help identify offenders and you will hear more of that later. We have also developed crime teams in many districts and at regional level to maximise the use of the RIPA powers to identify and apprehend

offenders in relation to volume crime. For example, in the last 6 months since we have introduced a crime team in urban region, they have recovered over £500,000 worth of stolen property. There are over 100 additional clearances for the districts in terms of detecting people that are falling into the areas of disqualified driving, burglary, theft from vehicles, deception, money laundering, robbery, possession of drugs and possession of firearms and these are prolific crime teams that have been out there which this unit has focused on and broken up for the districts.

ACC Gillespie has already mentioned the issue of domestic violence, and again I re-emphasise our proactive arrest strategy. I also have to mention the improving file preparation and processing. The Chief Constable has already mentioned that investigating officers and supervisors are made accountable for quality control and minimum service standards to be delivered and that is very important and I cannot ignore the robust approach we are taking to repeat offenders, in terms of both bail and court hearings and checking bail conditions. We feel, along with the proactive policing of public disorder that has accumulated in increased public confidence, that people are prepared to come forward and give evidence and support policing and by doing that, it has led to the increase in the detections.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Chief Constable, to sum up in this question.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

Just really by way of a couple of examples. ACC Gillespie made the point and it is well made, that if you look at our increase in crime much of it is because police have been doing more, be it around drugs, be it around counterfeit goods, be it around reaching perhaps parts of Northern Ireland which were more challenging to reach in the past.

If I just look at my Intellectual Property Crime Unit for example, in the last 6 weeks they have recovered over £1½ million of counterfeit goods, now that includes the vast majority being counterfeit films and DVDs, but also a substantial amount of counterfeit tobacco and cigarettes are coming into this country and the staggering thing about this, not just the volumes we are seizing, but the fact that people are prepared to sell these lethal weapons to their own communities. The counterfeit cigarettes coming into Northern Ireland are made extremely cheaply, there is huge money to be made in it, but

the reason they are cheap is because they are lethal. They carry very high tar levels, very high impurity levels and people are prepared to buy them in the mistaken believe they are simply getting one over on the Exchequer, these things are extremely dangerous and we are putting in a huge effort. On one operation, over 100,000 cigarettes were seized by our officers and those are cigarettes that will not be sold to young people and older people around Northern Ireland.

A major operation in Foyle led to the arrest of 16 people for money laundering offences, 7 of which have been charged with 25 serious offences around money laundering. In Ballymoney another major operation around counterfeit goods, led to over £55,000 worth of cash and £62,000 worth of property being taken. A very well publicised operation on the 9 March 2006 on the border region, working very closely with An Garda Siochana, 130,000 litres of fuel, 7 vehicles, substantial documentation, on our side of the border and south of the border a lot of cash, £570,000 worth of cheques, 3 more fuel tankers, 7,000 litres of illegal fuel and all of these offences, because they are driven by police action, of course lead to an increased clear-up rate. So, I think the message is, we are reaching every part of Northern Ireland, we have the technology, we have the people, we have the commitment and we will continue to do it.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Two more questions on performance, Mr Ian Paisley Jnr.

Mr Ian Paisley Jnr:

Thank you Chairman. Whilst acknowledging the very hard work carried out by your officers on the ground and also remembering that over a year ago when we looked at the performance figures, it was indicated that publicly we had hoped that we could get crime down below 100,000 per annum. Can I say that what I am detecting today, despite your very positive presentation, is a great deal of spin. Let us be clear, these figures are not good enough. The public do not believe these figures are good enough.

When you break them down into each of the areas, 10% increase in crime in the stats that we have in front of us in rural region. We have a pushing of certain crimes from the cities into the countryside, in particular car crime and domestic burglaries and whilst I acknowledge that there is hard work being done, this is the first time I believe in possibly 2 or 3 years where the crime statistics have turned, they have done a u-turn,

instead of going down there is now going to be an upward trend. I think many people will want to know and indeed I would add to that, an upward trend at a time whenever compared to the other regions of the UK that you have compared yourself to, you have more officers per head of population than those regions as well.

People will want to know have the police taken their eye of the ball, are they resting on their laurels, what are they really going to do to ensure that this turnaround is turned back and that we start to see crime going on a downward trajectory, not an upward trajectory. I mean, is it the case that we need more officers deployed, do we need a change in where officers are currently being deployed, from the city to the rural region, do we need more detectives with skills employed, do we need a lateral entry programme to address some of these issues because frankly, I do not believe your figures today are good enough. I think we can do better and we must do better and I hope you can outline to us a programme for the next 12 months on how we will achieve that.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

Chairman, I thought I had. No we have not taken our eye of the ball, no we are not resting on our laurels, my colleagues have described what is going on and we try to do what is a sensible analysis of the figures.

Northern Ireland is still and I think we need to be very clear on this, is still a safe place to live. My officers are completely committed to protecting communities and I think what these figures show is exactly that. Now if by arresting more people you are describing as a failure then I have some difficulty with that but a large number of the additional arrests ...

Mr Ian Paisley:

I did not use the word failure, I said the figures were not good enough Chief Constable, do you think the figures are good enough?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

If you would just let me finish Chairman, proactive operations that lead to increased arrests, arrests of people who have not been arrested before, significant seizures of

cash, not only by us but obviously by our colleagues in the Assets Recovery Agency show that this organisation is fit for purpose. That does not mean we are complacent.

No-one around this table is complacent, we would like to see, I remember the discussions last year to get to 100,000, we want to get lower than that, but I think there needs to be a reality check on what is achievable, just by the police. This is a joint operation and what my colleagues have described, I think quite forcibly, is where you are seeing increasing interaction with communities, be it Neighbourhood Watches, be it more information, be it being people being more confident to come forward, those are all very positive but can have an impact on the crime figures one way or the other, so it is not as simple as saying an increase in crime overall is a bad thing, we need to drill beneath that.

