



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Justice

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

**Review of the Northern Ireland Prison
Service Estate Strategy**

26 April 2012

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Committee for Justice

Review of the Northern Ireland Prison Service Estate Strategy

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Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Paul Givan (Chairperson)
Mr Raymond McCartney (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Sydney Anderson
Mr Tom Elliott
Mr Alban Maginness
Ms Jennifer McCann
Mr Patsy McGlone
Mr Peter Weir

Witnesses:

Mr Gary Boyd	Northern Ireland Prison Service
Mr Colin McConnell	Northern Ireland Prison Service
Mr Max Murray	Northern Ireland Prison Service
Mr Geoff Rossington	Northern Ireland Prison Service

The Chairperson: I welcome to the meeting Colin McConnell, director general of the Prison Service; Geoff Rossington, infrastructure change manager; Gary Boyd, director of finance planning and corporate compliance; and Max Murray, director of offender services. I advise that the session will be recorded by Hansard. Mr McConnell, I invite you to take us through your paper.

Mr Colin McConnell (Northern Ireland Prison Service): Thank you very much, Mr Chairman and Committee members. Last February, the Justice Minister, anticipating the prison review team's (PRT) final report, commissioned a refresh strategy for the development of the prison estate to address that report's recommendations. The outline strategy that you now have includes proposals to meet the accommodation needs of the prison population over the next 10 years by ensuring safe, decent and secure accommodation. Throughout, our aim is also to develop the prison estate in order to create an appropriate physical environment to support rehabilitation work with offenders, in line with the review team's recommendations. The outline strategy has been developed with a view to providing secure custody; supporting and reflecting human rights standards and ethical values; and using and investing public money wisely.

The outline strategy sets out the Northern Ireland Prison Service's (NIPS) strategic vision for the development of the estate with regard to each of the main prisoner groups. For juvenile offenders, that includes proposals for ending the practice of accommodating child offenders at Hydebank Wood Young Offenders' Centre (YOC). It includes proposals for improving the physical environment for both young

offenders and women at Hydebank Wood and exploring alternative approaches to the management of young offenders, such as the development of a secure college and piloting alternatives to custody. For women offenders, there are proposals for developing initiatives to provide appropriate responses to women's offending and exploring options for the services and facilities needed for their management, including the potential for a shared facility encompassing community and custodial disposals and/or supported accommodation. There are proposals for additional accommodation to manage overcrowding in the adult male population, including the development of a new medium-security prison in a central location; the decommissioning of Magilligan prison from 2018; the reconfiguration of Maghaberry prison into distinct zones for different prisoner categories; and the creation of environments that will facilitate and support change.

I will now go into the proposals in more detail. The 2011 youth justice review recommended that the practice of allowing the courts to send persons under the age of 18 to the YOC should cease and that arrangements be put in place to manage their transition to the juvenile justice centre (JJC). The prison review team echoed this recommendation that under-18s should no longer be held in Hydebank Wood YOC. The Justice Minister has accepted this recommendation and indicated a clear policy intent that under-18s should no longer be held at Hydebank Wood. It is the assumption of NIPS, therefore, in developing this outline estate strategy, that the detention of under-18s at Hydebank Wood YOC will cease entirely. As we know, the Minister has already signalled his intention to introduce draft legislation by the beginning of 2013, which would remove entirely the discretion of the courts to send a juvenile to Hydebank Wood. In the interim, significant work has been ongoing at official level to ensure that juveniles are held at the YOC only when absolutely necessary. Liaison between the YOC, the Youth Justice Agency (YJA) and the courts has resulted in most juvenile inmates being reallocated to Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre. As of today, only two juvenile inmates are in Hydebank Wood. The Department of Justice (DOJ) and the YJA are currently engaged in identifying and putting in place the necessary infrastructure and regime arrangements to accommodate the final small number of serious and prolific juvenile offenders at Woodlands.

Ensuring that we provide appropriate responses for women and young offenders remains a key priority. However, it is important that we identify and put in place the right solutions, interventions and provisions. The outline strategy recognises that further consideration is needed in order best to identify what measures should be put in place to ensure that our prison estate and the wider justice system are best configured to support resistance work with young offenders to address offending behaviour, promote rehabilitation and reduce the risk of reoffending.

The prison review team acknowledged the success of the Inspire Women's Project for women and suggested that the same model, suitably tailored to meet the specific needs of young offenders, should provide the default option for managing young offenders. The Department of Justice proposes to run a pilot to explore whether the Inspire model might offer a possible alternative approach, through community support, for young adult male offenders.

The prison review team also recommended that Hydebank Wood be reconfigured as a secure college focused on education and skills training, with sufficient activity and appropriate interventions to support change. The concept of a secure college is new. No such facility currently exists in Northern Ireland, and we are unaware of any such facility in any neighbouring jurisdiction. That is why we consider it necessary further to impact this recommendation in partnership with the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL), which can provide greater expertise in learning and skills environments. Discussions are ongoing at ministerial level to agree how the two Departments might best collaborate on that, and the Prison Service's ongoing review of learning and skills will help to inform that process. However, although we recognise the need to provide effective, tailored interventions for young offenders, in taking forward the prison review team's recommendation, our priority should be implementing the right solution; not being seen to implement quickly.

We also recognise the need, which we will address, for more immediate investment in improvements to the physical environment at Hydebank Wood better to support rehabilitation and desistance. That will include upgrading and refurbishing the current physical provision to facilitate better engagement between staff and young offenders and to support change. Priority work has been identified as the reconfiguration of Hydebank Wood to provide a small step-down unit for category D offenders to help to manage their return to the community and the refurbishment of Willow and Elm blocks to improve the

decoration and furnishing, together with the installation of anti-ligature fixtures and fittings to enhance safer custody. The eventual removal of juveniles from the YOC will also allow us to build on existing regimes to provide more specific, tailored regimes for young offenders.

Ensuring that we provide appropriate responses for women offenders remains a key priority. However, it is important that we identify and put in place the right solutions, interventions and provisions. As with young offenders, the outline estate strategy recognises that further consideration is needed in order best to identify what measures should be put in place to ensure that our prison estate and the wider justice system are best configured to support women offenders to desist from offending behaviour and to reduce the risk of reoffending. A strategic vision for the development of the prison estate in relation to women offenders has been shaped and informed by the findings of the prison review team's report and the 2010 women's strategy, which set out our four strands for improving the management of women offenders: providing alternatives to prosecution and custody; reducing offending; gender-specific community supervision and interventions, such as the Inspire project; and gender-specific approaches to the management of women in custody.

