



Northern Ireland
Assembly

COMMITTEE FOR JUSTICE

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Justice Bill: Part 3 and Schedules 1 and 2

16 December 2010

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

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Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Lord Morrow (Chairperson)
Mr Raymond McCartney (Deputy Chairperson)
Lord Browne
Mr Thomas Buchanan
Sir Reg Empey
Mr Paul Givan
Mr Alban Maginness
Mr Conall McDevitt
Mr David McNarry
Ms Carál Ní Chuilín
Mr John O'Dowd

Witnesses:

Ms Alison Allen	)	Antrim Borough Community Safety Partnership, Antrim District Policing Partnership and Antrim Borough Council
Ms Cathy Watson	)	Ballymoney Community Safety Partnership
Ms Suzanne Wylie	)	Belfast City Council
Mr Iain Creswell	)	Coleraine Community Safety Partnership
Alderman Maura Hickey)		Coleraine District Policing Partnership

Ms Sarah Wilson	)	Craigavon Community Safety Partnership
Ms Claire Linney	)	Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council
Ms Liz Cuddy	)	Extern
Ms Koulla Yiasouma	)	Include Youth
Ms Wendy Carson	)	Larne Borough Council
Ms Bridget McCaughan	)	Limavady Borough Council
Mr Michael McCrory	)	Magherafelt Community Safety Partnership and Magherafelt District Policing Partnership
Mr Philip McKeown	)	Moyle District Policing Partnership
Ms Bridgeen Butler	)	Moyle Community Safety Partnership
Mr Campbell Dixon	)	Newtownabbey Borough Council
Ms Olwen Lyner	)	Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders
Councillor Jack Beattie	)	Northern Ireland Local Government Association
Ms Helen Richmond	)	Northern Ireland Local Government Association
Ms Mary McKee)	
Ms Rosaleen Moore	)	Northern Ireland Policing Board
Ms Amanda Stewart)	
Mr Paul Doran	)	Probation Board for Northern Ireland
Mr Derek Hussey	)	Strabane Community Safety Partnership
Mr Jeff Barr	)	Strabane District Policing Partnership

The Chairperson (Lord Morrow):

Good afternoon. I welcome you all here today to Parliament Buildings to participate in this evidence event for the Committee for Justice. As you will be aware, the Justice Bill is a large Bill that covers a range of areas. Today, we will focus on Part 3 and schedules 1 and 2, which will

integrate the roles of community safety partnerships (CSPs) and district policing partnerships (DPPs) to create a single partnership for each council area.

The Bill was introduced in the Assembly on 18 October and passed its Second Stage on 2 November. The Bill's Committee Stage began on 3 November and will continue until 11 February 2011, when the Committee will report to the Assembly. It is expected that the remaining stages of the legislative process, which will be dealt with in plenary session, will take place during February and March 2011.

In response to the Committee's public call for evidence, responses from almost 70 organisations were received. Some 49 organisations commented on the clauses and schedules that deal with policing partnerships and community safety partnerships, and many of those groups are represented here today. I want to take this opportunity to thank you all for your written submissions and for your attendance today.

Turning to the evidence session itself, members of the Committee staff have microphones that are to be used when speaking. If you wish to speak, please signal to me or a member of the Committee staff. Please ensure that all mobile phones and electronic devices are turned off. Please do not just put them on silent mode, as that will still interfere with the recording of today's proceedings.

I will now outline the format for the evidence session. I understand that a paper setting out the order in which evidence will be taken has been provided to everyone. Departmental officials will briefly outline the clauses in Part 3 and schedules 1 and 2 and their intent. There will then be a brief opportunity for Committee members to seek any clarification that they need, after which I will open up the meeting and deal in turn with each clause about which issues have been raised or comments have been made.

I will call first the organisations that are listed to speak on clause 20. If you are called, staff will pass a microphone to you, and you should state your name and organisation for the Official Report and outline the points or issues that you want to make as briefly as possible. We do not want you to be overly brief, but we want as many people as possible to participate today. Anyone who wishes to make follow-up comments should indicate that to us, and you should also ensure that you state your name and organisation for the record. There will then be an opportunity for Committee members to ask questions and to seek clarification on clause 20, after which I will move on to the next clause listed.

Once all the areas have been dealt with, departmental officials will respond to the issues raised and respond to any questions or points of clarification that Committee members may have. There will be an opportunity for the organisations and stakeholders here today to raise issues with the departmental officials. However, if there are any further points that you wish to draw to the attention of the Committee once you have heard the response from officials, you may wish to write to the Committee on those issues. I hope that that is clear. We will work at it, and I am sure that we will get through it all right.

I will commence the session by welcoming the witnesses from the Department of Justice: David Hughes, who is head of policing policy and strategy division; Gareth Johnston, who is deputy director of justice strategy division; Nichola Creagh, from policing policy and strategy division; and Dan Mulholland, from policing policy and strategy division. I invite them to outline the clauses on policing and community safety partnerships and their intent. You will have 15 minutes in which to do that. David, you are kicking off.

Mr David Hughes (Department of Justice):

As has been said, the Committee has the draft legislation, the explanatory notes and a briefing note from the Department that covers Part 3 and schedules 1 and 2. Before covering specific

clauses, I would like briefly to set out some of the principles that lie behind the Bill. Issues around policing and community safety are consistently a priority for the public, and the Department recognises the importance of those issues to the public and the importance of addressing them locally and in a multidisciplinary fashion. Local partnership in that field is essential.

The legislation creates a new local partnership in the policing and community safety field. It is intended to replace the DPPs and the CSPs with a new partnership that preserves the functions of both and which creates something that takes the good work of both and, hopefully, amplifies it by bringing all the functions together.

The work of DPPs and CSPs is highly valued, and all the functions of those partnerships are to be preserved, as set out in clause 21. The great advantage of a single partnership is that it would have the responsibility for the full range of functions and would ensure a holistic approach to identifying local concerns, prioritising issues, working out how problems can be tackled, agreeing who is to take the lead and who is to support, committing resources and expertise, ensuring the delivery of solutions, and evaluating the success or otherwise of specific projects. A fully coherent body of such work, centred on the production and delivery of a unified partnership plan, ought to enable the new partnership to be effective in securing safer communities.

The monitoring work of the PSNI in the district, which at present is a function of the DPPs, is a unique feature of the oversight of the police. It is not replicated for other delivery agencies, and it has not been the task of the Department of Justice to extend that model beyond the police. However, it is a critical element in ensuring the transparency and accessibility of the police to the community. As such, it forms an integral part of the arrangements for that holistic partnership working.

However, it would not be appropriate for the police to give an account of their performance to the representatives of other delivery agencies. Therefore, it is one of the functions to be reserved to a committee of the partnership called the policing committee. The policing committee is to be made up of the councillors and the independent members.

The idea of single partnership working in the policing and community safety field is attractive, as it would be consistent with the original view of Patten and with the recommendations of the Criminal Justice Inspection. During public consultation on the future of the functions of DPPs and CSPs, it became clear that there was widespread support for the concept of a single partnership working in the policing and community safety field.

The consultation not only demonstrated the general — although not universal — consensus that there should be a single partnership; it also demonstrated the range of views about what that partnership ought to be like. Perhaps unsurprisingly, there is no consensus on the best model for a new partnership. The original consultation document, which was published by NIO Ministers earlier in the year, contained three models for the partnership. Consultees raised concerns about all of them. It is worth noting that the version that has since been set out in the legislation is different again. Consultees' views were taken on board, and a version informed by priorities in Northern Ireland has been worked out.

The Department has endeavoured to work with the views of stakeholders to create a partnership that achieves the best solution for the public. That is to say that we believe that the legislation creates a partnership with a clear responsibility and capacity for improving communities' experiences of safety and policing. The new partnerships are designed to be effective in council areas on the current scale or on a larger scale as envisaged under local government reorganisation. They are also intended to be broadly in keeping with the principles of community planning. We do not believe that it is necessary to wait for the introduction of community planning before creating those new partnerships, but it is important that we have been

liaising with the Department of the Environment to ensure that it is not inconsistent with what is being proposed for community planning generally.

I am conscious that the draft legislation draws attention away from the outcomes of partnership work in the policing and community safety field. It, inevitably, focuses on the practicalities of membership, functions, accountability and so on. Those things are important and necessary, but it is also important that they are scrutinised to ensure that they allow partnerships to be effective in delivering improvements in the experience of community safety. However, they are not, in themselves, the end goal of the Department. The goal of the Department is to improve policing and community safety.

I will look in more detail at the legislation. Clause 20 establishes the new partnerships: one policing and community safety partnership (PCSP) for each district and, in Belfast, one district policing and community safety partnership (DPCSP) for each police district. It is worth clarifying that, in the legislation, “police district” refers to what in common usage is an area command unit, namely north, south, east and west and not A and B districts. The confusion arises from the fact that the original legislation still refers to police districts in that way, and the drafting has to be consistent with the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000. That explains why there will be four DPCSPs.

Clauses 21 and 22 set out the functions of the PCSPs and DPCSPs respectively. Those are basically the same functions as those of the DPPs and CSPs put together. That confirmed the view of the Department that those functions are still valuable and relevant. The first three functions are functions of the policing committee rather than of the partnership as a whole, because they relate specifically to the police. Clause 23 requires the Department of Justice and the Policing Board, acting together in a joint committee, to issue a code of practice for the PCSPs and DPCSPs. It sets out what kinds of issues may be included, but it is not prescriptive. That code of practice will be developed afresh. It will be informed by the experience of DPPs and CSPs to date, and, crucially, it will inform the new partnership about the exercise of its functions and ensure a degree of consistency.

Clauses 24 to 32 may look extensive, but they are basically a framework for the reporting of the work of the partnership to the council, the Department and the Policing Board. There are differences in timing for Belfast and the other partnerships, because the principal partnership in Belfast would have to go to the DPCSPs for reports before it can complete its reporting. The legislation does not require the reports to councils, the Department and the Policing Board to be different. In fact, we assume that they will basically be the same. However, the legislation recognises that all three authorities have an interest in the overall work of the partnerships. The work of the policing committees is more specifically related to the police and, therefore, the reporting is to the Policing Board. That is an important inheritance from the DPPs and one that it would not be appropriate to break.

Clause 33 enables policing committees to establish additional consultation mechanisms for the engagement of the police and the public. Again, because it is specifically about engagement with the police, it is reserved to the policing committee. Clause 34 places a duty on public bodies — effectively all public bodies — to exercise their functions having due regard to the effect on crime and antisocial behaviour and with a view to enhancing community safety. Clause 35 sets out the responsibility of the Policing Board and the Department for assessing the performance and effectiveness of PCSPs and policing committees. Schedules 1 and 2 are basically the same. Schedule 2 contains for the DPCSPs in Belfast what schedule 1 contains for the PCSPs. They set out the detail of membership, procedure and so on of the partnerships.

The partnership will consist of, first, elected members appointed by the council and reflecting the balance of parties in the council; secondly, independent members appointed by the Policing Board; and, thirdly, representatives from designated organisations that are identified by the partnership itself.

This last group may include statutory delivery agencies, non-statutory agencies, relevant non-

governmental organisations, charities, voluntary groups and so on. There will be eight, nine or 10 councillors, one fewer than that of independents and at least four representatives from designated organisations. There are so many organisations that could make a useful contribution that it makes no sense to specify the designated organisations in the legislation and thereby limit the partnerships in making their own choices suited to the needs of the district. The policing committee will be made up of councillors and independent members.

I also draw attention to paragraph 14, which enables PCSPs to establish subgroups. That power is intended to allow partnerships to set up groups that are focused on a particular neighbourhood or a theme and to allow those groups to include representatives from all sorts of other organisations and groups as well as individuals who can contribute to the issue in hand.

I draw attention to paragraph 20, which allows PCSPs to combine to cover more than one district, with agreement. That is a mechanism that would enable some transition, if necessary, to larger council areas or, for practical purposes, where there is a unity of purpose and similar issues need to be addressed. I hope that that provides a sufficient overview of the legislation. However, Committee members may have some questions.

The Chairperson:

I will turn to the Committee now for points of clarification and then I will go to the audience. Was the model adopted in the legislation recommended during the consultation period? If so, how many organisations suggested that model?

Mr Hughes:

The model in the legislation is not precisely any of the models that were set out in the consultation document, but it had to take into account the views that were expressed in the consultation period. The models in the consultation document were not felt to be adequate by almost any of the consultees.

The Chairperson:

So, have we got a mishmash?

Mr Hughes:

It is a development of one of the models in particular. It represents a significant development of model two.

The Chairperson:

Do any other Committee members want to raise any points?