Now I am happy to go into substantial detail with the Board on some of those issues at a time of your choosing but this is a complicated picture. I mean in terms of car crime, we have a rate of car crime that is roughly half the national average, now that did not happen by accident, it happened by a lot of hard work, not just by police officers, but by police and communities, Operation Cleanup, those sorts of events, people making it very clear that we are going to deal with these issues around "run arounds" for example which were a scourge in all communities and we have proved we can do that. But I would want to reassure you Chairman that we are certainly not taking our eye off the ball and we certainly would like to do better, that is accepted.

Mr Ian Paisley Jnr:

I will just make it clear, I did not characterise the report as a failure, I said the figures were not good enough. If you want to characterise them as a failure that is the Chief Constable's choice of words. He used the example of car crime, car crime is up 5.7% in rural region, we have seen an increase in my own constituency, 13% increase in car crime, in Magherafelt 75% increase. Now I think these are the police figures and I think we have got to address those issues and make sure that instead of getting away from the characterisation that the Chief Constable tried to put on my question, that we address the issues. These figures are not good enough, let us make them better next time round.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Question 12 which we were very concerned in the private session about road accidents and this relates to performance as well, Mr Peter Weir.

Mr Peter Weir:

Chief Constable, in light of the continuing appalling tally of deaths and injuries caused by road accidents in Northern Ireland, particularly I think involving young people, what additional measures or schemes are the police pursuing or intending to pursue to reduce the number of these terrible accidents?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

It is an issue that is very high on our agenda. We have 270 officers in Roads Policing who are dedicated to do road traffic law enforcement. Despite what Members may have heard, I have no intention in reducing that by one, so the central commitment to roads policing, never mind the commitment from districts will remain. I think traffic accidents are a classic example where police have a major role to play but without the education of road users, and engineering with our colleagues from Roads Services to try and minimise the risks, we are always going to be struggling, and I think what we have shown is, by partnership we are getting there, but there is a long way to go.

We have a number of initiatives, there is Operation Road Safe which is a major operation and sadly over this weekend, we arrested over 40 people for drinking and driving, that is on one weekend on Operation Road Safe. I think about 1200 offences, ACC McCausland you will correct me if I am wrong, in one weekend of road users, so there is a major enforcement issue which we are committed to dealing with. There is also an education issue to make people realise that drink driving and speed are the main contributors to people dying on the roads in Northern Ireland.

We will continue to run our high profile Drink and Drug Driving and Anti Speeding Campaigns. More technology is coming on line, we are using the cutting edge technology will be coming in on the A1 which is a speed camera system which measures speed between 2 points. The big positive of that is, that it actually makes people slow down over a distance rather than the current speed camera that intend to focus on one location. The harsh reality is, speed kills people and those that do not like speed enforcement, and I have to say it is not seen as universally popular, many of my

chief officers at DPP meetings are criticised for speed enforcement, but by enforcing these limits and by putting this technology in, we are actually keeping people alive which allows them to moan about it but the point is, it is very important and we will continue to use technology where it is appropriate to do so.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Two final questions on performance, Mrs Pauline McCabe and then Mr Joe Byrne.

Mrs Pauline McCabe:

I just wanted to clarify and it is really based on a few cases that were raised recently with me. Given the improved technology and given the general overall improvement in the custody and bail figures for the relatively small number of districts that are still serious off target, what would be the explanations for that?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

Is that in relation to case preparation? I will ask my 2 colleagues to give an answer on that.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

Very simply, you may well find there are historical cases which are very difficult and detailed files. For example, in CARE and serious offences files that are for example, the Lisburn case. If you look at Lisburn they are off-target. There is an historical issue catching up on those files and they will gradually, that is why you see Lisburn used to be on bail over 30% away they are now around 8% away because those files have now been subsumed into the system and cleared. We had a backlog of files which have been cleared through because of the introduction of the technology we have brought through with the Criminal Justice System which is now improving, and what you should see and I am pleased to report, which the Chief Constable will be aware of soon, that both regions are on target and above target in the new financial year, in fact we are producing around 97% in both areas meeting the targets that have been set because the new technology has come on line.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mrs Judith Gillespie:

I will just reiterate what ACC McCausland has said that in terms of the whole year figures, some districts have been penalised by the start of the year when they had a very poor start due to staff issues, sickness or whatever but they have caught up and if you look at the last few month's performance they are hitting, in fact exceeding the targets so because the figures are taken for the whole year period, unfortunately they are penalised for a bad start at the beginning of the year, but as ACC McCausland says, you will see a substantial improvement come the new year and the new technology which has been introduced.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Mr Joe Byrne.

Mr Joe Byrne:

Chairman, I generally welcome the positive indicators in relation to the solving of a lot of crime but there are 2 issues. In relation to drugs crime I would say that the public at large are still concerned that there are still some paramilitaries greatly involved in drugs and the PSNI are still not able to cut it out. I would say however, there has been a marked improvement in the tackling of organised crime relating to fuel, cigarettes and counterfeiting of goods, so I would like to know, why is it that the PSNI have not yet managed to crack the paramilitary control of drugs?