Although some women in custody will receive proportionate responses, the offending behaviour of others may be more appropriately and proportionately addressed through a range of more creative and constructive alternatives. The Department of Justice has taken steps to begin to address some of those issues, including, in particular, the introduction of a supervised activity order pilot scheme and a review of community sentences. In addition, a series of strategic workshops has been held to begin to reach an understanding and agreement on how a number of the prison review team's recommendations fit with the wider government agenda of improving public safety and reducing the risk of reoffending.

In line with the prison review team's recommendation, we accept that the Inspire model should become a springboard for subsequent development to identify and build, in partnership with others, the components of the community-based women's services needed in Northern Ireland. The DOJ is considering what further inter-agency and cross-sectoral work can be developed better to target services and resources on the needs of women offenders in the community. However, that will require buy-in and resources from other mainstream services and Departments. The range of developments being taken forward across the DOJ is likely to make a positive contribution to reducing the number of women offenders receiving a custodial sentence. However, for some women offenders, custody is the proportionate and appropriate response, either because of the severity of their offence or for reasons of public protection. It is, therefore, critical that we find effective ways to improve outcomes for women in custody.

The Minister has indicated that the current arrangements for women at Hydebank Wood are not appropriate for the long term. It is important that we think carefully through all the issues to ensure that we identify the best possible solution for Northern Ireland. One model could be a shared facility providing an appropriate therapeutic environment that would offer community and custodial disposals. Other options that we wish to explore with colleagues in the DOJ include the provision of a halfway house accommodation, such as a residential unit in the community that would provide supported accommodation for women offenders or those at risk of offending or reoffending. That would have the potential to house lower-risk women prisoners in a low-security and more domestic setting, with a focus on building life skills and re-engaging prisoners with family and community prior to release.

At the same time, we are taking forward developmental work that also brings forward some immediate improvements to the facility for women at Ash House. Investment will be required to improve the accommodation at Ash House and to provide tailored facilities for the delivery of the gender-specific regimes needed to support rehabilitation work among women prisoners. Proposals are in place to extend the facilities, with the inclusion of learning and skills facilities, with the aim of developing and encouraging personal growth, self-maintenance and other learning and skills that can be useful in supporting successful rehabilitation on returning to the community. The plans include a hairdressing salon, a training kitchen and a therapy room. Investment will also be required to address the need to provide suitable accommodation for a small number of high-security women prisoners.

I am convinced that this is a comprehensive strategy that has clearly been thought through in considerable detail. Its fundamental underpinnings are the need to provide safe, decent and secure

custodial facilities in a way that is good value for the public purse, and to ensure that future facilities are purposefully designed, constructed and located to maximise the opportunities available to those in the justice system and beyond to work seamlessly with offenders to reduce the risk of their reoffending on release. By taking that strategic approach, NIPS, the DOJ and its partners will, in the years ahead, make a significant contribution to making communities safer by working together to reduce offending and improve public safety.

The Chairperson: Thank you very much, Mr McConnell. I have a couple of questions before bringing other members in.

I want to ask about the 60-bed working out unit planned for Maghaberry to replace the prisoner assessment unit (PAU), which was in Belfast. We will talk about Magilligan shortly and the issue of a more central location, but what is the rationale for the PAU site not being suitable for the working out unit? Why will that now go to Maghaberry?

Mr Geoff Rossington (Northern Ireland Prison Service): Two sets of working out facilities are being created. One is a smaller unit at Maghaberry prison, but the main one will be at the former PAU site on the Crumlin Road. We envisage that being a 60-place unit, but its exact configuration is yet to be determined. A working group is in the process of being formed, because we need to work out the configuration — the number and sex of those who may be involved in it — and whether we can involve other parties, for example, social services or some third sector organisations.

The Chairperson: The outline strategy's proposals for Mourne House deal with a separated regime. The plan is to close the separated regime in Maghaberry and for Mourne House to deal with the highest-risk prisoners. The capacity planned for Mourne House is 180. Will you still have a separate regime for those regarded as separated prisoners, or will those 180 prisoners all be handled in the same manner?

Mr McConnell: To all intents and purposes, the separated regime will continue until separation is no longer. Separation exists and will continue to feature in our plans.

The Chairperson: The issue is how that would be factored in. Obviously, it is easier to deal with the mini-prison in Maghaberry for separated prisoners. However, you will have 180 prisoners in Mourne House. In what way will you break up the separated prisoners so that they get a different regime from the others?

Mr McConnell: Separation will remain until it is no longer required. As the outline estate strategy sets out, the detailed thinking on how that plays out has yet to be done, but separation will continue.

The Chairperson: It would be a good opportunity to make separated prisoners comply like everybody else — perhaps, David Ford should answer that question.

Will you outline how the closure of Magilligan would be beneficial, beyond improving travel arrangements for prisoners' families and enhancing employment opportunities? Explain the rationale behind saying that its closure and relocation to a more central point will be better for the Prison Service and its staff.

Mr Max Murray (Northern Ireland Prison Service): I do not think that the estate will be reconfigured on the basis of the personal interests of our staff. We have to look at the needs of the offenders in our care. It is for that reason that we seek to centralise a third facility in greater Belfast, from where 35% or 40% of our prisoners come. It would be easier and more convenient for families to link into family relationships, bearing in mind that such relationships are critical to resettlement. It would also be easier to access, for example, the working out unit and the new facility for accessing jobs, so it makes sense.

The other contributory factor is that the close proximity to Belfast of the third facility at Maghaberry means that we could consider using it for those on remand. If we were to rebuild at Magilligan, it would be impossible to accommodate remand prisoners there and transport them every day to Belfast.

So a range of drivers suggests that the third location should be central, somewhere in the greater Belfast area.

The Chairperson: Do you not think that your staff will be a bit surprised at your questioning the need to consider them as part of the review?

Mr Murray: I am not, by any stretch, trying to ignore the interests or needs of staff. However, that cannot be the driving emphasis. Bearing in mind that the new facility will cost between £140 million and £150 million and has to last for the next 50 years, it must be located where the business need is. Of course, staff are a consideration, and that issue has to be managed sensitively. There is no doubt about that, but I am saying that that cannot be the driver.

The Chairperson: Have you started discussions with the Prison Officers' Association (POA) about all of this?

Mr Murray: No.

The Chairperson: I note that, as part of the consultation, you spoke to people whom I would describe as prisoner advocates, but I see no indication that you spoke to staff.