Lord Browne:

I declare an interest as a member of Belfast City Council. I am glad that you sought to clarify the position regarding the setting up of district policing and community safety partnerships, of which there will be four. You said that, rather than corresponding to A and B districts, they will represent north, south, east and west Belfast. There has been some misunderstanding about there being four areas rather than two. I would be grateful if you clarify that again.

Mr Hughes:

That issue arose during drafting. At the moment, there is a principal DPP in Belfast and four subgroups — north, south, east and west. Those map against the four area command units that the police recognise. In legislation, what we all call area command units are still called police districts, and so the legislation in front of us has to reflect that legislation. So, under the current DPP model, we have a principal partnership and four subgroups, and, under this legislation, there would be a principal PCSP and four district PCSPs. That is possibly a confusing element, but we recognise that.

Mr McNarry:

Can we be assured that, in the evaluation of the current practices of DPPs and CSPs, no imperfect

practices have been identified or are being carried forward?

How can you ensure that there will be an adequate balance between police accountability issues and wider community safety and policing issues?

Finally, how will the selection of the delivery partners in the PCSPs be undertaken and how will a representation from a cross section — this is the important bit for me — of the community be achieved?

Mr Hughes:

I will try to make sure that I stay with your three questions.

Issues may arise at present around the practice of CSPs and DPPs. It was drawn to the Department's attention, and is a matter that stakeholders indentified, that there are currently frustrations in some places about the fact that there is a distinction between the two bodies and the fact that it would be useful to have greater integration and harmony between the ways in which the two work. The framework model set out in the legislation brings the two bodies together to create a single partnership. Therefore, the potential imperfection has been addressed.

In all these things, the detail of how it works will be in the individual partnerships. Some of that will be the responsibility of the partnerships as to how they decide to work and fulfil their functions. The broad legislation will not necessarily be in a position to specify every last detail of practice. However, there is provision in the Bill for a code of practice to be prepared on the performance of functions. In drawing up that code of practice, which would be issued by the Department and the Policing Board together, there will be an opportunity to look afresh at what does and does not need to be set out in a code of practice. If there are issues of practicality and

detail that present partnerships feel need to be fed back to the Policing Board and the Department, both the Department and the Policing Board would be very willing to hear those so that the code of practice is the most useful document that it can be.

Mr McNarry:

Nothing we have is perfect; it would be great if it was. However, where there are imperfections, I am trying to ascertain if you are alert to them, know what they are and are not carrying them forward.

Mr Hughes:

Unless someone is going to correct me, I do not think that we have ignored any of the issues that have been raised with us, or of which we have been conscious, that we feel could be addressed in bringing the legislation forward.

You mentioned the balance between the police monitoring function and the wider community safety and policing function. That is a balance that needs to be addressed. By bringing the functions together and having what I describe as a holistic approach to addressing issues in a district — by being able to consult and engage, identify issues, work out what to do, prioritise, allocate, see that delivered — it is intended that that complete cycle of responsibility will bring about a balance. Therefore, it should be possible for the different functions of a single partnership to operate in harmony, because that would all be part of the one partnership's work.

You had a third question.

Mr McNarry:

How will the selection of the delivery partners in the PCSPs be undertaken to include a cross section of the community?

Mr Hughes:

I think that there is a desire to ensure that any code of practice would give some guidelines in that area.

Mr McNarry:

You are saying words to me such as “desire”, which is very nice. You said that my other question “needs to be addressed”. However, I am looking at a draft Bill and cannot put desires in that. I need you to try to be specific. If you cannot be specific today, perhaps you can come back and tell us that those things have been addressed and are in the Bill, or that you are going to address them and put them in the Bill. I cannot take on board desires, much as I would like to.

Mr Hughes:

We will be addressing the issues that you raised, and they will be addressed in the code of practice, which would come back to the Committee anyway. That kind of code of practice would contain a lot of detail that would not normally appear in a Bill. However, it would come to the Committee and would be full of the kinds of practical issues that matter a lot.

It is also worth reiterating that the code of practice would be issued by the Department and the Policing Board together. Therefore, there is work to be done between the Department and the Policing Board to ensure that we are all thinking along the same lines and can come to an agreed code of practice.

The Chairperson:

We are moving on. I say to members of the Committee that we are here to hear from the organisations that are with us. Our remarks should be solely in relation to clarifying a point. If there are questions, we will continue after the public session.

I want to give the audience the best chance of participating because they will not have the opportunities to do so that we, as Committee members, will have.

Sir Reg Empey:

DPPs and CSPs are morphing into PCSPs. We also have CPLCs and PACTs. How will anyone make head or tail of all that? How will it be coherent or credible to the ordinary citizen whose life and experience we are trying collectively to improve? There seems to be an enormously complicated structure of interface between the police and various parts of the community. Is the scope of the Bill sufficiently wide to put in place coherent arrangements that people can understand?

Mr Hughes:

Creating a single partnership out of the functions of the DPPs and the CSPs is one step towards greater clarity, by having a single partnership that has responsibility across the field rather than the present arrangement of two separate partnerships.

There is a relationship to other points of consultation and contact between the police and the public. Partners and Community Together (PACT) groups will have PACT meetings as part of the wider package of ways in which the police will relate to communities. Often, that is done on a much smaller scale than the district scale. There is, of course, still a place for PACT meetings, but there is also a place for the connection between a district-level partnership and things such as PACT groups.

There are many community and police liaison committees (CPLCs) and they are widely spread, although on a smaller scale than the district policing partnerships and community safety partnerships. I expect that the PCSPs will have an interest in maintaining relationships with the public and in maintaining the public's interest in their work. However, they will fulfil a slightly

different function from place to place. The functions and responsibilities, which are unique to the new partnerships, are set out in statute. The sheer range of functions and organisations makes it a unique partnership.

The new single partnership does not completely clear the field of any possible rubbing points or relationship complexities, but it simplifies the situation while not wiping out the role that CPLCs and PACT groups have and will continue to have.

Sir Reg Empey:

If one goes to those meetings, as I am sure that Mr Hughes has, one generally sees the same people, no matter what heading they are under. My anxiety is, given the time pressure on the police, how on earth will officers find time to attend all those meetings to have any meaningful interface or dialogue with the community? I understand the principle of simplification, for want of a better word, that you are pursuing. However, are we only half doing the job? Will alternative solutions be introduced? I am sure that the Committee will return to that.

We still have a large number of different organisations populated by many of the same people, whose meetings are attended by the same police officers and whose functions are so obscure to the public that they cannot distinguish between them. Are we achieving our objective?

Mr Hughes:

I understand your point. The effort is to simplify what is being done at district level, and you have recognised that. There will always be a question for those involved in securing the relationship between the community and the police and other policing and community safety organisations to ensure that they prioritise their efforts in the right way. It may be entirely appropriate that there are different levels and different places in which those connections are made. What we have in statute at present with the DPPs and CSPs, we are simplifying by statute.

The Chairperson:

Other members have asked for points of clarification, but I am moving on, as our time is running away already. I want to be fair to our audience out here and give them a fair wind. I will move on to representatives of organisations: first, Derek Hussey from Strabane Community Safety Partnership. I remind everyone that we are dealing with clause 20. After Derek has spoken, we will hear from Suzanne Wylie of Belfast City Council.

Mr Derek Hussey (Strabane Community Safety Partnership):

Thank you, Chairperson and members, for the opportunity to be here. We in Strabane Community Safety Partnership are concerned that the prominence of the community is not prioritised in the title. The first contributor alluded to the importance of this issue to the public; I would equate that to the importance to the community. However, the proposed name would indicate that police are the dominant partner. That may not be an actuality, but it could be a community perception.

Furthermore, just under half of the respondents to the consultation in June 2010 suggested “safer community partnership” as a favoured title. I understand that 27 stakeholders suggested that within 16 responses. Of all the responses, none suggested the title “policing and community safety partnership”, as outlined in the Justice Bill. However, eight stakeholders within five responses suggested “community safety and policing partnership”. We were told by the first contributor that the views of the consultees were taken on board; therefore, we query why that title was opted for. We recommend that the Justice Committee re-examines the proposed title.

Ms Suzanne Wylie (Belfast City Council):

Good afternoon. First, I will clarify my position: I can only represent the views of Belfast City Council in accordance with what was said at the strategic policy and resources committee of that council and views that have been confirmed through that committee.

In relation to clause 20, Belfast City Council supports the intention of the Minister and Department to bring together a more integrated partnership. The council has been calling for that to happen for some time. That joint partnership will look at public views and consider them; plan together; look at funding together; and jointly report through various structures. The council also agrees that the functions of the community safety partnerships and the district policing partnerships are relevant and should be carried forward. However, it has a number of concerns, particularly around the proposed model for Belfast. I will go into those one by one.

The council thinks that the proposal to establish one policing and community safety partnership and four district police and community safety partnerships in the Belfast area, as well as associated policing committees for each, is complex, will increase the administrative burden already on staff in trying to manage and facilitate all of those structures and could reduce the ability to deliver front line services. In our view, it will also place a burden on elected members and independent members to sit on both the police and community safety committee and the policing committee itself, as well as on other statutory agencies. They will potentially have to sit on five different structures throughout the city.

We appeal for flexibility. We appreciate that a code of practice and guidance will be drawn up on how the structures operate, and we appeal for Belfast City Council to be involved in drawing up those codes of practice. However, there needs to be flexibility because when those structures are put together and have a membership of elected members, independent members and so on, they take on a life of their own. They expect to meet on a regular basis and expect to have a valuable and credible function. That has to be borne in mind; they will set their own agendas.

Some clarity has been given on the police districts for Belfast. The council was unclear about that, and David Hughes provided some clarity this afternoon. However, it is my understanding that the Chief Constable determines the number of districts. Therefore, in the future, the Chief Constable could potentially bring about a change to the number of police districts in Belfast.

Again, the council appeals to the Committee to make sure that the legislation, guidance and codes of practice enable that kind of flexibility in the future.

I want to make a point about the linkages with the community-based partnerships that already exist throughout the city. I am sure that that is the case in other parts of Northern Ireland as well. Sir Reg mentioned some of them, such as the PACT structures and the CPLC structures. There are, however, other structures throughout the city of Belfast. We have the West Belfast Community Safety Forum, the area partnership boards and the neighbourhood renewal structures. It is vital that the new structures connect with existing structures because, to make a difference, it is absolutely vital that communities are involved in identifying the problems, trying to solve the problems and working with all the agencies to solve those problems. We cannot have any disconnect between the various structures.

Finally, we would have valued more political discourse on the model for Belfast, and we appeal to be involved in the codes of practice that will be developed in the future.

The Chairperson:

I thank Derek Hussey and Suzanne Wylie. We will open the meeting to others, including Committee members. I emphasise that we are still dealing with clause 20. Anyone else on the floor or in the Committee should indicate that they want to speak and we will list your name and call you in the order that we pick you up.

Mr McDevitt:

I want to pick up on Ms Wylie's last point about Belfast City Council's desire to have been slightly more involved in the design of policing partnerships in the city. What, specifically, would the council have wanted to see in the Bill in that regard?

Ms Wylie:

I cannot propose an alternative model because there is no council position on that at this point. However, we would have liked to have talked that through with the Department of Justice and with members of the Committee to look at whether there are alternatives, because 10 partnerships — five main partnerships and their policing subcommittees — will place an administrative burden on the staff. That will give us a difficulty in trying to make sure that we devote most of our resources to delivering services on the ground as opposed to preparing papers for meetings and convening and organising those meetings.

Mr McDevitt:

Do you have any sense of the extra cost that the council might incur as a result of the proposed structures?

Ms Wylie:

I could not give specific figures on the cost. However, at present, the current structures in Belfast City Council are that we have one community safety partnership for the city, one principal district policing partnership and four DPP subgroups. This will create another layer, so there will be four groups meeting regularly.

Ms Sarah Wilson (Craigavon Community Safety Partnership):

Some communities in Craigavon have not fully engaged with policing individually but have been involved very much in CSP activities, where the police are seen as only one element in a wider partnership. As mentioned, we are concerned about the title, which will project to communities a sense that there is a dominant partner and that this could potentially be a policing structure, rather than a wider partnership approach. Therefore, it might undo some of the good work that has been undertaken by the CSP in Craigavon.

Ms Claire Linney (Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council):

Our council has talked about the issue that Suzanne raised. Councils are the third partner in the structure, and there was potential to involve them earlier in overseeing delivery. As Sir Reg said, councils will be the advocates for making this happen on the ground, when it comes to public perception and community involvement. Councils are the third strand and need to be involved as a partner with the Department of Justice and the Policing Board, rather than being a stakeholder consultee when it comes to planning how it will operate and how the structure will link with communities.