Secondly Chairman, in relation to the figures on the custody and bail figures. Can the Chief Constable assure the Board that prosecuting officers attached to courts are not going to accommodate the interests of lawyers who continually want to have young people returned for adjournments continually over a 2 or 3 year period, which is largely at the pleasure of the lawyers and not to the victims or indeed to the young people who are charged with crimes?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

If I deal with the first bit around drugs. I highlighted the seizures, but if I can just go back to last month in April to what the Drugs Squad do. We took out 90 kilos of cannabis in relation to one operation over 20/21 April 2006, that is £450,000 worth of drugs seized on one operation plus recovering nearly £6,000 in cash. On the following day we recovered a further 36.2 kilos of cannabis and one kilo of cocaine and 350

ecstasy tablets, that was actually a search of a forest, so we are committed to doing it, it does not mean we are there yet, I would agree with that. We put huge effort into cannabis which both those seizures are because we know the links between drugs supply and paramilitary activity and whereas many forces do not see cannabis as a priority, it still is very much a priority in Northern Ireland for that reason alone because we know they are linked to a dissident paramilitary activity, so I would like to reassure you it is something that we have not taken our eye of the ball with.

In terms of custody and bail, well of course we do not prosecute now, the Public Prosecution Service prosecutes. I could not agree more and much work is going on in relation to delay in the whole criminal justice system. I do not know if ACC Harris wants to cover any of those issues in more detail, but I could not agree more, we need to get people through the courts more quickly and get the cases heard rather than continually being adjourned.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Drew Harris

In relation to delay in the criminal justice system, we have seconded a superintendent to a Delay Action Team that is to report by mid June on just what we can do to bring down the whole processing time within the criminal justice system. That is under the auspices of the of the Criminal Justice Board led by the NIO but that will be worked on in a report in June and that will add to the work that has already been done in the organisation about tackling both the issues of quality of investigations and the timing of them.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Question on the use of firearms by police officers, question 9, Ms Purvis.

Ms Dawn Purvis:

Thank you Chairman. Chief Constable, could I ask you to brief Members if you would on the PSNI's general policy on the use of firearms by police officers, the post incident management of such events and clarify the guidelines if you would for consideration of the conduct of any officer involved. Also could I ask you, notwithstanding the ongoing investigation by the Police Ombudsman into the recent shooting of Stephen Colwell, could I ask you if you have any general comments to make on this incident?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I will ask DCC Leighton to cover those points.

Deputy Chief Constable, Mr Paul Leighton:

Firstly, I would associate ourselves with the comments of the Chairman in sending our condolences to the Colwell family and also in recognising how traumatic an incident this was for the officers involved. I was there and spoke to the officers on the day and I know it was a very very traumatic incident for them as well, although obviously the death of Stephen Colwell has to be regretted in whatever circumstances.

The general policy on the use of firearms are contained in our General Order entitled "Human Rights and the Police Use of Firearms" which shows that there is a heavy emphasise on the human rights aspect of training and as you know and the Board also know, the PSNI requested Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary last year to conduct a review of our Firearms Policy and our Procedures in Training and we have now had the recommendations of that report and we are in the process of implementing them.

The current policy sets down very strict guidelines for the police use of firearms and as the title suggests, and I have mentioned before, places very heavy reliance on the Human Rights Act. I can go through some of them, I know Board Members have access to this General Order but some of the highlighted paragraphs would be *"the degree of force used in order to achieve a lawful objective must be proportionate to the mischief it is intended to prevent..... Only in the most extreme circumstances where life is endangered or there is a risk of series injury, may the use of lethal force be justified"* and there are several parts of the General Order that highlight the guidelines for officers. Every officer attending firearms training receives an input on human rights and the proportionality of firearms use before they are allowed to undertake any firearms training. This happens every time they attend firearms training, so there is an emphasise on how officers should approach the use of firearms as well as just the technical use of firearms.

With regard to the consideration of the conduct of any officer involved in an incident, obviously any use of firearms is reported immediately to the Ombudsman and the Ombudsman conducts an investigation. We, therefore, have very little information about the actual investigation, that is the Ombudsman's and we are reliant upon the

Ombudsman making a recommendation or informing us of certain issues within that investigation that warrant further action and we keep in close contact with the Ombudsman on that point.

With regard to the actual incident, it was an awful incident on a Sunday afternoon and we can say very little because the Ombudsman is conducting an investigation and it would be improper of us to comment. All we can say is that the police were conducting a checkpoint very close to Ballynahinch PSNI station when one officer opened fire with 2 shots, there were 3 officers involved in the incident. All officers are co-operating fully with the Ombudsman's Office from the moment it happened.

You also asked about the post incident management. We appoint a post incident manager for every shooting incident. That post incident manager is normally an inspector or chief inspector specially training to deal with the welfare of the officers involved in the incident. I have to report that on this occasion this worked extremely well, I have spoken to the Ombudsman's Office about their opinion of this aspect of our post shooting procedure and they were pleased with the way it worked on that Sunday as well. I have spoken to the post incident manager, he was there very quickly, he has dealt fairly with all the officers, as I said all the officers are co-operating with the investigation and we are pleased with the way that actually worked after the event to look after the welfare of officers.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Mr Alex Attwood has a supplementary.

Mr Alex Attwood:

I think it is first important to state that there has been and this is a matter of public record, significant reductions in the use of police force in recent years and that is a consequence of, in my view, new approaches by the PSNI and the accountability structures, including the Policing Board and the Police Ombudsman and that extends across the range of force options, lethal force, police batons and plastic bullets. So, I think that has to be acknowledged and that is encouraging and welcome and I recognise that because the jurisdiction of the Police Ombudsman there is things that you might not be in a position to comment on but I think there are 3 matters that I would ask some further comment on.

The first is, does the police command have any concern about the number of times recently that the police have drawn weapons, not necessarily fired but have drawn weapons, and is there any analysis of the number of times that has happened compared to other police services?

Secondly, in the light of this incident and in the light of the shooting of the car in West Belfast about 4 weeks ago, has the police conducted any, independent of the Police Ombudsman's Office, any internal investigation as to whether there does need to be some reassessment of the use of lethal fire or the pulling of guns?