Mr Murray: As far as I am aware, we will start the consultation process after today's presentation to the Committee. There is no doubt that it will be critical that we take on board the staff views, and the POA's view is central to that.

The Chairperson: So the majority of people who commit crimes emanate from greater Belfast, where Maghaberry and Hydebank are located. What about the rest of the Province? Why put everything into greater Belfast? I am sure that people commit crimes in areas such as Londonderry, Strabane, and Dungannon, and Magilligan is more suitable for their families. If your concern is the welfare of prisoners' families and building up family connections, will the location of greater Belfast not make the position worse for some?

Mr Murray: I do not know that it will make the position worse. Is getting from Enniskillen to Magilligan any less difficult than going to Maghaberry? I very much doubt it. The issue is that the numbers involved are significantly higher in the greater Belfast area and east of the Bann than in the north-west and west of the Bann. If, somewhere down the line, we were to consider building another facility, we may well consider the north-west. However, the current numbers, location of prisoners' families and prisoners' place of origin suggest that greater Belfast is the target area.

Mr McConnell: The scores on the doors, if you like, are that about 30% of the current prisoner population are in the greater Belfast area, and over 50% come from the greater Belfast area — east Antrim, Lisburn and north Down. At the other end of the scale, only about 10% of the current prisoner population come from the Derry/Londonderry area. So relocation would make sense, given the current and projected make-up of the prisoner population.

Mr McGlone: The overwhelming bulk of the prison population at Magilligan is from the greater Belfast area, so consideration has to be given to families, many of whom, by the nature of where they come from and —

Mr Weir: I am sorry to interrupt, but are the figures that you gave for the overall prison population or for Magilligan?

Mr McConnell: They are, as I understand it, for the whole population.

Mr Weir: So it is not just Magilligan.

Mr McGlone: Thanks for that, Peter.

You might not have the figures with you today, but a case has clearly been made about the prison population at Magilligan. Will you provide us with a comparable breakdown of the prisoners currently in Magilligan, please? That would be very useful in helping the Committee to come to its conclusions.

I am glad that you touched on the issue of people with mental health problems. I heard — I do not know whether it was from your evidence at one stage — that an alarming number of prisoners have mental health problems, ranging from the severe to the less serious. Will you refresh my memory of that percentage, please?

Mr Murray: Some 60% to 65% of prisoners have mental health problems of different levels. About 5% or 10% are severely mentally ill. Mainly, prisoners suffer from some form of personality disorder, which we regard as a mental illness, albeit that is not defined as a treatable mental illness by psychiatrists and others.

Mr McGlone: That brings me on to the facilities that you will make available in the prison. The second element is how you work with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS), and whatever strategies it has, to help people who find themselves in prison under difficult circumstances that are partially as a result of their health problems. I would be interested in your giving me a wee bit more clarity on that, please.

Mr Murray: The new house blocks that we have built at Maghaberry and the six-unit block at Magilligan have very wide landings and plenty of natural light. Those contrast with the existing H-block model at Magilligan or the square house at Maghaberry, which have narrow landings, low ceilings, no natural light, poor lines of sight and poor staff supervision. From what we see every day, there is no doubt that higher quality living accommodation is significantly beneficial to prisoners' well-being. The atmosphere in the likes of that new accommodation differs from that in other houses. From a mental health perspective, new accommodation would make a big difference. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons and Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJINI) have condemned the square house in Maghaberry and the blocks at Magilligan. They are not fit for purpose, and we need to do something about them. Any new blocks should be built with the intention of creating a more acceptable living environment for prisoners and working environment for staff. It does make a big difference.

Mr McGlone: You touched on the working out programme for prisoners. I do not know anything about that. Will you explain the process, how it works and how it would factor into the location of a new prison?

Mr Murray: The working out unit on the Crumlin Road in Belfast is largely in place to assist life-sentence prisoners in their transition from custody to community. Life-sentence prisoners, for example, currently serve an average tariff of 15 years. At the three year pre-tariff stage, they start community-based testing. In the final year of custody, leading up to the consideration of cases by the parole commissioners, prisoners will be considered for phase 1 of a working out programme, which means that they would transfer to the prisoner assessment unit. They undergo assessment on phase 1, and, by phase 2, if the risk assessment proves satisfactory, they work out in the community but return each evening to the unit. Every other weekend, they are at home, until, eventually, they come to phase 3, by which stage they work and live in the community. All that is part of the testing and informs the whole process of risk management. It will give an informed view to the parole commissioners.

Mr McGlone: If I picked you up correctly, those are prisoners on longer-term sentences?

Mr Murray: Yes.

Mr McGlone: How many prisoners currently in Magilligan fit into that category?

Mr Murray: A number of short-term prisoners transfer to the working out unit. The prisoner assessment unit at Belfast is to enable prisoners to get jobs in the greater Belfast area, and that already happens. It will be subject to risk-assessment, but, for example, all of the current 82 places at the Foyleview

facility are for prisoners who are considered low or reduced risk and who will, or could, eventually work out in the community. There is no reason why any of those prisoners could not be transferred to a new facility if there was sufficient space. You must understand that the current availability at Crumlin Road is only 25 places, whereas the new accommodation will provide about 60 places.

Mr McGlone: Thank you very much.

Mr Weir: I was a bit concerned when you talked about Magilligan prison. We have made clear our views on it. I understand that the statistics, broadly speaking, suggest that the prison population roughly reflects the overall distribution of population in Northern Ireland. About 50% of the prison population comes from the greater Belfast area, which, roughly speaking, equates to the percentage of the population of Northern Ireland from that area. If there was only one prison in Northern Ireland, I could see the argument for it having to be located in the greater Belfast area. However, we are talking about having at least three major prisons here, and the secure colleges at Hydebank and Maghaberry were also mentioned. Surely, locating all of those in the greater Belfast area does not reflect the distribution of the population. There must be an argument for a rebuild on the Magilligan site in the north-west. Your argument that the north-west or west might be considered for a possible fourth prison seems quite weak. If the Executive buy into the project, partially or totally, we are looking at spending £0.25 billion. The idea of spending such a sum now and considering building a fourth major prison at some stage in the future is weak. Will this not create difficulties for the staff and for people visiting from the north-west of the Province? Do you not think it reasonable that at least one prison out of three should be based in the west?