The council also felt that this is an opportunity to be innovative. We are undertaking a review and are considering the elements of DPPs and CSPs that worked well and whether there is an opportunity, at this stage, to go back to the Patten report and look at a community planning model in which we bring in the wider, public safety, organisations, as the report envisioned at the start. We should take this further to realise greater involvement by councils.

Mr Jeff Barr (Strabane District Policing Partnership):

I concur with my colleague Derek Hussey from Strabane CSP. We have done extensive work on the ground in Strabane, particularly to get community support. Derek is right when he says that the document implies that this will be a heavily police-dominated model and would, therefore, undermine some of the work that we have done. The Committee's emphasis has to be in placing the community at the forefront. That would help us at this stage and would give the community aspect the lead.

The Chairperson:

Thank you. We will move to clauses 21 and 22. I call Koulla Yiasouma from Include Youth, then Suzanne Wylie from Belfast City Council, followed by Liz Cuddy from Extern.

Ms Koulla Yiasouma (Include Youth):

Thank you very much for the invitation to speak. I want to speak on two subsections of clause 21, subsections (1) and (3), and their mirror subsections in clause 22. I want to talk about a possible limitation in clause 21(1), particularly paragraphs (c), (d) and (e), which concern co-operation and obtaining the views of, and discussion and consultation with, the public. I will be brief and, hopefully, helpful.

For some time, Include Youth has been concerned about a consistent lack of meaningful engagement with children and young people across some of the processes that we are talking about today. Indeed, some young people have informed Include Youth that they have found some of the meetings to be inaccessible and very adult-focused. Some of them felt that the meetings were combative in nature.

We look forward to partnerships that, in whatever form, recognise that young people are partners in making communities safer. Too often, young people are viewed as the cause of crimes and the enemies of law-abiding communities, rather than as part of the solution in making communities safer. As such, clause 21 is crucial, and we welcome and applaud the notion of genuine and meaningful participation with the public and with communities in general.

We suggest the addition of the following words to clause 21(1)(d): “fully considering”, after “to make arrangements for obtaining”. I have sent that alternative wording to the Committee Clerk. We would like clause 21(1)(d) to read:

“to make arrangements for obtaining and fully considering the views of the public about matters concerning the policing of the district and enhancing community safety in the district”.

We are saying that we are looking for meaningful consultation with communities in a way that is accessible to particular groups in communities.

My second point is on clause 21(3). This is an age-old issue for Include Youth. The clause places a level of responsibility on PCSPs and DPCSPs to reduce actual and perceived levels of crime and antisocial behaviour. Include Youth has gone on record about the definition of and actions to address antisocial behaviour. Our understanding is that the term is first mentioned in legislation in Northern Ireland in the Anti-social Behaviour (Northern Ireland) Order 2004, in which it is described as behaviour that:

“caused or was likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons not of the same household”.

We have fundamental difficulties with such a vague definition of behaviour, which language is being repeated in the Justice Bill. A lot of work and resources have been expended on the notion of antisocial behaviour since 2004. For example, the PSNI has a performance target to, in this financial year, reduce antisocial behaviour by 15%. That is really difficult to do when there is such a nebulous definition. In fairness to the PSNI, however, it has come up with 14 categories of antisocial behaviour and a fifteenth catch-all. Having looked at those 14 categories, most of them seem criminal in nature, rather than the sort of behaviour that the 2004 Order is intended to address. We ask that the term “antisocial behaviour” be removed from the Justice Bill until we can get a definition that is clear and can support the partnerships in actually doing something about it.

Ms Wylie:

Thank you. I will not repeat any of the points that I made earlier. Belfast City Council’s view is that the functions and structures of the PCSPs should, ultimately, lead to improved community safety and policing across the city. That should be their ultimate purpose. They should support responsive and effective service delivery, which is focused on making a difference in communities. That reflects what someone else said earlier, which was that communities should be at the forefront. The approach should not be only top-down; it should be balanced with a bottom-up approach from communities.

Belfast City Council understands why the separation of the PCSPs and the policing committees is being put forward. However, the council believes that there is a risk that a culture of distinctiveness could build up in the new structures. Therefore, the council calls for clear guidance on how the PCSPs and DPCSPs can work in an integrated fashion, have a shared culture and establish clear communication lines with one another.

Thirdly, there is a lack of clarity around the purpose of the principal district policing partnership in Belfast. The learning from that should certainly be taken forward when designing the distinct functions between the policing committee at the main Belfast level and those at the four district levels.

Finally, there needs to be clarity around the status of the new partnership. By that I mean the legal status around the powers and vires it has: what will fall to the body itself and what powers and vires will fall to the councils in the future. If, for example, it is the council's responsibility to enter into contracts on behalf of the partnership, it is recommended that that should be made explicit in the legislation to ensure that the council has the vires to do that.

Ms Liz Cuddy (Extern):

Good afternoon. I thank the Committee for this opportunity. Extern provides services for vulnerable people with complex needs and challenging behaviours in communities. In doing so, we work closely with communities across Northern Ireland.

My points are general ones about clauses 21 and 22. In principle, we welcome the establishment of PCSPs. Anything that streamlines the current situation, continues to improve policing and community safety, simplifies bureaucracy and reduces costs is to be welcomed. However, we are not assured that the current proposals will achieve any of that. We are

concerned that the remit, agenda and working of the partnerships will become skewed and occupied by policing matters, although we accept that that is not what is intended in the Bill. However, the community focus must not be diluted or treated as secondary to policing matters. We would like to see that reinforced. Hence, monitoring and supporting relationships between policing, community representatives and all agencies that deliver community safety outcomes, whether they be community, voluntary, private or public, must be the agenda, actions, outputs and outcomes of all of those partnerships.

The partnerships will need to provide evidence and assurance, from appropriate participation, decision-making, outputs and outcomes, that they support and promote those relationships. To do that, there must be appropriate representation of voluntary and community sector providers and their constituent groups on the partnerships. We are not clear about how that will be respected, developed or delivered. Some matters that appear to be for the code of practice should be looked at in the legislation.

Ms Bridget McCaughan (Limavady Borough Council):

I am concerned about clause 21's huge emphasis on policing. It will deliver a scenario in which the police monitoring role supersedes front line delivery of vital community safety services. Looking at the proposed functions of the PCSP, most of the focus is on discussion and consultation of policing. Indeed, there is no mention of delivery of any kind before clause 21(1)(h).

Mr Hussey:

I have a similar point about clause 21. Our community safety partnership is of the view that, overall, the functions are too similar to the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000, so they are very police-orientated. We are concerned that community safety has not been legislated for outside of the policing arena.

In addition, multi-agency working has been neglected in the proposed functions. The role of the police may also be perceived as being monitored, as has been said, rather than working in partnership. The PCSP is unbalanced in respect of delivery to the community. Further, on clause 21(2), we query how a partnership can be formed when there are functions that pertain to only one part of the model. Furthermore, clause 21(2)(b) should not be restricted to the policing committee. Rather, the functions should be exercised by the whole partnership.

We would suggest that clause 21(3) is evidence as to why clause 21(2) should not be restricted to the policing committee.

The Chairperson:

Anyone else want to comment on this? Any Committee member? No one has responded. That being the case, we will move on to clause 23, which deals with the code of practice for PCSPs and DPCSPs.

Ms Sarah Wilson:

Many of the proposed provisions outlined in clause 23 refer to practices that are already taking place under the DPP model. However, there is no evidence or information, either from the consultation or in subsequent papers, on whether those practices are effective in a local council or local community setting. We, therefore, propose that robust evaluations of those practices, as well as of all other practices in the CSPs and DPPs, should be carried out and that only the most effective should be carried into the new partnership. Therefore, we are establishing whether there is merit in including them in the current legislation.

In addition, a cost-saving analysis should be carried out, as requested by Craigavon CSP, Craigavon DPP and Craigavon Borough Council during the initial stages. That would reinforce any evaluation of the practices proposed in the legislation. Furthermore, many of the codes of

practice are very traditional, and the legislation provides a key opportunity to look at alternative and more innovative ways of community engagement. In addition, the clause provides clear insight into the role of the policing committee, but little is mentioned about the practices in the overall partnership and what they will adhere to.

Therefore, Craigavon CSP and Craigavon DPP view the legislation, as it stands, as increased bureaucracy that brings no added value to the current situation. We recommend that the Committee request an evaluation of current practices, including a cost-saving exercise, to bring forward any proposed recommendations in the new legislation.

Ms Rosaleen Moore (Northern Ireland Policing Board):

The Policing Board welcomes the legislation. I think that one of the first actions of the newly formed Policing Board was to make representations to the Northern Ireland Office about the desirability of trying to meld the DPP function and the community safety function, so we are glad to see this coming about.

We take a little bit of issue with one point. The DPPs have been subject to periodic review by the Policing Board. A very comprehensive review was undertaken a short time after the DPPs were formed. As a result of the review, a number of changes to the code of practice were implemented. The Northern Ireland Office instigated some legislative change on foot of that.

The board also carries out a consultative exercise annually and assesses annually the effectiveness of the DPP functions against that. There was mention of public meetings, but public meetings are only one facet of a DPP's engagement with the community. The engagement is also with community organisations, sporting bodies and educational bodies and about working on further themes in relation to, for example, domestic abuse and working with young people, which is work that the board has instigated itself. So, we would not be in agreement with what

Ms Wilson said.

Mr McDevitt:

I want to understand the position of the Policing Board. Does the board object to there being a code of practice in the Bill?

Ms Moore:

No. We are endorsing nearly everything that is going forward.

Mr McDevitt:

I want to be sure that I understand this. What are your specific issues with clause 23?

Ms Moore:

We are not taking issue with it. We are just disagreeing with the analysis that we, as a Policing Board, have not effectively assessed the district policing partnerships against the code of practice and other issues. We have carried out our responsibilities, as have the DPPs.

The Chairperson:

Anyone else? OK, we will move on to clauses 24, 27 and 30, which deal with accountability and reporting.

Ms Wendy Carson (Larne Borough Council):

My point comes from Larne Borough Council and is about the accountability of the four bodies — the joint committee, the council, the Northern Ireland Policing Board and the Department of Justice — in the new proposed PCSP model. That is very concerning to us, given that the process

was to simplify the lines of accountability, not to add more bureaucracy. The legislation may lead to conflicting targets and requests in the future. Therefore, we appeal to the Committee that, whenever it looks at reporting lines and mechanisms, it tries to put them into one.

The Chairperson:

Does anyone else want to comment?

Ms Helen Richmond (Northern Ireland Local Government Association):

There remains a lack of clarity on the level of accountability and oversight that will rest with councils if it is considered that a PCSP is underperforming in any way. We welcome clarity on that.

The Chairperson:

Anyone else? We will move on to clause 30, which is about reports by policing committees to the Policing Board.

Mr Barr:

I am vice-chairperson of Strabane DPP. If the Chairperson and the Committee permits, I want to place on record frustrations on behalf of Strabane DPP. Having made a submission, we feel restricted in the sense that we are being told to come and talk about a particular clause. It is a very real frustration.

As a DPP, we have concerns about clause 30. The legislation suggests that the policing committee will not report to the overall PCSP. The policing committee could independently issue and publish reports. Is that not an unusual governance arrangement? In our estimation, it certainly will not lend itself to good partnership working. In fact, one could infer that PCSP

logos could not even be applied to policing committee documents if they have not been ratified by the PCSPs. Furthermore, if PCSPs do not see reports to the Policing Board, that will not lend itself to true partnership working. We are concerned that it will lead to confusion, even poor relations, and it will certainly inhibit good partnership working. Sir Reg Empey has already referred to a lack of coherence.

Furthermore, if the Committee will permit me to do so, I will dip back into clauses 23 and 24. It is indicated that, as body unincorporated of council, councils should have an accountability role as opposed to a reporting role. Therefore, there are even questions about reporting. Under the provisions of clauses 27 and 30, we suggest that there is a risk of duplication of reports, because reports are required from both the Policing Board and the joint committee. Therefore, there will be one report for the policing aspects of an issue and another report to cover the community safety aspects. As my colleague indicated, there are serious questions about the whole reporting mechanism, and we ask the Committee to take a serious look at that, to try to simplify it and, furthermore, to make it work.

Sir Reg Empey:

I want to ask Mr Barr for clarification. Could he elaborate on his first point about frustration at the restrictions?