Thirdly, in order to give reassurance it might be helpful to share a bit more what the HMIC did recommend in its assessment of this matter and the recommendations that DCC Leighton indicated that the police are now implementing?

Deputy Chief Constable, Mr Paul Leighton:

Your point about any concerns, yes we do have concern about the number of times that weapons are drawn. Weapons have been drawn in the past 14 months, 112 times, they have been used on 8 occasions. We are obviously concerned with the way weapons are used and we analysis each and every incident. Some of the incidents are reported to the Police Ombudsman and because they are not concerned with the actual incident they refer it back to us, but they are all referred to the Police Ombudsman. Most of the incidents are incidents where warning shots have been fired into the air and you will recall that warning shots were also fired at the Zoo in September last year where a chimpanzee escaped and warning shots have been fired on other occasions.

The incidents are all analysed, we do not conduct an independent investigation inside the police service, we work with the Ombudsman's Office to ensure that they have access to everything that has happened, so that we can get a full report from them and the Regulation 20 Notices are obviously sent to the Board as well and we will implement and work to make sure that those are all fully put into practice.

With regard to learning lessons from each shooting incident, I mentioned the Post Incident Manager. The Post Incident Manager in each shooting incident reports back to Firearms Training so that immediately a shooting incident occurs, the circumstances as

that Post Incident Manager perceives them, not necessarily after the full investigation and everything else, but any issues that have come to Post Incident Manager's attention are reported back to training, so they can be fed into training from that day so there is no delay in feeding things back into the feeding loop. So, the Post Incident Manager at the Ballynahinch incident has already fed back some issues to Training Branch to make sure that things are being emphasised correctly.

So yes, we have obviously concerns, we carry a lethal weapon in Northern Ireland and we have obvious concerns about the way those are used. It is not possible for us to do a very clear comparison with English forces although we could so some work on that and I am happy to come back to you on that and I am happy also to come back to you also on the HMIC report and the recommendations in a fuller briefing.

Mr Alex Attwood:

Very briefly, I think that you should come back to the Board or Corporate Policy or whatever because I have to say that I want to acknowledge that that was a very honest and frank answer that we got from the Deputy Chief Constable and that honesty and that frankness I think is welcome and reassuring.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Ms Arlene Foster has a supplementary.

Ms Arlene Foster:

Very briefly, in relation to the Force Order which as you rightly say we have a copy of, you have already made reference that every discharge of a firearm goes to the Ombudsman's Office but in that Force Order and this is just to reiterate Mr Attwood's point about the openness of the PSNI, as I understand it that there is no need to actually refer cases where the firearm is discharged in accordance with the humane destruction of animals. I am thinking in particular of the incident in Downpatrick recently when I know a firearm was discharged so it is just to reiterate actually that the PSNI are actually going further than their Force Order says they need to.

Deputy Chief Constable, Mr Paul Leighton:

I think what you will find is that officers at the scene are always concerned when a firearm is used in no matter what way and they will nearly always ring the Ombudsman's Office to make sure that the Ombudsman are aware, even if they know that they do not have to refer the case.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

In my opening remarks I made reference to the Stephen Colwell case, I also made reference to the Mr Jimmy Connor death and I would bring together 3 questions, questions 20, 21 and 14 and Mr Barry Gilligan to lead.

Mr Barry Gilligan:

As the Chairman has said it was a horrendous attack on Mr Jimmy Connor in Belfast city centre and his subsequent death and there was another assault on the same day, 26 April 2006. Could you give us some further comment on those Chief Constable and also, could you talk a little bit about the PSNI strategy to provide a safe environment generally in Belfast city centre, both during the day and at night and whilst acknowledging that no crime may be committed, could you also comment on the strategy to reduce the intimidatory effect that the public feel that groups of youths have congregating around street corners?

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Would you like to give your question now, Mr Hay.

Mr Willie Hay:

I suppose Chairman it is related to much what Mr Gilligan has said, it is about attacks and robberies on our elderly in the rural areas of Northern Ireland and I know there was a police unit set up to try and deal and investigate some of these attacks and it might be useful going back to what Mr Gilligan has said and how that unit is now performing.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I will ask ACC McCausland to deal with the first 2 parts and then ACC Gillespie will follow up with Operation Bullant.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

Firstly Chairman, in relation to the terrible tragedy around Mr Connor. He was assaulted as he left the Mermaid Bar at Wilson's Court at 17:25 hours on the 26 April 2006. That assault was a punch in the side of the head and the back and knocked to the ground, his wallet containing £200 of his pension was removed from his pocket. He was conveyed to Belfast City hospital where a short time later he was spoken to by detectives. He was unable to provide a viable description of his assailant at that time and due to his demeanour it was decided to speak to him at a time later, obviously the medical problems with the assault. Other evidential avenues were explored fully and I have already mentioned the use of CCTV. Several hours later sadly Mr Connor's condition deteriorated and he passed away. On 28 April 2006 shortly after midnight a male person attended Grosvenor Road PSNI station and spoke to police. He stated that it was he who had committed the act and he had subsequently been arrested and charged with the murder and appeared at Belfast Magistrates court on Monday where he was remanded in custody to appear again on 22 May 2006. Again, the use of the CCTV system I have already highlighted and the benefit of the media appeal was a great asset in terms of actually apprehending this person.