My other point about Magilligan is that we have existing prisons. If we are looking for a greenfield site to house large numbers of prisoners, and it is not being used for that purpose at present, I cannot imagine that too many communities will race with great enthusiasm to have a freshly built prison on their doorstep. Have you thought through the attitude of residents? With Maghaberry, Magilligan and all existing prisons, it is difficult for people to argue against them as they already exist. How do you respond to those concerns?

Mr Rossington: When it comes to identifying the ideal site or location for a new facility, we have to go through a process that involves a full site search. That would be advertised in the European Journal and take into account not only existing, government-owned assets and property but privately owned property.

Mr Weir: Forgive me if I am wrong but, unless I picked you up wrongly, we are talking about something that is pretty much purpose-built. If it is simply a question of taking a pre-existing site/building and modifying it to make it fit for purpose, the more sensible solution would be to keep it at Magilligan. If you are talking about something freshly built, we are looking at greenfield sites.

Mr Rossington: You are talking about a newbuild, which could be on a greenfield or brownfield site.

Mr Weir: Do you think that communities will be mad keen to embrace something of that nature on their doorstep when it is not there already?

Mr Rossington: Magilligan has, for example, 400 employees. If the new prison were to be a similar size, there would be a similar number of staff.

Mr Weir: Yes, but if you are talking about its being a similar size to Magilligan, you will economically disadvantage the north-west and economically advantage wherever it moves to. Essentially, you are shifting facilities from one area to another. Clearly, that will mean that one area will receive a financial spin-off and another area will lose out financially. The fact that a new prison will have a wider economic advantage to an area will probably not give a great deal of comfort to people who suddenly find themselves half a mile down the road from it.

Mr McConnell: All of that could well be true, Peter. However, the issue for us is to be clear that what drives our outline estate strategy, in reflecting the recommendations that flow from the prison review team's report, is our capacity to impact most meaningfully on the offenders who come into custody and

how we best engage with the other partners and agencies that can have a positive impact on that. That is the real driver behind the strategy, hence the recommendation that a new facility be located closer to the major conurbations in the greater Belfast area.

Undoubtedly, other economic considerations will have to be worked through so that we not only attend to best value considerations but, at the same time, address the key issue of how best to engage with the majority of offenders who come into custody in a way that has the highest probability of reducing the risk of reoffending. Of course, there are direct economic concerns about where the prison is located and what that will do to the economy. That is, undoubtedly, an issue. However, we must also consider the downstream economic issues, which is the bounty, or bonus, that comes from the more appropriate location of a facility vis-à-vis the criminogenics that drive this. If we can appropriately locate a new prison that gives us the best connectivity for all the issues set out in the prison review team's report, that will give us the greatest opportunity to reduce the risk of reoffending downstream. That would benefit the whole economy in Northern Ireland, not just the economy in the immediate vicinity of the prison.

Mr Weir: I am not particularly convinced, but I will move on to a couple of slightly more parochial issues. You mentioned that you have been reducing the number of young offenders at Hydebank, which seems sensible. At the time of the report, the number was five, and you said today that it is now two. You mentioned basing all those offenders at Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre and said that additional works would be needed there to accommodate them. What will be the scale and timescale of those works?

Mr McConnell: I do not have the details here today, Peter. However, I can assure you that work is ongoing between the DOJ and the Youth Justice Agency.

Mr Weir: Would it be possible for you to provide those details?

Mr McConnell: Yes.

Mr Weir: Finally, there may have been a false concern about Lisnevin in Millisle. I have read through your outline strategy a few times, and it appears that the intention is simply to use Lisnevin as a training centre for the next two or three years until Desertcreat comes into being and then dispose of the site. Is that a fair assessment?

Mr Rossington: I am sorry; I missed the last part of that, Peter.

Mr Weir: All that I derive from the report is the intention to continue to use Lisnevin in Millisle for training purposes for the next two or three years and then for the site to become obsolete and be disposed of once Desertcreat is in place. Is that the future of Lisnevin as you see it?

Mr Rossington: It is important to note that there are, in fact, two facilities in Millisle: the Prison Service College (PSC), which is the big white house and the supporting infrastructure; and the former borstal, which is named Lisnevin. Although adjacent, the two sites are separate.

Mr Weir: There has been some concern and, I suspect, ill-founded speculation, that the intention was to reactivate the former borstal. Can you categorically say that there is no such intention?

Mr Rossington: We are looking at the need for contingency accommodation and considering a number of sites, one of which is Lisnevin. We need to carry out a full options appraisal to identify the costs of returning Lisnevin to an operational status and determine whether that would be value for money and a feasible option.

Mr Weir: So you are not ruling out the re-use of Millisle as contingency accommodation?

Mr Rossington: The re-use of Lisnevin or Millisle?

Mr Weir: Well, Lisnevin is in Millisle. I do not know which way round you want to put it. Millisle covers more than just the two facilities; there is the village as well. Will you clarify that you are not ruling out the Millisle site, whichever way you want to put it, for future contingency? Local people, remembering the days when it was an active juvenile justice centre, are seeking reassurance. It would be fair to say that many of them do not remember those days particularly fondly.

Mr McConnell: We appreciate, Peter, that the prospect of reopening a facility that has been closed probably causes the local community some concern. Equally, however, I would have thought that the Justice Committee would think it remiss of the Northern Ireland Prison Service, given some of the prison population pressures that we have experienced, not to think through how we might provide contingency accommodation. The fact that Lisnevin was an active part of our estate in the past means that it is right that we should consider the feasibility and viability of bringing it back on stream, particularly as doing so may represent better value for money. However, our initial evaluation of Lisnevin does not exactly fill us with encouragement.

Going back to —

Mr Weir: Your lack of encouragement may be my encouragement.

Mr McConnell: I will go back to a point that I made earlier, and Geoff touched on it as well. I would have thought that the Committee and others would think it remiss of us not properly to consider the options that might immediately be available to us. That is why we stated in the outline estate strategy that we would properly evaluate the options. It is fair to say —

Mr Weir: How many sites are you considering for contingency use?

Mr McConnell: We are looking at two options: Lisnevin and Massereene. As I wish to be transparent with the Committee, I should say that neither site is ideal, and each presents its own difficulties. Our initial evaluation, as I said, was not encouraging. However, it would be inappropriate of us not to go through a detailed evaluation process so that we can come forward with a defensible judgement on each of the sites.

Mr Weir: What is the timescale for that evaluation process?

Mr Rossington: We are waiting to appoint a professional services contract from which we can draw some external experience. That is not due to be awarded until July, so I imagine that it will be later this year, but I cannot give you an exact date.