Mr Barr:

We took the opportunity to make a submission. We were, for instance, invited to identify and prioritise three items that we might talk about here. The correspondence that then came out asked us to talk about clause 30. In many respects, that did not concur with the initial thoughts of the Strabane DPP. When we made our submission, we thought that we would have the opportunity to come here, along with the rest of the people, to indicate our concerns to the Committee.

I will give you one example. The arrangement that will be on offer is about community partnership working. The Strabane DPP has put a lot of store by that fact, given that is based in a very difficult area where policing is still not accepted. We have put a lot of store by brokering confidence in the community. We have tried to place the police alongside other emergency services. We feel that we have started to make strides, but we have a long way to go. Policing is not accepted in a lot of parts of Strabane, and we also have a dissident threat. Therefore, we are concerned about the new arrangement because of its compilation.

Our members value strongly the fact that there is remuneration when they participate. A lot of them gave up their time, working hours and salary to attend and participate in the DPP, often at unsociable hours. We, as independents, are out working on the ground. For example, we are the ones who go into communities to try to ensure that there is little or no bother on 12 July. We would have appreciated the opportunity to come and give a fuller response, rather than to just comment on one clause.

Ms Moore:

I will comment on clauses 24, 27 and 30. The board's view is that there is a certain amount of standardisation between a number of the reports that are referred to in those clauses. There will not necessarily be duplication.

There is a clear line of policing accountability from the policing committee through to the board. That cannot really be diluted because it is a statutory obligation that was enshrined in the Patten recommendations, and we are very keen that it is maintained.

The Chairperson:

Mr Barr, I want to ask you about your comments, just for clarification. You said that you feel restricted. Did you mean that you are restricted because of what happens in Strabane or because

of what is happening here?

Mr Barr:

It is purely about being able to report to the Committee. As I said, we made the response and prioritised three items. We then received correspondence indicating that you were inviting us to make a response on clause 30. In our submission, we highlighted a number of factors that have been omitted and are not even being talked about. That is where we, as a DPP, feel that we have been restricted.

Mr Givan:

Mr Barr, when the Chairperson has asked whether anyone wants to comment on any other clauses, have you picked that up?

Mr Barr:

Yes.

Mr Givan:

So, you have had the opportunity to comment on other clauses.

Mr Barr:

I mentioned remuneration, which is one of a number of examples. I do not see provision for that here or where it is likely to come up.

The Chairperson:

We will be dealing with remuneration a little later.

Mr Barr:

That is great. I appreciate that.

The Chairperson:

Does anyone else wish to comment on clause 30? If not, we will move to clause 33, which is entitled “Other community policing arrangements”.

Ms Cuddy:

We are not clear about what clause 33 means or what it will look like when it is implemented. I apologise if that is apparent to everyone else. Consultation with communities is critical, but it needs to follow clear processes that are understood, if not established, by those communities. As we understand it, the process that is laid out in clause 33 suggests that consultation could be approved by the Policing Board but not approved by the PCSP. For us, that would create governance and coherence issues and, potentially, conflict. We would like clarification and, hopefully, an assurance that that is not what it means.

The fact that all parts of the community have a role to play in achieving and maintaining the community safety focus must not be lost. Consultations need to result in better policing and community safety, and there needs to be a mechanism for evaluating and monitoring, otherwise it will just be a matter of consultation for consultation’s sake.

The Chairperson:

Anyone else like to comment?

Mr Hussey:

Our CSP contends that clause 33 contradicts and undermines the spirit of the single partnership

and that consultation requirements will be wider than policing. It is inadvisable that the policing committee should be able to establish any body, and we hope that the role of the committee will be re-examined by the Justice Committee.

Mr Iain Creswell (Coleraine Community Safety Partnership):

We believe that the consultation requirements should include more than policing and should encompass all aspects of community safety, which would reflect the spirit of the single partnership and avoid consultation duplication. Additionally, the establishment of bodies could duplicate various roles in the council, including community development.

The Chairperson:

Anyone else? Let us move on to clause 34, which deals with the duty on public bodies to consider community safety implications in exercising duties.

Councillor Jack Beattie (Northern Ireland Local Government Association):

I thank the Committee for inviting the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) to give evidence on Part 3 of the Justice Bill. I am a councillor in Castlereagh Borough Council, a member of Castlereagh's community safety partnership and an executive member of NILGA.

In principle, NILGA members broadly welcome the proposal to establish policing and community safety partnerships as an opportunity to establish a more focused and holistic approach to reducing crime and improving community safety across council areas. Although the police and the PCSPs are key contributors, NILGA members consider that they cannot deliver community safety successfully alone. The inclusion of clause 34 provides an opportunity to build broad-based responsibilities for community safety and contribute to the delivery of a shared community safety agenda. The duty should ensure that community safety issues are made central to all policy development by government and public authorities and are not limited to those

public bodies directly involved in the PCSPs.

The clause has the potential to make a real difference to the lives of the people of Northern Ireland by providing a framework to design public services around the needs of individuals.

Ms Bridgeen Butler (Moyle Community Safety Partnership):

We feel that clause 34 is vital and that this is a unique opportunity to gain cross-departmental support and participation. However, the Bill needs to go a little bit further and name the appropriate public bodies, similar to the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 in England, which will ensure buy-in and participation from all key stakeholders. That, in turn, will realise the full potential of the partnership.

Mr McDevitt:

Will Ms Butler give us a sense of the bodies in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to which she is referring?

Ms B Butler:

We are considering bodies such as the police, the Housing Executive, health boards, youth services, the emergency services and the education board; any bodies that can make a meaningful contribution to the community safety agenda.

Mr McDevitt:

I understand Councillor Beattie's concern, but where in the clause is that concern not being met? Does subsection (3) not try to meet his concern to some extent?

Councillor Beattie:

I did not hear the end of the question.

Mr McDevitt:

You make a very good point. However, I wonder where it is that you feel we need to strengthen the clause that we are looking at? It could be read that the clause does everything that you say, but that you are putting an interpretation on it.

Councillor Beattie:

You can widen these things too far and, then, perhaps get nowhere. The clause needs to look at other people and be as broad as it can be. I take your point that it could go too wide, but the clause needs to have a broader outlook for the individual. Sometimes, statutory bodies are inclined to draw a line around themselves and simply deal with their own issues. They stick within their own sections or compartments.

Ms Mary McKee (Northern Ireland Policing Board):

I am an independent member of the Policing Board. We fully support clause 34. It provides a unique opportunity for innovative engagement practices, which some of my colleagues mentioned, especially with disaffected and vulnerable organisations. We also endorse the fact that the clause should go a bit further and mirror some of the legislation in England and Wales, particularly the Crime and Disorder Act. It is a unique opportunity, but it needs to be pumped up a bit and go a bit further. However, we strongly support the clause.

The Chairperson:

Anyone else?

Mr Hussey:

I have a very brief point. I get the sense that there is a very welcoming atmosphere around this clause, but a feeling that it needs to be strengthened. The suggestion is to look at the Crime and Disorder Act in England and Wales. Hopefully, the Committee will do that. At the end of the day, we all want legislation that enables the partnerships to be fit for purpose.

Ms Sarah Wilson:

Another element that the Committee may wish to consider is how the legislation will be enforced. We recommend that public agencies are included in the legislation. To add to the list that Bridgeen gave, Roads Service is one of the key bodies that need to be brought into the legislation. We recommend that the clause is strengthened in that way and that the ways in which it is going to be enforced across the agencies are looked at.

Ms Yiasouma:

I was going to make the same point. We, too, welcome the clause and recommend that it is strengthened by naming the core bodies that are instrumental in making communities safer. My question is: have any of those possible bodies responded to the consultation or made any representation to your colleagues in DOJ or at a ministerial level? I wonder whether a lot of those organisations are aware of the clause.

The Chairperson:

Anyone else want to comment before we move on?

Mr Barr:

There are obviously resource implications when community safety is being taken into consideration. Therefore, perhaps there is a requirement to community safety-proof all policies and procedures, particularly those of public bodies. In light of the current situation, there has been a fall-off in representation from public bodies in the local strategy groups. I ask the

Committee to take that into consideration. With the new model, is it a likelihood that public bodies will not put people forward to sit on these bodies?

The Chairperson:

The Executive have also raised some issues and concerns around clause 34.

Anyone else? As I do not see anyone else who wishes to speak, we will move on to clause 35, which is entitled, “Functions of joint committee and Policing Board”.

Ms Wylie:

Belfast City Council would welcome the setting up of a joint committee and any attempt to ensure that there is joint working between the Department of Justice and the Policing Board around the new partnership arrangements. However, what is specified in clause 35 refers solely to the monitoring roles and separates the monitoring roles of the joint committee and the Policing Board. If it is necessary to separate them in that way, it is fundamental that the wider role of the joint committee is defined in the legislation.

For example, the legislation should set strategic direction for the partnerships and how they operate, streamline how they operate and ensure that there is no duplication. Furthermore, we should look jointly at the funding arrangements for the partnerships and take on board the views of the partnership structures and make decisions on those where there is a need for change. There is a need for clarity on the role of the joint committee and the role of councils, particularly if it is the role of the joint committee to set strategic direction. There should be input from councils to enable them to have a say in the strategic direction of the partnerships.

Ms Moore:

The Policing Board supports the formation of the joint committee and its establishment in

legislation with a caveat that there should be no diminution in the board's current statutory roles or responsibilities.

Ms Sarah Wilson:

I have a point about the inclusion of independent assessment of the levels of public satisfaction. I made the point earlier about a robust evaluation. That evaluation needs to be independent and, therefore, there needs to be an independent assessment of levels of public satisfaction so that we get a very clear picture of the performance of both the policing committee and the PCSPs.

The Chairperson:

Anyone else?

Mr Barr:

Taking on board that the legislation provides for the joint committee to assess public satisfaction and the effectiveness of the overall PCSP and that the Policing Board will assess public satisfaction, do you agree that there is a possibility of confusion or duplication of roles?

Ms Richmond:

Our members welcome the streamlining of the administrative process but need more detail on the role of the joint committee. We contend that the model must take account of the role of councils in supporting PCSPs. There will be three funding sources. Indeed, the proposed removal of the 75%:25% funding split between the Policing Board and councils could lead to an increase in overall council contribution, yet there is no direct link with council priorities.

The Chairperson:

Anyone else? We will move on to schedules 1 and 2, which are about policing and community

safety partnerships and district policing and community safety partnerships. We will start with paragraph 4.

Mr Michael McCrory (Magherafelt Community Safety Partnership and Magherafelt District Policing Partnership):

I will speak about the recruitment of independent members through the Policing Board. Our DPP and CSP feel that, at the minute, that is quite expensive. This year, we will spend roughly £25,500 to recruit eight members. The overall figure across Northern Ireland is approximately £700,000 to £800,000 for the recruitment of independent members. We feel that it might be better for the local council to do that through the new PCSP, if it is appointed. We compare that to the Peace III partnerships where, locally, we have Dungannon, Cookstown, Magherafelt and Fermanagh as one partnership that appoints independent members. It spent £2,000 just to advertise in the local papers. There is staff time associated with the interview process, but, then again, that applies to the recruitment of independent members of the district policing partnerships. Therefore, we ask the Committee to look into that and to assess the cost-effectiveness of the recruitment policy.

Alderman Maura Hickey (Coleraine District Policing Partnership):

Thank you for having me here to speak on the issue. I want to speak on paragraph 4(12) of schedule 1, which refers to the payments of expenses to independent members. The legislation states:

“The council may pay to independent members such expenses as the council may determine.”

There does not appear to be any such inclusion for elected members in the partnerships, which means that councils would have to meet those costs separately and would not be able to recoup them from the central grant. Therefore, the members of the DPP believe that the expenses should be set at a central level through the code of practice, as was the case for the DPP, to ensure equality throughout the council areas and among members of the partnership and to allow councils to recoup the potential costs.

Members of the DPP also believe that the independent members should receive a nominal allowance. There are a number of reasons for that. Firstly, the calibre of the people needed for such an appointment and the level and amount of input that independent members can make to a partnership. I can certainly endorse that from my knowledge of the independent members of Coleraine DPP. Therefore, it is likely that fewer people would be interested in applying to be members of the partnership, if there was no incentive to take part.

Members also questioned if the payment of allowances to members of the Northern Ireland Policing Board, by virtue of paragraph 2 of schedule 1 to the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000, would be repealed. There does not seem to be anything in the legislation that replicates clause 22 of that Act in relation to the district commander consulting with the new partnership on the priorities and a local policing plan. Members would be grateful if that apparent oversight could be clarified. I am the chairperson of the Coleraine DPP.