Mr Gilligan had a second part of the question in relation to Belfast city centre and making Belfast city centre a safer place for people to attend, both during the day and night. In relation to overall crime, crime is down in South Belfast which covers Belfast city centre and there has been 1,000 less victims of crime this year. There has been 11½% reduction in crime as a whole across South Belfast which is a significant reduction and the Chief Constable has already mentioned it in other parts of his presentation, but to achieve that and how we have been tackling anti-social behaviour, we have been specifically working with local sector police using problem solving approaches to deal with this issue and that has increased liaison with the local community and particularly the business community and other agencies working in partnership to tackle the situation together and one of the examples of that is Chairman, as you are aware and the Board support, the City Centre Beat Initiative where 2 officers have been sponsored by the Chamber of Trade and in effect, had a very significant impact in the city centre itself, both in relation to eradicating aspects of anti-social behaviour and I am more than happy to come to whichever Committee of the Board feel, to give an update and yearly report on that City Centre Beat Initiative.

We have also used Acceptable Behaviour Contracts and considered Anti-Social Behaviour Orders where necessary against youths and we look to see that they can be taken forward now that the legal challenge has been resolved. We target our patrols and the use of police out-problem areas to potentially address issues where we want to actually place the police. This is a short term remedy because it has already been referred that it can simply displace the problem of youths gathering at certain areas and we look to try and get longer term solutions to them potentially in engineering out the difficulties and working with the City Council.

I have already mentioned on a number of occasions the increased CCTV coverage of specific areas and the benefits that that has accrued to the whole feeling of safety in the city. You have already heard about the "Get Home Safe" campaign and the Tilley Award Initiative in relation to that and also we are working at an education level in the school to encourage youths in effect, not to congregate in these natures and anti-social behaviour and that is an integral part of the scheme itself, the CASE scheme that we take forward. The aim of that scheme is to reduce the levels of anti-social behaviour by children of a school age and liaison also takes place between the police and local youth clubs or groups with a similar aim. But what I would suggest Chairman and I make this offer to any Member of the Board, old or new, that you wish to come out on a Friday or Saturday evening and experience what it is like in the middle of the city centre, particularly in the early hours of the morning and the importance of working with the license trade and all the places of entertainment in effect policing large numbers of people coming onto the streets, I make that offer and certainly I know of Members have and you yourself Chairman have gone out and experienced it, I think it would be a very worthwhile thing for any Member to come forward and have a look at and then be able to speak from having experienced it fully.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mrs Judith Gillespie:

There was a further question in relation to Operation Bullant which concerns the aggravated burglaries at the homes of older people, in particular in rural region and that operation has been running since January 2006. The Operation which remains in line with recent advice from the Policing and Reducing Crime Department of the Home Office, uses the National Intelligence Model to target police resources to ensure best practice approach to investigating these crimes, revisiting previous victims, identifying crime prevention and forensic opportunities, ensuring the sharing of information

between the districts concerned, and those are Craigavon, Armagh, Newry, Down and Banbridge, detecting and deterring would be criminals and a co-ordinated and joined up approach between districts and identifying opportunities for multi-agency problem solving.

So during the life of Operation Bullant so far, there have been 3 arrests for aggravated burglary. All 3 were remanded in custody and there have been 4 other arrests for Operation Bullant suspects for other offences thereby disrupting their activities because, of course, there is more than one way to target these individuals and that is not just in terms of burglaries that they are being targeted. There have, of course, been numerous other arrests for burglary and related offences during this period but these were in other areas and not necessarily connected with Operation Bullant.

I am happy to report that during the life of the Operation so far, there has been a significant reduction in this type of crime in the DCUs concerned. In other words, in January there were 7 related offences that we are aware of, in February there were 5, in March 3 and in April 1 so the trend is thankfully downwards.

Operation Bullant draws from district crime managers, intelligence managers, analysts and detectives as well as having substantial operational support from the Tactical Support Groups within rural region and the District Commanders.

We reviewed the operation recently in relation to its efficiency and effectiveness and it is still a priority for police officers across those districts, but it is a subject also of scrutiny at my rural accountability meetings, especially in those districts concerned. We have reviewed the strategies, as I have said it is been reconfigured and we no longer rely on a full-time dedicated team, but the Operation harnesses now the wider resources outlined above, but the core structure of the Gold group, the senior investigating officer, the intelligence manager and the nominated District Commander, Chief Superintendent Alan Todd, still remains in place to make sure the operational strategy continues.

It should be noted that whilst over the last number of weeks, aggravated burglaries against older victims in the region have decreased. Obviously the potential for such crimes continues and we are certainly not taking our eye off the ball here, it still remains

a priority attention from a preventive, investigative and reassurance perspective and ACC McCausland has already referred to a number of preventive and reassurance issues and I am very happy to provide the Board, in writing, with a list of all of those rather than go through them all now, but there is a large number of them to protect and reassure vulnerable older people. I am also looking at forming a permanent crime team within rural region to address this cross DCU crime so that we do not have to constantly react to cross-border crimes that is developing, we can actually pursue them on a pro-active basis as a permanent team.

Mr Willie Hay:

I think Chairman that the latter issue is the most important, looking someone permanent within policing to deal with these issues, I think that is vitally important and I think also to build confidence within the rural community, especially amongst our elderly more than anything else. It might be useful at some appropriate time for ACC Gillespie to come along to the appropriate Committee meeting I think, to lay out a future strategy and how we might deal with some of this very serious crime, especially within rural areas, I think all of that is very useful.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

The Board is concerned about the monitoring of serious sex offenders, I am going to bring together 3 questions on that, questions 6, 7 and 8, maybe Mrs McCabe you would lead on that and then Mr Weir will follow.

Mrs Pauline McCabe:

It is obviously a question that follows on from the tragic death of Attracta Harron. Could the Chief Constable outline the role of PSNI in monitoring serious sex offenders released from prison and explain how that role is delivered, and also, how liaison with other relevant agencies is managed?