Mr Gary Boyd (Northern Ireland Prison Service): An earlier point that you made, Mr Weir, was about the £250 million. I am not sure where that figure came from. In the outline strategy, our proposal for a new prison is costed at £140 million. The completion of a new block housing 240 prisoners at Maghaberry is additional to that.

Mr Weir: According to your outline estate strategy, which shows capital departmental expenditure limit allocation and future spending forecasts, the net capital budget is £241 million.

Mr Boyd: Sorry, that is the overall figure.

Mr Rossington: That figure also includes the last financial year, so you can take £19 million away from it.

Mr Weir: Let me rephrase my point. Whatever the exact amount, even if it is £222 million, we are talking about very large sums of capital money. My point is that you will want the Executive's buy-in to that level of expenditure, but you also talk about potentially building a fourth prison at some stage in the future and locating it in the north-west. However, it is unlikely that the Executive will consider spending additional large sums of capital money for many years to come. I also have to say that, if

some of that is sunk expenditure and you produce figures for total gross capital over a 10-year period that show £246 million minus capital disposals of £5 million, it should not be overly surprising that people will talk about £0.25 billion.

Mr Boyd: What we are talking about in the Budget period to the end of 2014-15 is the £96 million that we have been allocated. The £140 million —

Mr Weir: With respect, if we are talking about an overall projected spend, we cannot talk about that in isolation. With the best will in the world, there is no point in simply stating the overall spend for the rest of the current comprehensive spending review period. You make an overall proposal, which, when fully implemented, will incur a range of costs. We have to be careful not simply to look at the short term.

Mr Boyd: I did not want people to misunderstand: we are not spending £250 million on a new prison; we are talking about spending £140 million.

Mr Weir: With respect, no one suggested that. However, I suggested that, as part of the overall strategy, the figure for all the work to be done is somewhere in the region of £0.25 billion. Earlier, Mr Murray said that the north-west might be considered should the decision be taken to build a fourth prison in addition to what is already proposed. My point is that there will have to be Executive buy-in to an overall package costing roughly £0.25 billion. Most people's experience of large-scale capital spend is that the cost tends to go up slightly rather than down. Therefore, whether or not we get away with spending that amount of £0.25 billion and are happy enough with that, I do not think it realistic to think that an additional prison could be built in the north-west or west of the Province. Certainly, that would not happen within the next 10 years.

Mr Murray: I would never have implied that it would happen within 10 years.

Mr Weir: I appreciate that. I was not suggesting that that was your implication.

Ms J McCann: You went into quite a lot of detail on some existing projects for women prisoners. The Inspire project, for example, works very well, and I am glad that you are seeking to extend it to young offenders. However, report after report has highlighted the need for a purpose-built prison for women, which you have not mentioned. We have been to Hydebank quite a few times, and it is just not the place for those women to be. It is very cramped, with remand prisoners on one landing and sentenced prisoners on another. The women have to walk through another part of the prison for visits, and so on. It is just not a good place for them to be, particularly given the vulnerability, problems and difficulties of some of the women whom we encountered. Will there be a purpose-built prison for women at some stage?

Mr McConnell: I will ask Max to go into more detail in a minute, Jennifer, but it is clearly set out in the outline strategy that we recognise the absolute need for the Northern Ireland Prison Service to provide services specific to women's needs. Quite rightly, Peter Weir reminded us of the overall cost to the public purse of running the service and delivering this outline strategy. It is critical that, whatever we do, we get it right and that the service is as future-proofed as we can possibly make it. That is why I was very careful, in my introduction, to say that we want to move forward at the right pace with the right consideration, rather than moving forward quickly. That is not firing the ball down the fairway just to avoid the issue; it is quite the opposite. We are tackling it comprehensively from a DOJ and partnership point of view, right down to distilling the key issues and determining how best we design a response to those. With that in mind, perhaps you would comment, Max.

Mr Murray: I would be the first to agree with you, Jennifer. Back in 2004, I was the one who took the decision to move women from Mourne House. Ash House is not an ideal facility for women by any stretch of the imagination, but it is a much better facility than they had in Mourne House, and the regime is definitely better. Certainly, at some stage in the future, we will have to revisit that issue.

Colin, in his introduction, talked about some of the additional factors that must be taken into consideration, such as the impact of a supervised activity order pilot to keep fine defaulters out of

prison. We know that many females who come through the system are fine defaulters. He talked about a review of community sentences, and, ideally, alternative community disposals would be a better means of handling many low-risk offenders.

A series of strategic workshops has been held to reach understanding and agreement on a number of recommendations. Those recommendations are to do with wider discussion on the management of women with mental health and addiction problems. It is widely understood that women's needs differ from those of the male population. However, it has not yet been determined what exactly should be provided in the community. Perhaps there should be more Inspire-type models, wider co-operation with third sector providers, such as Women's Aid or other organisations, or community-based disposals.

The outline strategy asks what will be the residual issues with custody issue and how should we manage them. Does custody, for example, include people coming in from the community who have particular criminogenic needs that need to be addressed? There is a clear path for taking forward the issues concerning women, but a bit of work needs to be done upfront by the DOJ, which must consider disposals other than custody.

Ms J McCann: I was glad to hear you talking about prisoners' families, because they, particularly the children, are often forgotten about when people talk about prisoners. It is no fault of children that their mother or father is in prison, and I am glad that family relationships will be better serviced, prisoners will be closer to their families and that there will be better visiting accommodation.

The issue of compassionate parole, which is a families-related issue, has raised its head. It seems that, when a family member dies, the prisoner concerned might get only a couple of hours of compassionate parole. Sometimes, prisoners have even been refused compassionate parole, and I have dealt with a couple of constituency cases of that nature. We are talking about trying to foster family relationships through visits, increased contact, and so on. Yet, prisoners with no history of not returning after parole might be refused or given extremely limited compassionate parole at the one time when they need, and are needed by, their family. It seems that you have taken a step back compared with the situation that existed years ago. I do not know whether you are able to respond to that or know the reasons behind why that happens.