Ms McKee:

I want to go back to the cost implications. The Policing Board is very aware of the costs of recruiting independent members. We are working this year to reduce that £700,000, as the gentleman mentioned. Previously, the £700,000 contained a contribution from the Northern Ireland Office. I understand that the Department of Justice does not intend to contribute to that cost this time. So we have a target in our business plan this year for recruitment of £550,000.

The Chairperson:

Someone's phone is on, and it is interfering with the recording. Please make sure that all mobile phones are switched off.

Ms McKee:

If councils are proposing to recruit independent members, we would welcome that. Are councils

also proposing to do the legal challenges and the judicial reviews? We would be willing to hear from them, if we could do that and work in an effective way and in partnership.

Mr McCartney:

I have a question on cost for Michael and Mary. Does Michael have a breakdown of why it costs £25,000 to recruit eight members?

Mr McCrory:

No, I do not. That is the figure that is given to us by the Policing Board. It is £25,500, and we have put that into our accounts for next year. We do not receive the money from the Policing Board. The Policing Board recruits directly using consultants, and members of our DPP do the interview process.

Mr McCartney:

Mary, have you any idea why it costs £700,000? It is proposed that that is cut to £500,000.

Ms McKee:

It is because we are looking at efficiency measures and using our in-house staff to do the process.

Mr McCartney:

Why is it £700,000?

Ms Amanda Stewart (Northern Ireland Policing Board):

The £700,000 has largely been made up this year because in the previous round, the Northern Ireland Office made 100% of a contribution towards the advertising stage of the process. We

understand that it is not going to do that this year, so we have had to pass that cost on to councils. Another issue is that there were a number of independent members who we were able to fast-track in previous competitions, subject to a satisfactory performance review, so there was no cost associated to them.

In the last recruitment competition, we had 181 members with no associated cost. We understand that a fast-track process will not be put in place for current DPP members, because it would be a new partnership, so, assuming that a larger number of people would be processed in the competition, we have had to increase the cost per candidate.

The Chairperson:

Does anyone else wish to comment?

Mr Barr:

We suggest that, unless there is another, easier method, councils should be empowered to nominate and appoint independent members. Surely that would keep the cost down and be more efficient?

Mr McCartney:

I missed your first point. I am sorry, but I was talking. Will you repeat it?

Mr Barr:

Our suggestion is that councils, as unincorporated bodies, could be allowed to nominate and appoint independent members. Surely that would cut costs.

Ms Sarah Wilson:

We reinforce the idea that a cost-saving analysis needs to take place on savings that might come about from the establishment of a PCSP. In section 12, we outlined the fact that councils may pay independent members' expenses. We need to identify what those expenses would be in comparison to the remittance paid. Consequently, a cost-saving analysis needs to take place.

Ms McKee:

To my colleague in Craigavon: we would welcome that and any other ideas. It is interesting to note that the majority of the quite considerable costs that the Policing Board faces involve chasing up councillors to sit on panels. Therefore, if my council colleagues know of better ways to communicate with councillors in order to get them to sit on panels, we would very much welcome the savings. *[Laughter.]*

The Chairperson:

Councillors are sometimes busy, too. Nevertheless, the point is well made.

Ms Linney:

To go back to my earlier point, if the three key partners were to get around a table and work together to discuss costs, recruitment and so forth, maybe we would not have to be discussing those matters now, because systems would be in place and the matter would be sorted. Maybe we now need to get the three partners around a table.

The Chairperson:

And that might save people from having to chase around after councillors. *[Laughter.]* We get the point. Does anyone else wish to speak on this point?

Ms Richmond:

I would like to emphasise that councils should be consulted before consideration is given to allocating costs to them.

The Chairperson:

Anyone else?

Mr Givan:

I would like Alderman Hickey to clarify a point that she made. She said that independent members are cited in the legislation with regard to expenses. Was she alluding to the fact that councillors are not cited in the legislation and, therefore, independent members would receive expenses but councillors would not?

Alderman Hickey:

Yes.

Mr Givan:

So, she would like councillors to receive expenses as well — is that the point that was being made from Coleraine?

Alderman Hickey:

Yes, to a certain extent, I was referring to expenses. However, it is important that independent members get a fee, because they would be the only people sitting on those groups who would not be paid for being there. Consequently, I think you would definitely not get the calibre of individual whom we currently have in Coleraine Borough Council.

The Chairperson:

Anyone else?

Mr Barr:

Maybe this is the opportunity to talk about remuneration?

The Chairperson:

No. *[Laughter.]* Paragraph 17 deals with finance, so we would ask you hold on until we get to that point. I assure you that you will not be restricted. *[Laughter.]*

Mr Barr:

That is the clarity that I want. Good stuff.

The Chairperson:

Anyone else?

We will move on to paragraph 7, which deals with representatives of designated organisations. Before I call the next speaker, who will be Philip McKeown from Moyle DPP, I would ask contributors to stand when commenting or asking a question.

Mr Philip McKeown (Moyle District Policing Partnership):

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to speak. Paragraph 7 of Schedule 1 provides for the representation of designated organisations on a PCSP. However, that, in effect, means that the policing committee of the not-yet-formed PCSP will have to designate such organisations. The schedule may pose potential difficulties and raises a number of queries. First, how and on what

basis will such organisations in the council area be designated? Secondly, what contribution, if any, will designated organisations be required to make, and at what level? Will that include finance, staff and a commitment to the delivery of community safety? Will representatives of each of the designated organisations be required to attend the PCSP?

Mr Paul Doran (Probation Board for Northern Ireland):

Thank you and good afternoon. The Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) would like to be specifically named in the Justice Bill as one of the designated organisations. We recognise the advantage to the delivery of justice sector services at local levels and that certain flexibility is required to reflect the appropriate local organisations best placed to be represented on each PCSP/DPCSP. However, there should also be room for a regional context in order to provide consistency of approach.

The Probation Board has 31 offices throughout Northern Ireland and is represented in every major town. We have experienced staff who are aware of regional strategy and are skilled in delivering that strategy in a local context. We pride ourselves on working in, with and through the community, and, as such, we work closely with local communities and their representatives to reduce reoffending and provide a safer environment.

Having the Probation Board statutorily identified as a designated organisation in the Bill on a regional basis would bring a consistent level of experience and skills to assist in the preparation of plans to reduce crime and enhance community safety in the district role of each PCSP, provide a consistent approach to the work of PCSPs and allow for better co-ordination across the sector in pursuing the objective of reducing offending and reoffending. We believe that we have proven expertise in that field; we currently effectively supervise over 4,300 orders and licences in local communities throughout Northern Ireland. PBNI also believes that that approach would provide a better basis on which to work with the PSNI and other agencies to focus PCSPs on the wider issue of reducing crime.

In England and Wales, the Policing and Crime Act 2009 made probation boards responsible authorities on community safety partnerships. That new status came into effect on 1 April 2010. We appreciate the opportunity to give evidence today and we ask that the Probation Board be named in the Bill as a designated organisation.

Ms Cathy Watson (Ballymoney Community Safety Partnership):

I have two points to make. We acknowledge that no upper limit to the number of people who can sit on the PCSPs is stipulated in the Bill. However, other factors, such as room size, especially in smaller council buildings, will dictate the maximum number of participants. That will be at the expense of community, voluntary and statutory representation on the partnership body when the number of elected and independent members who have to sit on that body is taken into account. Following on from that, current research in the Causeway coast and Glens area across the four CSPs has identified that there is significant leverage — 100% plus, in fact — from partner agencies. We are in grave danger of losing that amount of leverage if the organisations are not sitting around the table.

Mr Campbell Dixon (Newtownabbey Borough Council):

I want to go back to the point about the representation of other organisations. It is considered that, for completeness and co-ordination of effort, such designations should be made by the council, having regard to functions that are delivered through partnership arrangements with other statutory and community bodies, such as those involved in good relations, neighbourhood renewal and Peace III. That would allow for a more joined-up, corporate approach to achieving the aims of the legislation and associated council objectives, particularly in anticipation of future developments in community planning.

Ms Yiasouma:

Following on from Paul Doran's point; we suggest that youth justice agencies be named on the

same basis as the Probation Service should be named. The paragraph provides the opportunity to give effect to clause 34, which we discussed earlier regarding other bodies joining the PCSP and DPCSP — we have got new acronyms to learn. We ask that the paragraph be strengthened and include, for instance, criminal justice organisations in one grouping and health, social care and education in another. It needs to be a little more explicit as to the groups wanted. We ask that the voluntary and community sector is mentioned specifically, which will enable the councils to undertake election or selection processes and nominate the particular groups they want. We do not believe that it is enough to say “at least 4 organisations”. We believe that the categories and sectors of organisations need to be made more explicit in the paragraph.

Mr Hussey:

I am sure that we can all agree that the reduction of crime and disorder is a multi-agency issue. Given that fact, should the naming of agencies, similar to the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, be considered, to place an obligation on agencies to reduce, or assist in the reduction of, crime and disorder?

The Chairperson:

We move on to paragraph 10, which deals with the chair and vice-chair.

Ms Watson:

We believe that the positions should be open to anyone in the partnership. That is on the basis of studies carried out by IDEA, which is an organisation in England, to research into and improve the provision of public sector organisations. IDEA found that the most effective chairs of the CDRP came from the voluntary, statutory and community partners.

Ms Moore:

We believe that the position of chair should be held by an elected member of the council and we feel that there should be a single chair for the complete organisation.

Mr McCartney:

Will you give your rationale for that?

Ms Moore:

Councillors are elected and have a mandate. Therefore, there is accountability. As regards the policing function, we think that it would be a much better arrangement to have a single chair, a single entity, for continuity purposes if nothing else.

Ms Watson:

I forgot to say that I can forward the research to the Committee for consideration.

The Chairperson:

Thank you.

Ms McCaughan:

I ask the Committee to consider not restricting the positions of chair and vice-chair to elected members, in the spirit of true partnership working. Other agencies should not be excluded from holding those positions in order to maintain their interest, allow ownership, and promote an ethos of shared responsibility within the PCSP.

Mr Barr:

We concur with the latter comments. We do not believe that it would make for an inclusive partnership if there were not co-chairs, one of whom was a representative of the community, rather than having one chair who is an elected representative.

Mr McDevitt:

Mr Barr introduced the term co-chairs. As I understood it, there was a debate as to whether there will be a chair and vice-chair.

Mr Barr:

I mean chair and vice-chair.

Mr McDevitt:

Are you arguing that it should be open to anyone and that it does not have to be a political representative?

Mr Barr:

Yes.

Mr McDevitt:

OK.

Ms Richmond:

For the reasons put forward in respect of democratic accountability and the role of the policing committee, NILGA members support the idea that the chairperson should be an elected member.

Mr O'Dowd:

What is the current practice in CSPs for holding the positions of chairperson and vice-chairperson? Is it rotated?

Ms McCaughan:

The Limavady CSP took the decision, which was supported cross party, that everyone but an elected member would hold the chair — *[Laughter]* — simply in the interests of partnership working. The councillors felt that the council was facilitating the CSP; therefore, they would enable other organisations to hold those posts.

The Chairperson:

So it is a partnership excluding the council. *[Laughter.]*

Ms Sarah Wilson:

Councillor O’Dowd, you are probably aware that Craigavon CSP and DPP have the same Chairperson. Inevitably, because of the instruction from the Policing Board, that Chairperson is an elected member. However, the arrangement works very well, and that is why Craigavon CSP and DPP feel that they work cohesively together already. Therefore, we do not see the added value of this legislation, as we have the same chairperson on both bodies.

Mr Barr:

There are many models and examples of good working relationships. DPPs work well together and Investing for Health also has a community chairperson, so we should try to keep it as inclusive as possible.

The Chairperson:

That was quite interesting. We will move on to paragraph 13, which relates to policing committee procedures.

Ms Alison Allen (Antrim Borough Community Safety Partnership, Antrim District

Policing Partnership and Antrim Borough Council):

Good afternoon. I will speak to schedule 1 paragraph 13, which provides for the establishment of subgroups under the policing committee and its mirror clause in paragraph 14, which provides for the establishment of subgroups under the main body of the PCSP. As has already been indicated, a wide range of community-based organisations, such as CPLCs and PACTs, deal with policing and community safety issues at a local level. This could lead to confusion if extra subgroups are set up. The public have an expectation that they will have one point of call in relation to all policing and community safety issues. Setting up further subgroups would only confuse the public.

In the absence of information in the Bill and the relationship between the main PCSP and the policing committee, there is a danger that if two different subgroups were set up, communities would not get the best level of service, which has been stated by officials as being the purpose of the Bill.