Mr Peter Weir:

Obviously as indicated, I think this is an issue which goes to the heart of public safety and also public confidence in policing and criminal justice issues. I suppose the flipside of the question from Mrs McCabe is, that I think people want to see assurance that, particularly serious sex offenders are not moving between jurisdictions with a feeling

that they have a cloak of anonymity. I would like to ask what steps the policing are taking to exchange information on registered sex offenders, and particular serious sex offenders, both to and from other jurisdictions? If I could ask specifically then, on the issue of the Billy Adams case, a gentleman who had very serious previous sex offences was released on remission from prison in Northern Ireland and indications were given at that stage that he moving to Liverpool, could I ask whether there were indications given to the police in Liverpool of his previous convictions whenever he was released from prison?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Drew Harris:

Firstly, the broad outline of the MASRAM Process, which is the process by which we manage the risk posed by serious sex offenders in the community. Prior to any serious sex offender being released from prison, an Area Sex Offender Risk Assessment and Management Committee is convened involving all the key agencies, and that includes the police, the Probation Service and the Prison Service. This Committee carries out a dynamic risk assessment based on all current information, such as intended resident, employment and family circumstances. A risk management plan specific to that individual is then devised which will detail the minimum level of supervision required by each agency and the conditions to be placed on the offender and various actions then that are required in respect of that offender. If the individual offender is deemed high risk, ie category 3 the management of the individual will be reviewed each month by the Area Sex Offender Committee. A Designated Risk Manager is also appointed to ensure that actions identified in the Risk Management Plan are implemented. Although the role of Designated Risk Manager predominately falls to the police, a local inspector will be responsible for this, on occasions it can be assigned to either of the other partner agencies, for example the Probation Service or Social Services.

An up to date report on the offender's management is provided each month and this highlights any failings or positive outcomes of the Risk Management Plan so that they can be addressed accordingly. All high risk offenders are also reviewed on a quarterly basis by a panel representing the Northern Ireland Sex Offender Strategic Management Committee and I chair this particular committee, so as can be seen that the police are very much involved with other partner agencies in managing the risks around serious sex offenders in the community.

Part of managing that risk is the exchange of information on registered sex offenders, both within and from other jurisdictions to ourselves. All information we hold is stored on a computer system known as VISOR (Violent Offender and Sex Offender Register). This is a central database and is accessible by all other UK police services. If the police become aware of an offender moving outside Northern Ireland to another part of the UK, the relevant police service is notified via VISOR and then they take over the risk assessment and management of this individual. We also work closely with our colleagues in An Garda Síochána and regularly exchange and record information on registered sex offenders who may travel between the 2 jurisdictions.

In February of this year, the Registered Sex Offender Project Advisory Group set up under an inter-governmental Memorandum of Understanding has been established between the 2 police services to enhance the cross-flow of intelligence and information between them and primarily we hope to standardise the processes of risk assessment around individuals in both jurisdictions.

The PSNI are also involved in the current EU Criminal Records Project which is intended to lead to the sharing of information on persons convicted of all serious offences, including sexual offences with other Member States. The PSNI has also shared information with other jurisdictions when they become aware of high risk offenders travelling abroad in circumstances which have not permitted the application to a court for a Foreign Travel Order.

Further to this, the Schengen Agreement also allows for alerts to be recorded on individuals who have committed or who have alleged committed serious offences including all sexual offences, this enables those individuals to be identified and tracked through any country included in this agreement. The UK and the Republic of Ireland are both participating members of this agreement.

There are issues at the moment around an EU wide implementation just regarding the IT systems so that they speak but we are very much involved in respect of Schengen and making it operationally viable.

In respect of Mr Adams, this has demonstrated how we share information. Mr Adams committed serious sex offences in the Republic of Ireland, he was repatriated to a prison in Northern Ireland and on his release he was not then subject to any license. He then moved to Liverpool and the PSNI passed comprehensive information to Merseyside police and this included all details of his previous offending and convictions. Subsequently, Merseyside police sought a Notification Order from a court which was granted and that is a Civil Order specifically to manage sex offenders who are outside the registered schemes, as he was.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Question relating to the killing of Stephen Montgomery, question 16 Mr Attwood.

Mr Alex Attwood:

I have actually received a written answer to that question. Could I just ask 2 supplementaries, to ACC Harris.

I think that and you might not be able to say all that you could say, it might be helpful that as soon as possible, that you share with the wider public any conclusions that have been drawn by any reviews that have been completed or are yet to be completed arising from the Attracta Harron murder and other incidents.

Secondly, it would be reassuring to the public that given the issues around the Home Secretary at the moment, that you were in a position to confirm that people who you have identified as being dangerous and a high risk, particularly those at the highest risk, that you, the PSNI and the other relevant agencies know the whereabouts as we speak of each and any of those individuals who you have identified as being in the highest risk category.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

I presume they are not answering and that you are just asking them to note those questions.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Drew Harris:

In respect of our most serious risk sex offenders who we are managing, on Friday last we had a meeting which reviewed all of those and I can confirm that management plans are in place for all of them and we are aware of their residence and their activities.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Question relating to the Cavendish Club, question 17 Mr Attwood.

Mr Alex Attwood:

The Assistant Chief Constable for Belfast Region has provided me with a lengthy answer to some of the issues around all of this, but I think it would be helpful if you could publicly explain some of the issues around this club because there does seem to be a tension between the fact that this club has been identified, was raided and that there may be prosecutions arising from that raid and the fact, that there does not appear to be any other clubs of a similar nature, either in Belfast or elsewhere who may face prosecutions. You may be in a position to confirm or deny that but there does seem to be that tension as to why in the South Belfast DCU this particular club is being pursued and how it is, that whilst other individuals may have been warned about their conduct, there are no other premises in the North, as far as I am aware, who are facing the potential of prosecution.