Mr Murray: Compassionate temporary release falls within my area of responsibility. It is an onerous responsibility for those expected to make such decisions. When doing so, they have to consider the application form and grounds for compassionate release under article 8 rights, etc, and be mindful of the needs of the family and the individual. Against that, they have to look at a prisoner's background, including the offending behaviour, progress while in custody, willingness to address the offending behaviour, assessment, case recording and evaluation (ACE) score and whether he or she has reduced the risk presented. Staff must also consider whether the risk can be managed in the community. If not, they have to consider whether the prisoner can have staff-escorted leave; accompanied leave with a responsible adult, be that somebody from the community or a prison chaplain; or unsupervised leave. If they grant unsupervised leave, they have to consider the length of time that an individual is allowed to be out. If people with alcohol problems are allowed out for a period of leave that stretches into an evening, there is no doubt that there is an increased risk of their joining in with a social activity in which alcohol becomes a problem. So all those factors have to be taken into consideration before arriving at a conclusion. If any victims' representations are on record, those must be factored in as well.

Ms J McCann: I had a recent case in which a young man in Magilligan applied for compassionate parole after his father died suddenly. He was, in fact, due for release in the same week in which his father died. However, he was not even given enough time on parole to attend the cremation of his father's remains. Even though he was due to get out in a couple of days anyway, he had to get back to Magilligan for a certain time. He was not even allowed a compassionate visit in a designated visiting area because, he was told, no tables were available. If we are serious about trying to reform the regime, we really should look at that. I will not labour the point. Family funerals are important, particularly for Irish families who have wakes, and so on. Notwithstanding all that you said, we need to be compassionate in our treatment of such cases. I wanted to raise that issue here, but I will also raise it in other places.

Mr Murray: I am happy to meet you to talk that through.

Mr Elliott: Thanks very much for the presentation. My first question is on Magilligan. I am concerned that the driving force seems to be what is convenient for prisoners and, indeed, their families. Although I appreciate what Jennifer said about families not being not at fault, I am more concerned about society in general and how it perceives all of this. I wonder how much of the prison regime is about punishment and how much of it is about rehabilitation. In your view, what is the balance ?

Mr McConnell: It is probably best for me to start off, Tom, and my colleagues may wish to contribute, too. I think that the Prison Service and the Department of Justice are absolutely clear about the fact that imprisonment itself is the punishment. The award of the court to commit an individual to custody is the punishment. The challenge for the Northern Ireland Prison Service, as for other similar jurisdictions, is to deliver the punishment of custody and ensure that it is provided in a decent and humane way. Another challenge for us is ensuring that offenders who have passed through our care — I use that term deliberately — are better prepared not to offend when they go back into their communities than was perhaps the case when they first came into our care, and communities should be able reasonably to expect that.

Mr Murray: I was going to make a similar point, which is that our ultimate aim is public protection, so we have the interests of society at heart. Security is a given. It is a fact of prisons that their purpose is to keep *[Inaudible.]* It is what we do with prisoners when they are there that makes the difference — providing opportunities and putting the necessary support in place to try to influence their attitudes to offending, and the hope is that they will desist from offending.

It has been clearly proven that the punitive approach, such as that adopted in boot camps in England some time ago, does not work. I remember, 34 years ago, joining the Prison Service at Hydebank Wood. At that time, prisoners' heads were shaved. I will give you an example of there being absolutely no respect for authority. When Alistair Hayes took over as governor, and I was there as his deputy, the decision was taken not to shave people's heads, because it was ridiculous. However, there was an outcry from inmates, because a shaved head was a status symbol on their return to the community. It meant that they could walk up and down the street, and people would recognise that they were straight out of Hydebank. That punitive approach does not work, so it is about the rehabilitative process.

Mr Elliott: Am I right in assuming from what both of you said, especially Colin, that the punishment almost stops when the judgement is made and that when individuals enter prison, it is all about rehabilitation?

Mr McConnell: Yes, in the sense that prisons, by their very nature, are a punishment. The deprivation of liberty is the punishment exercised by the courts. There is a sort of value approach in custody, which is not written anywhere but, essentially, is "Do no harm". The real challenge to the Prison Service now and the Prison Service of the future is to work in such a way that offenders who have passed through our care pose less risk to the society and community to which they return. That is a tremendous challenge, and it is certainly one that the Northern Ireland Prison Service is up to facing.

Mr Murray: Prisoners are locked up every night at 7.30 pm and do not get out again until an officer unlocks the door the next day. They are told when they can use the phone, shower, exercise and when they are required to go to a particular location to work. Prisoners might be told that they will be locked up at lunchtime and cannot get out in the evening, for whatever reason. They are subject to a progressive regime system based on rewarding them according to their effort in prison and what they do to address their offending behaviour and attitude. I do not think that prisoners regard the regime that we operate as relaxed but recognise that prisons, by their nature, are difficult environments.

Mr Elliott: OK, I will accept the difference of opinion there.

Your outline strategy states that current projections are for the prison population to increase. However, it goes on to state that the Department's policy is to reduce the prison population. Forgive

me, because I have not had the opportunity to go through the entire document, but are you planning for a future increase in the prison population, or for a decrease in your estate?

Mr McConnell: We are very clear that, at this stage, we are planning for providing a service able to cope with a projected increase in the population. That is the primary goal of the strategy. We want that provision to be as fit for purpose and purpose-designed as we can possibly make it within the available public resource. However, we are also conscious of looking at alternatives to custody when they are appropriate, feasible and sustainable, and one would want the Department to be working on that. In the years to come, we hope that the Department can develop reliable, trustworthy alternatives and diversion schemes to custody that may cap the growth in the prison population and, we would hope, lead to its reduction. However, we have to make sure that we provide headroom in the system for the courts to continue to make custodial disposals if the judiciary considers that appropriate. However, there is the potential, Tom, for a double benefit.

As we move forward and develop a modern, effective and responsive Northern Ireland Prison Service, and in the event that the custodial population moderately drops off at some point, we will have a real opportunity to begin to take out of use those facilities that we have to plan to use and which, as we heard, we would rather not use but have to because of the prison population. No matter what way we look at the issue, the investment is sound and worthy for the future of the Northern Ireland Prison Service on the basis that it will, ultimately, provide fit-for-purpose, usable accommodation in the years ahead.

Mr Elliott: Is the strategy making preparations for an increased prison population?

Mr McConnell: At this stage, yes.

Mr S Anderson: Thank you, gentlemen. Are we allowed to talk about the exit scheme? No? Maybe I will bring it in. On the back of what the Chair said at the outset and, indeed, what Tom said, you stated, Max, that staff were not the first priority of the strategy. We also talked about consultation with staff perhaps commencing immediately after this meeting. At last week's Committee meeting, Mr Finlay Spratt did not have a great opinion of Mr Colin McConnell in relation to meeting him for consultation. I said that you did not have much time left to get a meeting in place.