As I have already stated, communities should have the expectation of one point of contact in relation to all aspects of community safety and policing. Due to the confusing lines of accountability in the Bill and the lack of information on agreed priorities between the Department of Justice and the Policing Board, there is a danger that having two separate sets of potentially conflicting objectives could result in perverse outcomes for communities. I propose that establishing geographically-based or issue-based groups should be within the remit of the overall body of the PCSP so that a joined-up approach to problem solving at a local level is taken, which will deliver the best for local communities.

The Chairperson:

Thank you. If you see an apprehensive look on our faces, it is because we are trying to keep an eye on the level of snowfall. We have been told that is going to be very severe, but it is not too bad at the moment.

Ms Watson:

It is my understanding that the policing committee would be responsible for inviting other organisations to sit on the policing and community safety partnership. How will they ensure that there is equality of representation in the overall partnership?

The Chairperson:

Thank you. We will now move on to paragraph 17, which deals with finance.

Ms Wylie:

First, in relation to financial assistance, Belfast City Council welcomes the proposal in the schedule to provide financial assistance to councils towards the running of the new partnership arrangements.

I will read from paragraph 17, because we propose a slight change to the wording:

“The Department and the Policing Board may for each financial year make to the council a grant towards the expenses incurred by the council in that year in connection with the establishment of, or the exercise of functions by, PCSPs.”

Councils, including Belfast City Council, supported the establishment of DPPs and CSPs in good faith. Councils invest considerable levels of finance in running the partnerships and towards the interventions that come out of those partnerships. You will have heard this afternoon that more and more costs are being passed to councils in connection with partnership arrangements. Therefore, Belfast City Council advocates that the wording used in the schedule places a greater commitment on continued financial assistance. With that in mind, we are proposing that paragraph 17 should read “shall” provide that assistance rather than “may”.

We also propose that the level of finance made available to councils through the grant should, at least, be comparable with the current arrangements.

The Chairperson:

Would it be presumptuous of me to call Mr Barr? *[Laughter.]*

Mr Barr:

Thank you, Mr Chairman. I knew you could not wait. *[Laughter.]* You will be pleased to know that this is my final point.

The Chairman:

Feel free.

Mr Barr:

Very good.

Strabane DPP feels that consideration should be given to the provision of a members' allowance. We believe that the proposed structures carry an increased significant workload from current structures, and, at a time when there is an increased dissident threat, activity from dissidents and others would have a detrimental impact on the take-up from the independent sector.

The initial threat to DPP members in Strabane cannot be underestimated given the level of attacks that members in the area endured when DPPs were first established and the potential dissident threat at this time. Our DPP would also be so bold as to propose that perhaps there is parity between board members of the NIPB.

Ms McKee:

You will be surprised to hear that the Policing Board has a unanimous and clear view on this. We

recommend that the Department of Justice fund a single way for the organisation, which should come through the Policing Board. Our rationale is that that would save on the confusion that people have clearly articulated. There would be one point of contact and one point of appeal. We could build up the trust and the true partnership working that people want to be underpinned by these structures.

Given yesterday's announcement about the rise in the rates, my colleagues will be delighted to hear that the legislation no longer requires councils to make a contribution. Indeed, that is at their discretion. Given some of the innovative funding streams about which we have heard, such as Peace III, I imagine that that will make for some very innovative partnership workings with colleagues in the community and voluntary sector.

The Chairperson:

Thank you. So, there is some good news. Does anyone else wish to comment on that?

Ms Sarah Wilson:

Craigavon Borough Council and its two partnerships would like to request evidence-based justification for the proposed legislation, including cost implications and savings. Additionally, we request that a programme of future expenditure is outlined and forwarded to the council, the CSP and the DPP.

Ms Richmond:

NILGA members urge that the paragraph on the contribution be strengthened to ensure that the joint committee "shall" make a contribution in connection with the establishment or the exercise of the functions by PCSPs.

Mr McDevitt:

Ms Richmond and Ms Wylie made the point that the paragraph should be strengthened to “shall”, making the provision a statutory duty. Ms Wylie went on to say that that level of finance should be comparable with current levels. Are you saying, Ms Wylie, that that should be included in the paragraph, or was that just an observation?

Ms Wylie:

It was just an observation.

The Chairperson:

We are coming near the end. That takes us through the clauses that we wanted to discuss. However, are there any issues or points that any organisation represented here today wants to raise?

Mr Hussey:

I have a couple of points to make. I am sure that members are aware that there is no mention of the role of the community and voluntary sector organisations in the legislation. Those are very important groups that contribute fully to the work of our CSPs. I hope that members can take that on board. It is also suggested that councils should be responsible for the decision on the make-up of the partnership. Currently, the legislation allows limited input from councils. However, it appears that all of the liability lies with councils.

Mr McCrory:

For the past two or three years, since this process started, we have asked for the areas of duplication that have been put forward in all the documents to be identified. They have never been identified. I am holding the record of a stakeholder meeting from two years ago, during which we asked for that. The reason for this is that we in Magherafelt want a baseline to be set so

that we can see what we need to build on, what we want to change, and how we need to move forward in developing a new partnership locally to make it more effective and efficient and meet all the targets. However, we are still waiting on the areas of duplication that have been put forward.

Ms Olwen Lyner (Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders):

On a more general point, as this consultation process has moved through the past couple of years, one key issue that has been raised regularly is how we would make formal links with community planning when it came. One of the reasons for the NIO and the Department of Justice moving ahead with this consultation at this time was that we were not in a position to have a view on community planning. As we know, those proposals have come forward again and are out for consultation, and it seems to our organisation that there are very important links between community planning, the function of well-being, and community safety. We need to ensure that we do not wrap up in a parcel around police accountability so that, in the future, we have to disengage those again. With the proposals out for consultation, it seems that it is timely to consider whether this is the right moment to move ahead with this.

The Chairperson:

Thank you. We will be coming back to the officials in a moment or two. However, it might be useful to take the pulse of the meeting and see what support there is for the clauses in principle. We accept that there are issues around all of them, but I am talking about the principle. Are all those here today in agreement with the principle of the clauses? I am not talking about the detail. We have listened as intently as possible to all the issues that have been raised. All those in favour, raise your hand. All those who are against, please raise your hand. I see that there are some who are against. It seems that there is a clear majority. For those who voted against, do you feel that there are fundamental difficulties with the clauses? Please put your hand up. Now, please put your hand up if you are relaxed about the clauses. OK. I am not sure what the message is on that one. We will go home and think about that. *[Laughter.]*

I thank the members of the Committee. They have held back because they wanted to give you the opportunity to participate as you are not here every day. Does any member of the Committee want to raise any issue about anything that has been mentioned here today? No. That is good. It is back to the officials. Mr Hughes, please take the stage again.

Mr Hughes:

I will endeavour to share the honours with colleagues, who may answer points on different clauses. We will take it in turns to ensure that there is full coverage of the questions raised. I hope that we will capture as much as possible, starting with clause 20 and the initial question about why in the legislation the bodies are called policing and community safety partnerships.

There were a number of suggestions about the title of the partnership, and people will remember the original suggestion of a crime reduction partnership, which I think was universally criticised in the responses to the consultation. It is important that both the community and policing elements of the functions of the partnership be reflected in the title. Because the partnership will have specific functions in respect of the police, inherited particularly from the DPPs, that policing element needs to be reflected in the title. Whether that means that it should be called the policing and community safety partnership, or the community safety and policing partnership, I am not sure that there is a strong argument either way. However, I do not think that the way in which the title of policing and community safety partnership was reached was an indication of the dominance of the policing function, any more than if it were the other way round, it would indicate the dominance of the community safety function. One has to come before the other in the title. We felt that it was important that the title reflected the fact that there were specific functions in respect of the police.

A number of questions were raised about the model for Belfast and the complexities and burden that that might create. Of course, it in many ways reflects the fact that, at present, there is a principal DPP and DPP subgroups, yet there is a single CSP. However, the model that has been

taken with the DPPs also reflects the fact that Belfast is a big city with different issues in different areas. Having said that, we hear what the city council has said, and in the preparation of the codes of practice we want to continue the engagement that the Department, the board, the police and other stakeholders have had with the city council and other councils through representation from NILGA and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE). This whole process has engaged stakeholders considerably and will continue to do so as we work towards conclusion and, in particular, the development of codes of practice.

I am not sure that there was anything else on clause 20. There was a challenge that there was an opportunity to be more innovative. It is worth making the point that we are hoping that what we are doing is taking this arrangement closer to an integrated model, particularly one envisaged by Patten, but also by others in the years since the DPPs and CSPs were established. We do not think that this is necessarily the final word on local partnership working in this field, and there will always be opportunities and times when this could change and when there will be further innovation. However, we are starting from the point that we are at presently, with DPPs and CSPs that have many years of practice and experience.

I will hand over to Nichola on clauses 21 and 22.

Ms Nichola Creagh (Department of Justice):

Thank you, David. A point that was made by a lot of people on clause 21 was about the dominance that people felt that there might be with the policing side, rather than community safety. I would like to say that that is not the point of the partnership, regardless of the name and what people might feel the name's implications are.

The point of creating the partnership is to find the best way to deliver those services to the public. We are very keen to always return to that and not to get hung up on the actual structures

and bureaucracy around that. The point of creating the partnership is to make it easier for the public to get the community safety and policing services that they need. We must emphasise that the policing committee is a very important part of the partnership. It has a particular role, which is to monitor the police. However, in creating the partnership, we would want them both to work together. It is a partnership. David Hughes referred to the creation of a virtuous circle in which the new partnership will be able to identify the local community's needs in respect of both issues.

Most people probably recognise that the community, in general, does not make a distinction between police and community safety issues. They simply want a solution to problems. The idea of the partnership is to enable those solutions to be identified, action to be taken and how it has worked to be evaluated. That is what we want the partnership to achieve. However, policing and the policing committee have a particular role, and it is important that that is maintained.

We have referred to the code of practice and so on that will be established. If clarity is needed about particular approaches and how they will work together, we will aim to provide that. A particular point was made about partnership working, restricted functions and reporting back. As I said, that is very much about people working together and the partnership actually being a partnership. If we can emphasise that in codes of practice, we will do so.

As regards clause 20, Include Youth made a point about antisocial behaviour. As you would expect, we have used the definition of antisocial behaviour that is in use currently. That can obviously be addressed in other forums, not least through the community safety strategy, which is out for consultation. We, in the Department, can reflect on that. There are opportunities to look at it.

I do not think that there were any other specific points. The dominance of policing was the key thing, but that is not the intention behind the creation of the new partnership.

Mr O'Dowd:

Good afternoon. I will paraphrase you. You said that we should not get too hung up on the structures and that the idea is to deliver services to the community. If the structures are not right, the service to the community will not be right. We are dealing with legislation that will form structures. We have to get those structures right. Perhaps you will clarify that point.

Ms Creagh:

Certainly. I did not intend to imply that we do not want to get the structures right. I appreciate that it is a relevant concern, but I am worried that people may have an impression that policing will be the dominant feature. That is not the intent of the legislation. I do not think that there is anything in the legislation that means that that will definitely happen. It is certainly something that we can be aware of. The partnership should be aware of it in how it operates, and, if necessary, we can reflect it in the guidance. That will be picked up by my colleague. We will develop that guidance with councils, the Policing Board and other stakeholders. I am not saying, in any way, that the legislation is not important. However, I think that people have the impression that the legislation implies that policing is more important, but that is not its intention.

Mr Dan Mulholland (Department of Justice):

I will talk about the code of practice, about which a number of people have raised concerns. Mr McDevitt asked whether we had looked at current practice to try to facilitate better practice when we develop the code. Sarah Wilson from Craigavon CSP also mentioned the current procedures. We are aware of inadequacies in the current procedures that have developed through time. They have served a purpose, but there are some aspects that merit change. We have had some preliminary discussion with the Policing Board, councils and others on the effectiveness of those, and we will continue to do that when drawing up guidance on the code of practice. Things will change, and the board is open to those changes. It will be a work in progress, but it will be very much based on the feedback that we have received to date on how it has been working.

The Chairperson:

Any questions at this stage? We will move on.

Mr Hughes:

A number of points were made on clauses 24 to 32, which, hopefully, I can gather together. There is a desire, which I think has also been expressed in consultation, to simplify and create a single line of accountability. The fact that there are so many clauses setting out reporting arrangements to different authorities suggests that the accountability is too complex. It is fair to say that it looks like an awful lot on paper, but, in fact, it reflects the fact that there are three different authorities with an interest in the work of the partnership. In setting that out, the Department wants to preserve the responsibility of all three authorities. It does not mean that there would be three separate reports of a different nature going to three separate authorities, but rather that a report needs to be provided to the Department, the Policing Board and the council, all of which have an interest in the success of the partnership and what it is achieving. That was underlined by a point made by Rosaleen Moore from the Policing Board that it is not about the duplication of reporting but about the standardisation of reporting.