Secondly, you might be able to clarify why it is that now the PSNI has decided that this is an issue that needs addressed when there has been legislation since 1985, and as far as I understand, there have been very few, if any, prosecutions of this nature in recent times.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

Thank you Chairman. I am meeting Mr Attwood tomorrow to discuss this issue with the District Command team at South Belfast in relation to specifically the Cavendish Club, but to deal with the Cavendish Club first, a file has been prepared and submitted to the PPS recommending prosecution for illegal gaming and associated offences.

There was £25,000 seized by police at the time of the operation, £23,000 of which has been returned to the club by the courts. All the other property seized during the operation is still in police possession, such as gaming tables etc.

Where information is gleaned regarding potential breaches of the relevant legislation, each respective District Commander is responsible for deciding on what action should be taken. However, to address the specific point that Mr Attwood raised, Operational Support Department is currently formulating corporate guidelines for such cases, as it is recognised that statutory provisions relating to such premises and the conduct of businesses allowed therein is a complex area within the law and that, Chairman, is the key crux of this answer, it is a complex aspect of the law.

As Members will be aware, Government has begun to change the betting and gaming legislation across the whole country and the magistrate in this particular case referred to the fact that the Cavendish Club seem to be ahead of the game in terms of potentially offering a different form of betting process which will soon become legal. However, until that is the case PSNI have taken to a warning or potentially prosecuting where we do find a case of people breaching the law. It has not been a case that this has been the situation since 1985, this has been a recent development over the last few months.

Certainly in relation to the Cavendish Club, we await the outcome at the court and there are a number of other clubs which we have spoken to which I can confirm are within the Belfast area and we have warned them.

In relation to a wider area in terms of Northern Ireland, we are currently researching that answer and should be in a position to answer that question very shortly.

Mr Alex Attwood:

I think we need to get that answered very shortly, I note what you say but I still think there is a tension. Whilst other people have been warned, nobody else has been prosecuted in Belfast and we do not know if anybody else has been prosecuted in all the other 27 or 28 District Command Units across the North, I do not think that seems to be a consistent and regularised position.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

That is why we have asked Operational Support Department to make a very clear policy for all District Commanders to follow. Again, I re-emphasise Chairman, there has been detailed discussion with the legal advisor in relation to the complexity of this

particular aspect of the betting, gaming and lottery legislation and in relation to other clubs which potentially could have been breaking the law. It has been felt, particularly with the media highlighting in relation to the Cavendish Club, that it was better in terms of policing to warn and advise people that they may be breaking the law because in effect they may innocently on occasions breach that legislation and by discussing it with owners we have found, on many occasions, they have said that they would not have proceeded to go ahead and continue to run the operation as it was described. We felt that was pragmatic policing in terms of preventing people and advising people to prevent a breach of the law.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Question relating to a reported disturbance on an Easyjet flight, question 18
Mr Attwood.

Mr Alex Attwood:

There has been some media comment on this and I understand that some of the media comment may be inaccurate and that I innocently, may have contributed to that inaccuracy. Given that that may be the facts of the case I thought it was only fair and reasonable to give the opportunity to the Chief Constable to clarify the matter and ask him a more substantial question, namely, have you any issues around airport police failing to prosecute people who may have caused disturbances on planes?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I am grateful for the opportunity, I have discussed this with Mr Attwood already. There was highly inaccurate reporting in the Sunday papers last week which suggested officers from another police service had been involved in a disturbance on a flight which then had to turn back as a result. I am pleased to advise you Chairman that that was absolutely not the case. There were 2 groups, none of whom were police officers. One was a group from Newcastle or Northumbria, one was a local group that had clearly been drinking and got on the flight and started to cause a sufficient disturbance that the pilot formed a view to fly back. There was one off duty officer from Northumbria police who assisted the cabin staff on the flight with a view to try and ensure that the flight got down safely, which it did, and then provided assistance to the local airport police. Of course, it is outwith my jurisdiction. I have asked for a full report to see what has gone on after then event. In fairness to the officer, one officer involved in trying to keep 2

very difficult groups of people who had been drinking apart on a flight, so in terms of his ability to gather any evidence that may well have allowed him to form a prosecution, I suspect he would have been struggling. He had an ultimate priority of safety to bear in mind, but I will be writing to the airport police to make sure that they have written acknowledging this officer's contribution to what could have been a very difficult set of circumstances.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Question relating to illegal immigrants, this is a late question but the Chief Constable and his colleagues agreed to take it, Mrs Kelly.

Mrs Dolores Kelly:

Thank you Chairman. Could the Chief Constable comment on the issue of persons thought to be illegal immigrants being held in PSNI stations. If this is the case, could the Chief Constable confirm how many individuals have been held, under whose authority are they held and are they given access to appropriate legal advice?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

Chairman, we could it in broad terms as we only got the question this morning, so in terms of numbers we can certainly make sure we provide them to you. There are occasions when we do hold people on behalf of other agencies and I will ask ACC McCausland to go into the detail as much as he can.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

We have established arrangements with the Immigration Service to provide holding facilities in our PSNI custody centres for their immediate arrests. All such persons are treated in accordance with the PACE Codes of Practice whilst in police custody. In terms of the figures I cannot comment on the numbers, but they are not significant in large numbers, I would suggest that to my knowledge, I am aware of at least 20 potentially for the whole year so far and we receive full cost recovery from the Immigration Services.

Mrs Dolores Kelly:

Chairman, if I could just come back in relation to appropriate legal advice, it is my information that not all firms are able to give specialist immigration advice and,

therefore, a separate list of firms who would be so able had been forwarded to the Chief Constable and is that information shared with other custody sergeants across all of the stations?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I will get back to you on it and people under PACE are entitled to legal advice, now in terms of the specialist nature of it, if there is a list I am unsighted on it but we would have to circulate it.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

There is an issue of interpreter, we have full interpreter arrangements made so any solicitor provision can be provided with interpreter services and the Service has that in position and that can in affect take place for any person coming into the country.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Question relating to PSNI officers convicted of legal offences, question 15 Mrs McCabe.