There are suggestions, ideas or proposals to close Magilligan and have a new prison in a more central location. In my opinion and in the opinion of others, that is causing further staff anxiety. They hear about such proposals on the back of the exit scheme, which is why I want to talk about the scheme.

We are in the middle of a staff recruitment process, and a number of new recruits will go to Magilligan. If the prison is moved to a more central location after those staff are established there, they will have to relocate. There will be costs for the staff and for the service. Will that issue form part of any consultation with staff, the POA or Mr Spratt?

Mr Murray: As I said earlier, as part of the consultation process, we will undoubtedly need to engage fully with the POA as a key stakeholder. As we develop an outline business case for a new prison, we have to go through a consultation process, after which a decision will be taken. If the decision is to build a new prison, wherever that may be, an outline business case will be made that will address all the issues to which you referred on costs, which is about relocating staff. There is no doubt that additional costs will accrue, so those must be included as part of the consideration.

Mr McConnell: Sydney, since you raised the issue of consultation, with the Chair's indulgence —

Mr S Anderson: It is not like me to raise such issues but I thought that I would give you an opportunity, Colin.

Mr McConnell: That is fine. Given what has been said, and with the Chair's indulgence, I will offer an observation that may appear odd to you. Actually, I do not think that things are so bad.

Mr S Anderson: You did not say that in answer to a question that I asked at a previous meeting.

Mr McConnell: Yes, indeed. I do not see things quite like that. You might say, "Well you would say so, wouldn't you?" There is sound evidence to suggest or support that view, in that, over the months, we have been talking about really tough and nitty-gritty issues. We have been addressing concerns that have been around for years, and we could have anticipated that there would be tough discussions and that it would not necessarily be easy to bring the two positions more closely together. However, I think that there has been a real triumph. Given everything that has been said, and almost in spite of me, the organisation has been able to move forward. That is because it is a team game, and everyone has a part to play. Contrary to what was said, I rate the two key players, Ronnie Armour and, for that matter, Finlay Spratt. They have shown great leadership, patience and, overall, courage to keep talking and representing the organisations — the employer and the workforce, in so far as the POA does that — in order to reach a certain point. Finlay touched on that when he was here: we actually have agreement.

I listened to colleagues when we spoke about the issue earlier today. If we roll back to a year or 18 months ago, would people have put a wager on us being in a position whereby we have agreement on some big meaty issues that will take the Prison Service forward? The conclusion then was that people would probably not have made that wager. Those two people, representing their respective organisations — Ronnie for the employer and Finlay for the POA — have done us a great service. So I do not see things in quite such stark terms or as bleakly as they have been represented. There is a real danger that we seek to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory. It is a real triumph for the organisation that we have got to where we have, and I really regard the two key people who have taken us to that position.

The Chairperson: It is right, Colin, that you have had the opportunity to say that and to deal with the issue. Now that you have done that — I respect your right to do so — I want to get back to the strategy because we have a long meeting ahead of us. Members should confine their remarks to the strategy.

Mr S Anderson: Given what I said earlier about staff relocation, and what other members have said about the effect on the economy in the north-west, what is the rationale in moving from Magilligan? Could a new prison not be built at Magilligan?

Mr Murray: Sydney, you know Magilligan prison: it is a long, linear site. I am a former governor of Magilligan and a strong supporter of its ethos and of what it has done. However, the site is far from ideal. From a transport perspective, it is not on a public thoroughfare, and it is not accessible or easy to get to. It is not easy for families or for job creation. Let us think about trying to get job opportunities for the prisoners in Foyleview; it is difficult to do so while operating from Magilligan. Ultimately, if we are to do what the prison review team says for a step-up, step-down community-based facility, Magilligan is far from an ideal site from which to operate.

If a new prison were to be built at Magilligan, it would have to be done while operating the existing site. That is extremely expensive and would cause difficulties in trying to maintain an operation while erecting a newbuild. The building would have to be done incrementally, so it would cost more and take more time. All those issues will have to be considered as part of the outworkings of the consultation process and, more particularly, looking at the future business case on how we move forward.

Mr Boyd: Magilligan has been there for the past 40 years, and it was recognised a long time ago that the Nissen huts and a number of the H-blocks are not fit for purpose and are disproportionately expensive to maintain. Therefore, under the 10-year strategy, we are talking about investing a significant amount of money in building a facility that will not only meet the needs over 10 years but will meet the population needs that are forecast by year 10. That facility will be there, presumably, for the next 50 years. This is a fundamental decision point about putting the prisons in the right place so that, ultimately, they will last for the next 50 years.

Mr S Anderson: I will leave the issue of Magilligan, which we have talked about enough. I want to pick up on a point about young adult male offenders and the secure college that you mentioned. To date, has any work been done or consultation carried out on courses with the universities and the colleges of

further and higher education? One sure thing is that the inmates will be secured a place. Some students on the outside cannot get college places. What will the level be? Are you considering those issues?

Mr Murray: As Colin said earlier, we are still working through the concept of a secure college. The Max Murray version is to have a purposeful and meaningful regime that is focused on the personal development of the young people who are in custody. It is about looking at the educational and training needs, the wider needs for addressing their offending behaviour, their healthcare needs and their addiction needs. To me, a secure college is an all-pervading learning environment for young people who come into custody in which there is a purpose and ethos that is about personal development and doing something that will improve their coping abilities when they go back into the community.

Mr S Anderson: Have you done any work with the Department for Employment and Learning yet?

Mr Murray: Yes, we have. In recent weeks, there have been two meetings with which DEL was involved to look at the review of the delivery of learning and skills. The Department of Finance and Personnel's business consultancy service is looking at the current learning and skills curriculum and at the best mechanism for delivery. DEL is represented on that. You are aware that we engage with Belfast Met and the North West Regional College at Magilligan, so those contacts already exist.

Mr McCartney: Thank you very much for the presentation. This is the first step in a process, so, on that basis, I will limit my comments. It is to be welcomed that the strategy is firmly placed within the wider strategic prison reform so that it is not seen as a review of the prison estate in the absence of something else. As we take it forward, we will need to see some meat on the bones of the ideas. In particular, I will give two examples. The first is the idea of a secure college. What will that mean, and what will the timeline be? It strikes me that it could be done, if not in the short term, in the medium term. You do not have to wait until the end of the Magilligan process, as it is being called. Unfortunately, this week, it was almost reduced to an argument between having Magilligan or not having it. Perhaps that it just the way that it would have developed.