A specific question was asked about the relationship between the policing committee and the PCSP and whether any reporting from the policing committee should go through the PCSP per se before it goes anywhere else. I am grateful for the observation, and I will need to think that through a little more carefully. However, my initial reaction is that, since the policing committee is a committee of the partnership — in essence, it is a very unusual arrangement — and is made up of the majority of members of the partnership and has the same chairperson and vice-chairperson as the partnership, it is not clear to me whether there is any particular reason why the reporting of the policing committee on issues that do not affect the full partnership should not go directly to the Policing Board. Having said that, I will take that point away and examine it more carefully. I think that those were all the points on clauses 25 to 32.

Sir Reg Empey:

Apropos my initial point, having listened to a number of members, it seems to me that it might be useful, if you can find a piece of paper large enough, to draw a diagram of all of this, setting out the lines of accountability, and so on. In parenthesis, I would also put the other structures that I referred to and their accounting lines and processes. We could then see where all those dots join up. A number of people made the point from an administrative point of view and another point of view that when we get to the stage where a committee of a board is almost the same size as the board and is chaired by the same person, we are in some difficulty.

I am not trying to be facetious, Mr Hughes; I am being serious. It may be very helpful to see all that set out in a flow chart that shows us where all those lines go from and come to. It may also be useful to put in issues that are not in the Bill, such as CPLCs and PACTs, because they are all relevant.

I also want to make a point about the name, which Mr Hussey and a number of others mentioned. Again, not to be facetious, if an organisation is called the Quacking Ducks Society, there will be a perception in the community that it deals with quacking ducks. Equally, if you deal with the name as currently proposed — I think that this is the point that Mr O’Dowd was trying to get at — people outside who do not have the working and detailed knowledge that we have may assume that it does something different, even though the official made it extremely clear that that was not the intention.

Mr Hughes:

Obviously, the legislation does not include diagrams, but there are diagrams back in the office, and we could easily forward something that illustrates the issue as we understand it. They do not at present include the CPLCs and PACTs, which are looked at separately. However, if it would help, we would be more than happy to provide something that would illustrate that text.

Sir Reg Empey:

I would find that helpful, Chairperson.

Mr Mulholland:

Clause 30 is entitled, “Reports by policing committees to Policing Board”. Comments were made that the policing committee appears to operate independently, with no requirement to report back to the overall partnership.

Just to clarify, the Policing Board can call for special reports of the policing committee on specific issues on an exceptional basis, which will be reported back directly to the Policing Board. That is about a reporting mechanism; it is not about sharing information. We would fully expect the policing committee to share information with the rest of the partnership when it meets. I just want to make that distinction between reporting and sharing information.

A comment was made on clause 33, which is about other community policing arrangements. There may have been a misunderstanding about what the clause says. Its focus is on facilitating the police to consult the public. There would be a lot of consultation with the public, the policing committee and the overall partnership. To avoid consultation fatigue, we would see that as being as minimal as possible. In particular, clause 33(2) relates to where it appears, to the board’s mind, that the partnership has not made sufficient arrangements for the police to consult a local community. From the comments received, it appears that there was a misunderstanding about that.

Ms Creagh:

A number of people spoke about clause 34. I am glad that a lot of people seem to support the clause, because we regard it as an important part of the Bill that adds a lot of benefit to the partnerships. I am sure that the Committee listened to what people said about the clause today.

There seems to be a misapprehension that the bodies to which clause 34 will apply are not listed. To clarify, those bodies are listed in schedule 2 to the Commissioner for Complaints (Northern Ireland) Order 1996, and that is laid out in the legislation. Schedule 2 is very extensive, and it is difficult to anticipate any body that is not included in that schedule. A number of people raised that as a point, but the bodies to which clause 34 will apply are listed.

The question was raised as to whether any body had difficulties with that. We are alert to the fact that, in applying the clause to organisations, it imposes a duty on them to demonstrate their compliance and to look at their policies on community safety. When that requirement is placed on an organisation, we are obviously alert to the fact that that could have financial and other implications. In recognition of that, we have, within the legislation, undertaken to consult widely the designated bodies to look at how that may best be dealt with.

The intent is not to create a bureaucratic construct in which people have to fill in lots of forms to demonstrate how they are complying. However, if the duty is there, organisations will have to demonstrate that they have complied with it. Departments and the other bodies listed will have that obligation.

That being said, we anticipate that, for an organisation that takes into account issues such as community safety and its policies, that could have beneficial consequences and returns, such as saving money in the long run. For instance, a number of people mentioned the Housing Executive. One practical example would be the Housing Executive taking into account such policies when designing estates, buildings or facilities. The reduction in crime and antisocial behaviour would pay for any additional features that it may have to design. That is the point.

As I said, we are alert to the potential for increased costs to organisations, but we hope that that would, in many ways, repay itself many times over through the reductions in antisocial

behaviour or crime that could come from that.

The Chairperson:

Are those the points that the Executive have expressed concerns around?

Ms Creagh:

Yes, the Executive have expressed concerns around the costs that could be placed on Departments and the organisations associated with Departments. The Minister is alert to those concerns, and we have given a commitment to work with the Departments in drawing up guidance. There is also a commitment that that part of the Bill would not be commenced until such times as Departments are happy with it. However, we emphasise that we regard the provision as having the potential to save money, perhaps in the longer term, but it could save money nonetheless.

Mr A Maginness:

Considerable legal liability is created across a wide range of public bodies as a result of this statutory duty. Has that been taken into consideration?

Ms Creagh:

That, again, is something that we are alert to. That was raised at the Executive, and they expressed a view. The Attorney General has certainly expressed a view on it.

In crafting this, we looked at legislation in England, Wales, Scotland and the Republic of Ireland. Those countries have not had significant legal challenges. I am in no way suggesting that that means that there will not be any challenges here. However, it has not been their experience that that has happened. Again, we are alert to that possibility, and, in drawing up the

guidance, we want to work with Departments and their advisers to see how that could be minimised. At this point, we feel that it is still a worthwhile feature that we want to try to work with the Committee and the Departments to retain.

The Chairperson:

You said that the Attorney General had expressed some views. Are you prepared to set those out in writing for the Committee's consideration?

Mr Gareth Johnston (Department of Justice):

Disclosure of the Attorney General's view requires his permission, but I am sure that we can ask his office about that.

The Chairperson:

You can tell him that we were asking about it.

Mr McDevitt:

I note the list of bodies in schedule 2 to the Commissioner for Complaints (Northern Ireland) Order 1996, which you hope will apply. However, a number of people raised the case of the list in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. Are you aware of the differences between the two lists?

Ms Creagh:

I must say I am not, but it is something that we can look at. The Crime and Disorder Act is legislation that extends only to England and Wales and it refers to the type of organisations that exist in those countries. Obviously, those local authorities have many powers that, in Northern Ireland, are reserved to Departments. I think that that is the primary difference. We can look at that in detail.

Mr Hughes:

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 is specific about the kinds of organisation which, it is assumed, will naturally have a contribution to make to community safety in a locality. The difference between what has been done in England and Wales and what is proposed here is that we have endeavoured to capture all public authorities so as not to limit the duty placed on public authorities. It may well be that there are all sorts of public authorities who can usefully make a contribution to community safety in one district in particular circumstances, and this applies the duty to that authority at the outset to get everyone on board. The risk of making a list is that one starts with a relatively short list and every so often that has to be lengthened as people ask: should not this or that organisation be on it? That is an unnecessary process for achieving what we achieve by capturing them all. That answers the point of specific organisations that ask to be specified on the list: they already are. The fact that there is enthusiasm is brilliant.

Mr O'Dowd:

I want to ask about the comments made by Mr Maginness as to whether the clause gives statutory liability problems to Departments. If no major claims have been introduced as a result of this, it begs the question as to whether the clause is practical. Does it force Departments to have a duty of care to, for example, design out antisocial behaviour? It is of proven worth?

Ms Creagh:

From the feedback that we received on how it operates in England and Wales, it has been very useful. That fact that English and Welsh public bodies have not had many legal challenges may simply illustrate the type of environment in which they work. It is hard to say. The evidence suggests that it has been useful in that context.

The Chairperson:

That brings us to clause 35.

Mr Hughes:

There were a number of questions about the role of the joint committee. The Bill contains only a small number of the statutory functions of the joint committee and the question is whether it should not set out all the functions of the joint committee.

The joint committee is the Department and the Policing Board operating together. Both the Department and the board will have many administrative functions that will need to be operated in respect of those partnerships. The joint committee is the place in which those functions will be conducted in parallel and in a co-ordinated fashion. It would not be normal to set out all those administrative functions in primary legislation, but the existence of the joint committee means that that is the challenge for the Department and board: to operate in that way.

As for whether it should be for the joint committee and councils to set the strategic direction together, the joint committee represents two authorities that operate at a regional level. They set a regional strategy. That is not to say that the council is not setting a strategy at a district level. If we were to endeavour to include all councils in the joint committee, we would create a body with a membership of two regional authorities and 26 district councils. I am not sure whether that is necessarily practical or what was intended.

On the evaluation function, as members of the Policing Board have pointed out, the functions of the DPPs are evaluated regularly. I believe that the challenge to the Department and the board will be to continue an assessment of effectiveness, which will be made easier by having a single plan with specific outcomes against which to measure effectiveness. That would make an analysis of effectiveness very much easier. In addition, presently, public satisfaction, awareness and knowledge of what partnerships are doing are surveyed regularly, and that should continue.

Of course, PCSPs will have the input of councillors, as members of PCSPs, on strategies in

districts, and that input should encompass the role of councils in setting strategies locally, which is why there are partnerships at a local level. Those are the points that I wish to make on clause 35.

The Chairperson:

Does anyone wish to make a point on that? No. OK, we shall move on to schedules 1 and 2.

Mr Hughes:

The first points made on schedules 1 and 2 were around the recruitment exercise and the cost of recruitment. I know that a conversation on that has already taken place between the Policing Board and councils. However, from the Department's perspective, we felt that it was important that the present role of the Policing Board in appointing independent members be carried over.

The Chairperson:

Does anyone have any issues around that? No.

Ms Creagh:

It is expenses and allowances rolled into one. The current legislation does not allow for the payment of allowances; however, that, as the Minister has pointed out on a number of occasions, is not intended to reflect on the good work that has happened in DPPs. The people on the current DPPs have played a valuable role, and the fact that the new partnerships do not include the provision to pay allowances is not intended to take away from that work or to imply that it has not been valuable. That said, the payment of allowances, in itself, creates considerable costs, and, in deciding where money should go, the feeling is that as much as possible should go to front line services. That is the rationale behind the decision. That said also, the Minister's position is obviously that no one should be out of pocket as a result of serving on a partnership, which is why there is a provision to pay expenses to members. The current legislation states that expenses

should be paid only to independent members. The Committee may wish, therefore, to consider an amendment to include councillors in the legislation covering DPPs. That is something that we might look at. We intend to work with the Policing Board and councils on drawing up guidance on how best to pay expenses. However, at this point, it would deal with expenses rather than allowances.

Mr A Maginness:

What is the total amount of expenses paid? You may not have the figures here, but can you give us an indication of the total amount of expenses and allowances?

Ms Creagh:

The figure for allowances is £1.5 million a year. I do not have to hand the figures for expenses, but we can certainly provide them to you.

Mr A Maginness:

Do you have a breakdown of allowances for independent members and councillors?

Ms Creagh:

Expenses are administered by the Policing Board, so I would say that it does. However, I am conscious that I am speaking on its behalf. We can provide that for the Committee.

The Chairperson:

Are there any further questions?

Mr Mulholland:

We are talking about paragraph 7. There were quite a number of comments about designated organisations. There was a bit of confusion about organisations designated under clause 34. There are three parts to the partnership: the elected representatives; the independents forming the policing committee; and designated organisations from statutory and voluntary community groups and business, etc. The latter group will be invited to the partnership and designated, in the first instance, by members of the policing committee, who are obliged to bring on board a minimum of four organisations. There is no maximum. It is up to them to say who should be invited to the board, and the principle under which they should apply that is consideration of who is best placed to contribute to the work of the partnership. We received a number of representations from the Probation Board and many others stating that they should be included and designated. We have avoided listing people to be designated, because the designation of a smallish church group or other fairly small groups, which might be usefully contributing to the local area, could be useful. Rather than being prescriptive, we think that it is best to capture that without listing them. However, that does not stop the partnership doing that.