Mrs Pauline McCabe:

Thank you. Chief Constable, Metropolitan police recently revealed that over the last 5 years, 174 of their officers received a criminal conviction caution and that 100 of those left the Service. Could you indicate how many PSNI officers have been convicted of criminal offences over the same period, and how many of those were (a) dismissed and (b) required to resign.

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I will ask DCC Leighton to deal with that but I think, just as clarity, the Metropolitan police statement said 100 left the Service, it does not say they left under dismissal or required to resign, I think we can probably do that deal but it is a different question I think.

Deputy Chief Constable, Mr Paul Leighton:

Over our latest 5 year period, we are not quite sure what period the Metropolitan police were referring to, but we have taken our latest 5 year period which comes up to April this year, we have 179 police officers convicted of a range of offences. The vast majority are in relation to motoring offences as one would expect, there were over 130

relating to motoring offences. Of those convicted 8 have so far been dismissed, 7 have been required to resign, that obviously is not the final figure because several of the discipline cases are still running and will still come to a misconduct hearing so it is not possible to give a definitive answer as to how many have been dismissed or required to resign.

Suffice to say we have taken steps to re-emphasise to the organisation how seriously we take criminal convictions, and particularly drunk in charge, I am happy to discuss further if you wish.

Mrs Pauline McCabe:

Could I ask one supplementary.

I have, in the public and private sector, been involved over the years in many disciplinary hearings and appeals hearings where criminal convictions were involved and I am constantly struck by the degree of leniency with police services generally and when comparing officers with the Met, the PSNI in particular shows in relation to these cases and when I ask, very often case law is quoted and different explanations. I just wonder if you would feel that it was the right time to actually get somebody on your behalf to take an objective, independent look at the whole area and how it has actually been handled and managed to see if you are satisfied with the standards generally being applied because the figures that you have given us do suggest a very high degree of leniency.

Deputy Chief Constable, Mr Paul Leighton:

As the Chief Constable has pointed out, the statement for the Metropolitan police says 100 have left the Service, it does not say 100 have either been dismissed or required to resign. The 8 and the 7 do not compare directly with the 100 but it would still accept the basic premise that any police officer and I have had discussions with the Federation, with the Superintendents' Association and with CPOSA and they are well aware of my concerns about this. In fact, no later than yesterday I sent out another message to the organisation about drink driving and really how unacceptable the levels of officers being arrested are. But our message is very simple, do not do it. Do not be concerned about this, just do not do it and that is the message we are trying to put out to everyone.

With regard to the sanctions that are imposed by Misconduct Hearings, the basic premise of course is the same as for the courts in that, each and every individual case must be decided on its merits and it has to be decided only by the presiding officer and the panel that sit with him or her. I do not interfere at all with a panel otherwise I would be guilty or the Chief Constable would be guilty of corrupting that panel and it would be subject to a judicial review. So each and every case must be heard on its merits and that is done vigorously. We do bring across ACC from other forces on occasions where we feel there is any conflict of interest, where one of our Assistant Chief Constable's knows the officer or we cannot find an ACC who does not know of the officer or of the case, so we do try and bring across independence when we can. I share your concern and I can assure you we are taking all actions we possibly can to deal with it.

Mr Alex Attwood:

I do think there needs to be more analysis done of the figures with the Met to see if there is a discrepancy in actual outcomes in relation to this matter.

The second thing is, does the command team lay down policy guidance to those who are making assessments about whether or not or should or should remain in the Service, because it seems to be fair and reasonable that you lay down policy guidelines to inform the panel who is making decisions and are those policy guidelines, if laid down, are they tooling it?

Deputy Chief Constable, Mr Paul Leighton:

We do lay down policy guidelines and you are quite right and if I can just quote from yesterday's which is a policy guideline, it is concerning drink driving in particular and it says quite clearly "*the usual sanction to be applied will be either dismissal or a requirement to resign*" that is in bold print in the middle of the message and that was the policy guideline to the organisation. That has been reiterated to all presiding officers of cases, so yes we do lay down policy guidelines. The comparison with the Met, certainly we can ask the Met about the 100 leavers and see if we get some better analysis done of that.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

The final question, question 11 relates to the Historic Enquiries Team, Ms Foster.

Ms Arlene Foster:

Chief Constable, in an article in the Sunday Times on the 23 April 2006 entitled "Troubles Enquiry Team is unable to probe police" it was stated that the number of cases passed from the Historic Enquiry Team to the Police Ombudsman's Office was set to rise from 78 to several hundred. Is this your understanding at present, and if so, what basis will these cases be so transferred?

Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde:

I think it is people comparing different things here in that particular article. The role of HET is very clear. It is to reinvestigate all the unsolved crimes, what it does not do is replace the statutory role of the Police Ombudsman, so they quite properly have jurisdiction over police officers involved in cases involving death and currently the HET have provided details of 55 deaths which we would say fall into that category. Clearly the work is going to overlap on some of these matters and I think the important thing is, that we work alongside the Ombudsman on some cases and both agencies have worked together, to put in place a system to hand over reviews when that needs to happen. The reason we set up the HET was a very genuine and serious attempt at bringing a lot more closure to a lot more people, it certainly was not set up to investigate and probe police activity over the past, where that falls outwith the jurisdiction of HET, it would be properly passed over, but I do not see it as a massive piece of business as it may have been described in that particular article.

Chairman, Professor Sir Desmond Rea:

Could I say thank you to members of the public and to the press for attending today and Chief Constable and his team for taking our questions and your responses.