Mr McCartney:

This is without prejudice, but the general thrust of Paul Doran's presentation is: if there is an organisation that fits the criteria to do what is required, why should it not be designated, rather than leaving it to the committee?

Mr Mulholland:

It is up to the partnership to determine who should be designated. They have a statutory duty to follow the section 75 in the same way as the partnership.

Mr McCartney:

I understand the concept of what the Bill is saying. However, in a general principle, if "we", or as broad as we want to make it, have a view of the right type of organisation, why is there not a

statutory provision for that?

Mr Mulholland:

The committee can —

Mr McCartney:

The committee does not have the task of committing legislation; it has a task of doing what it feels right in a particular locality.

Mr Mulholland:

I am talking about the policing committee.

Mr McCartney:

Yes, but if we have the power to say that designations are a good idea, why can we not say that a particular organisation should be designated across all partnerships, as a principle. In the same way, we are saying that there should be nine or 10 elected members.

Mr Mulholland:

I suppose that it is because there is a risk of leaving somebody off who might be useful. A youth club, for instance, might have an activity that would be useful.

Mr McCartney:

We are doing that by saying that there has to be so many elected members.

Mr Mulholland:

We are saying that there is a minimum.

Mr McCartney:

We could be excluding a church group by saying that there has to be a particular number of elected members. If there is a designated body, which, we all agree, will bring something to it, why should we not designate them? I am saying that as a principle. Why should we not name a designated body?

Mr Mulholland:

When you talk about “we”, I am not sure who you mean.

Mr McCartney:

As we frame the Bill. If, as we frame the Bill, we say that we are trying to do X, Y, and Z, and A fits with what we are trying to do, why should we not designate A?

Mr Hughes:

I do not think that there is a strong argument for saying that it would be inappropriate to designate a certain relatively small number of organisations who should always be present on a PCSP. However, that is taking the decision out of the hands of the local partnership, the elected members in the locality, and the independents appointed to that partnership. There was strong comeback during the consultation when the original consultation paper suggested that there were four categories of members of partnerships, and, once people had done the sums, they said that a partnership of more than 30 people would not work because it was simply too big to be operationally slick enough or effective enough in the locality. Therefore, if one begins to designate organisations and there is consensus on four, is that too few or too many to specify that they should always be represented if the list gets any longer? How many designated

organisations would there have to be in a partnership? How big could a partnership get?

That kind of discussion and decision-making probably makes more sense where some districts have quite a large partnership and where they would normally operate on that scale. Other districts would expect to have relatively small partnerships and to operate on a smaller scale. It is for this Committee to make that kind of recommendation, but I do not think that we have a rock-solid, principled objection to it. We have come to the conclusion that, on balance, allowing districts the flexibility to make those decisions seems to be the best way to do it.

It is also worth reiterating that involvement can be not only through being designated as an organisation, but community and voluntary groups can be involved in the work of the partnership. It may well be that some independent members come with a background in a certain field, and there is the provision that each partnership could set up smaller groups working on specific themes and areas where it is more appropriate to co-opt some of the smaller organisations on to the specific work group in that area or on that themed basis. Therefore, there are still lots of opportunities for community and voluntary organisations to be involved.

Mr McDevitt:

I am trying to get to the bottom of the departmental thinking on this matter. Is the Department of the view that, as a matter of good practice, no organisations should be present beyond those listed today? Is the Department of the view that the Probation Board does not need to be present for it to be a successful PCSP?

Mr Hughes:

I would not say that. We have not sat down and tried to take it upon ourselves to determine what relatively small number of organisations should be listed because there is always an argument that it should be somebody else, or more.

Mr McDevitt:

I agree with Mr McCartney's point. The downside to that is that if there are some must-bes, and it is in the honest opinion of the Department that those are must-bes. If you do not do it, it is possible, as the legislation stands today, that they would not be there. For whatever reason, a locality could just take the view that they are not relevant and they do not want them there.

Mr Mulholland:

You then put that duty on some of the smaller partnerships, such as Moyle, to bring somebody to the table from those statutory organisations. We know that, very often, the Housing Executive and the police will have to be there in many cases, but in some cases, they do not need to be there. It is about allowing flexibility and addressing local needs. We know that, in practice, through the community safety partnerships and the way that they work, they know the organisations that can contribute.

Mr McCartney:

The Probation Board is making the case. It is not as if Moyle will have to look to the Probation Board to join. The Probation Board is making the case that it will provide someone for each of the partnerships.

Mr Mulholland:

The legislation also means that when they are designated they will have to attend every meeting, but that may not always be necessary.

Mr McCartney:

I understand your point, but the Probation Board is making the case that it should be necessary. Therefore, if it makes the case and then does not turn up, it will be up to other people to remind them.

Mr McDevitt:

I am sure that we will want to debate this among ourselves, but in one part of the Bill you are putting in a statutory duty, which is seriously upping the ante on public bodies, and, in another part, you are refusing to put the compulsory list in. We are now in a situation with the Transport Bill, the report on which was signed off on Tuesday, where there is a short compulsory list of three or four organisations, and then there are other bodies that, in this case, the local transport partnership feels are necessary.

Mr Hughes:

As we have had this discussion, there is quite clearly strength on both positions. We will cheerfully take that away. There may be a consensus that perhaps three or four organisations will pretty much have to be on every partnership. We have not started with that position, but we hear what the Committee is saying.

The Chairperson:

We will move on to paragraph 10.

Mr Hughes:

The Department's starting position is that there is particular value in having the same chairperson and vice-chairperson of a policing committee as the partnership as a whole. That would maintain the unity of the partnership and ensure the connection between the functions of the policing committee and the functions of the partnership as a whole. As that is the case, it would not be possible for a member of a delivery agency to be the chairperson of a policing committee, and therefore, they would not be the chairperson of the overall partnership. I would be very interested to see the research that is being referred to, and I am quite happy to receive that.

I think it was said at some point that an independent member could not be chairperson, but the legislation as set out states that, in the first 12 months, the chairperson would have to be a

councillor, but after that, the chairperson and vice-chairperson would have to be a councillor and an independent; it could be one way or the other. It could be that the independent would chair, and the vice-chairperson would be the councillor.

The Chairperson:

OK. Let us move on to paragraph 13, which is about policing committee procedure.

Ms Creagh:

The point made under paragraph 13 is quite similar to clauses 21 and 22, which is about the role of the policing committee vis-à-vis the partnership as a whole. That piece of legislation refers to the appointment of subcommittees by the policing committee, which may or may not be something that they would want to do. Those subcommittees would be purely responsible for the restricted functions that the policing committee would look at, and not the roles of the whole partnership. That is why that particular measure states that policing committees should do that. Again, it is connected to the issue of the policing committee sitting within the partnership and what the point or role of that is.

To emphasise the point, the policing committee would not be working in isolation. The committee is a member. The whole partnership encompasses the policing committee, and any subcommittee that the policing committee would set up would, by its very nature, be encompassed within the whole partnership.

The Chairperson:

OK. We will move on to paragraph 17, which is about finance.

Mr Mulholland:

Nichola mentioned general funding earlier. There are a number of issues around finance, and I

have picked up that one of those is the withdrawal of the 75:25 split between the Policing Board and the councils on the funding of DPPs. That is being removed from the funding of PCSPs. There is also an issue of “may” being used in legislation as opposed to “shall”.

On the first point, the Minister was quite clear that we do not know what overall funding will be coming from the Budget just yet and what the ramifications of that are. However, the principle is that, if we leave aside the budget for the time being, the money available through the Policing Board and the Department, through the community safety unit, will go towards the new partnership. We will not require the council to contribute. We are not stipulating that they must contribute 25%, as the board has stipulated for the DPPs. It can be quite administratively burdensome if every invoice has to be split. We know that, in practice, many councils already contribute more than the 25% that they are obliged to so that they can deliver a service to the community that the community expects. Therefore, there is not going to be a stipulation as to the amount. As somebody else said, a council could opt to reduce its contribution. However, the Minister’s position is that he is hoping that councils will contribute to deliver a service that they feel is appropriate to their community.

Mr Givan:

So, there would be no compulsion on councils to contribute anything.

Mr Mulholland:

Leaving aside the budget that has been agreed, an amount of money will be given from the Policing Board and the Department, through the community safety partnerships, to the partnership.

Mr O’Dowd:

Will the 25% cut make it a statutory duty on councils to be part of the arrangements? Could a

council walk away from this? Is the onus on councils to be involved?

Mr Mulholland:

No. There is a statutory duty in the legislation, under clause 20(1) and 20(2), for councils to establish PCSPs in each council district. That is the statutory duty. This is about funding.

Mr O'Dowd:

But there is no statutory duty around funding?

Mr Mulholland:

Not around funding any additional money.

Mr O'Dowd:

Has the Department of the Environment been consulted on that?

Mr Mulholland:

Yes. As we are talking about how our policy links with the overall aim of community planning and RPA, the Department of the Environment has been fully consulted. It is happy that this is going in the right direction.

The Chairperson:

We are trying to get at what the enticement for councils is. You are saying that there is no financial commitment, but that there is a statutory obligation.

Mr Mulholland:

There is a statutory obligation.

The Chairperson:

That can be paid at a certain level.

Mr Mulholland:

Yes.

The Chairperson:

So there is no financial commitment at all.

Mr Mulholland:

No. Councils are obliged to consult on the local need and local issues and decide on a strategic direction for the partnership through the joint committee, which will be the Policing Board and the Department working together. That strategic direction will be delivered through councils. Councils will consult at a local level to see what the local needs are. Using the two bodies, councils will carry out an analysis and come up with an action plan to address those local needs.

To use a practical example, Belfast City Council contributes a significant amount of money, far above that which the Department can contribute, towards community safety wardens. Some of that money is used and is topped up by the council's contribution. I have worked over a number of council areas, and that happens in many councils. For example, Down District Council does the same. All councils top up the money.

Part of the existing arrangement is the requirement to lever in money from other organisations on the partnership. At the moment, the requirement is for 20% minimum match funding.

Sir Reg Empey:

Let me get this clear: you have removed the 25% cap, but imposed a statutory duty, and, as Alban pointed out, there is a potential liability if people feel that things are not designed or done in a certain way. Although you have removed the cap, it could end up that councils pay more than that because of the statutory duty.

Mr Mulholland:

Yes, councils can contribute more than 25%. In fact, that is the point that I am trying to make.

Sir Reg Empey:

The point I am making is that councils, at the moment, have a choice that they can contribute more than 25%. However, the statutory obligation and the potential liabilities may mean that councils have no choice but to contribute more than 25%. Is that a possibility?

Mr Mulholland:

Councils can contribute more than 25%, whether they have a statutory obligation to do so or not. You are referring to clause 34, which deals with the duty to consider community safety implications. Whatever that public body is, it needs to be within its strategic objectives to take community safety issues into account. It may consider an issue and decide that it is not its priority, and that it has higher priorities.

Mr Hughes:

I want to make a supplementary point. Mr Chairman, you mentioned the inducement to councils to contribute to the work of PCSPs. A critical inducement is that community safety is pretty

consistently a priority for the voting public. It is important to councils that they address that issue. It is in their own interests that they contribute to PCSPs' work.

Mr Mulholland:

The other point that I want to make is that, in the legislation, it states that the Department "may" pay a contribution towards councils' expenses in setting up partnerships. That was not our intention. It is certainly not the Minister's intention to draw funding from partnerships. It emerged when legislative draftsmen drafted the Bill. We are not sure exactly why it has emerged. It may be to protect the Bill's integrity. We are happy to go back to the Minister and ask him about that. There is no intention. It says "may" when it should be "shall".

The Chairperson:

Perhaps we should not kick the dog to see whether he is sleeping. We should just let him sleep on.

That covers everything. Officials have nothing further to add. In drawing the meeting to a close, I thank everyone for coming and sharing your expertise with us. As Chairperson, I have found the meeting useful and informative, and I believe that I speak for all Committee members when I say that. Thank you very much.

As for what happens after today's event, the next step in the Committee Stage of the Justice Bill is that, within the next few days, a transcript of the event will be circulated among all participants for their comments. The finalised transcript will be made available on the Justice Bill section of the Committee's web page. In February 2011, the content of that transcript will be fed into the Committee's report on the Justice Bill to the Assembly. That is the procedure from today onwards.

Finally, I want to thank the Official Report for transcribing the event, Assembly Broadcasting for providing its services, and the catering and support staff for their help. Again, I thank you and wish all who are travelling a safe journey home. The snow is not as bad as forecast — not yet anyway.