Secondly, I have a slight concern that the outline estate strategy states that a full site search and options appraisal will be necessary, but throughout the document, it is sited at Maghaberry. That is akin to having a case heard in court on the understanding that the person will be found guilty, and then calling that justice. We need to avoid that. My concern is that, as you develop the strategy and get closer to implementation, someone might ask why we need two receptions, two hospitals and two education suites. You will end up with an annex of a prison, which has been problematic. There have been worthwhile solutions at Maghaberry, and, as we have said in Committee, from a distance, Maghaberry is a difficult prison to manage because of its layout and the fact that it has different categories of prisoners. Solutions are being pointed out, and although I am not saying that a new prison should or should not be at Magilligan, my concern is that, as you get closer to putting that new prison on the ground, there is a clear view in the Prison Service that it should be sited at Maghaberry. When the authors of the document refer to a central location, they automatically assume that it is central to Belfast rather than central to the area in which you operate. So we need a more central prison and a medium security prison, but it will be at Maghaberry. I am concerned that you could undermine the wider reform package if we end up with an annex at Maghaberry. I can see that it will be good value for money, and people in finance will ask why you want two hospitals, two receptions and two of everything, and you will end up with an annex.

Mr Rossington: Correct me if I am wrong, but I think that the precise words are "preferably adjacent to Maghaberry". Is that right?

Mr McCartney: The document states:

"However, at this stage, our belief is that there would be considerable benefits to such a facility being located on a site adjacent to the existing Maghaberry site."

If I were talking about any other issue, you would say that there is a clear and fixed opinion, particularly given that the outline strategy also states that a new prison should be built preferably on land that is already owned by the service. The commentary this week — it is not in the document — is that the land that you are looking at at Maghaberry is not owned by the service. So that contradictory position leads me to the opinion that there is a fixed view on Maghaberry. That is fine, and people are entitled to have that view, but my concern is about the value-for-money argument that Peter mentioned. If capital is short, you can make a good argument that, rather than spending £120 million, you could make an annex. However, an annex may add to your problems rather than resolving them.

Mr McConnell: I am not persuaded that it is a contradiction. Those are considerations, and it is right to flush out the obvious benefits or disbenefits. However, we are clear that a distinct new facility is being proposed. As I said in response to Peter, the driving force is to address the issues of the criminogenics that drive offending behaviour. That is the primary goal, and it is not associated with immediate economic issues only. The real drivers for that are making communities safer while driving down reoffending in due course. That is the long-term aim. However, we appreciate that those aims and objectives have to be modified once the considerations are properly taken into account. So they are considerations rather than contradictions.

Mr McCartney: If a consultation process is under way, and we are coming to fixed views, will the oversight group have any role in monitoring the decisions? Do you see that as separate?

Mr McConnell: Ultimately, the oversight group is there to monitor progress and, undoubtedly, to consider quality assurance to make sure that decisions are properly thought through. In that sense, Northern Ireland has an advantage in that not only is this august body, the Committee for Justice, looking very closely at what we are doing but the DOJ steering group and the ministerial oversight group are doing likewise. There is a significant amount of inspection and oversight to make sure that we get it right.

Mr McCartney: We will come back to this issue. Thank you very much.

Mr A Maginness: I apologise for not being here for your presentation; I had to attend a memorial service for a trade unionist who was killed at work. However, I read the documentation, and I hope that I am not repeating anything that colleagues have put to you. It is a challenging document, but it is well worked out.

I have to agree with Mr McCartney that the outline estate strategy clearly implants the idea of, in particular, a new prison adjacent to Maghaberry. I question that for a number of reasons, one of which is the history of Magilligan. Over the past decade or so, Magilligan has proven to be quite successful as a prison establishment and has done some very good work. There certainly seems to be a different ethos there in comparison with Maghaberry, which has all sorts of problems and complications.

If a prison such as Magilligan is placed adjacent to Maghaberry, the historic culture of that prison is lost. That is my feeling, quite apart from all the economic arguments about the north-west, and so forth. There is no reason why there could not be a prison in the north-west. It could be in Derry or, indeed, in the centre of this region, around Dungannon or somewhere like that. There is no reason why you cannot pick locations such as that, but I emphasise my point about the unique culture of Magilligan and the danger of losing that.

I want to ask about costs. Mr Weir went through the costs very carefully: £140 million for a new prison. On page 75 of the outline estate strategy, it states:

"In the event the procurement route for this involves private sector funding there will be a reduced requirement for public sector funds. NIPS will be required to pay a unitary charge for the facility which will be a resource cost and will need to be bid for on that basis."

I assume from that that there is a suggestion that you may be looking at some sort of private funding. Have you explored that in any detail?

Mr McConnell: I will talk in general terms, Alban, and then ask the specialist to pitch in, if I may. You are right to point out and remind us that the culture at Magilligan is notably different — it has been reported on — compared with Maghaberry. However, the two institutions deal with very different populations and very different issues. Part of the journey that we are on through the strategic efficiency and effectiveness (SEE) programme on the overall reform and transformation of the Northern Ireland Prison Service is not only to have one shining example of a more progressive culture but to have an entire service with a progressive culture. We are working on that from the ground up with the staff who will be staying with us and with those who will join us in due course. We seek to grow that progressive culture right through the organisation, so in that sense, if I may say so, it is less important and less of an issue in relation to where Magilligan is now. It is much more about ensuring that, wherever a new facility is located, the culture is embedded from day one.

You touched on the financing, and, at this stage, it is not possible to determine where the best financing approach for any future build would be. That issue is open to discussion and consideration, but I will ask Gary to comment on the practicalities.

Mr Boyd: As Colin said, testing private finance is part of the process of the business case appraisal and seeking the appropriate permissions. We have been discussing plans for the financial impact of the estate strategy over the next 10 years with the DOJ, and in due course we will discuss them with the Department of Finance and Personnel through the DOJ. The strategy makes a point about capital availability versus the resource impact. If we were to go through those business case and appraisal processes and find that private finance was an option, it would be tested and evaluated in relation to the overall value for money and affordability that the Department makes available to us.

The strategy outlines the post-Budget period over the last seven years of the estate strategy. If the funding that we are talking about — up to £140 million — were available in a conventional capital build, we suggest that that will all be put into the mix of the appraisal and business case process, and the overall affordability will take account of the available capital and resource. It is a bit early in the process to comment on the relative value for money of one over the other.

Mr A Maginness: Will you consider it in due course?

Mr Boyd: Absolutely, as part of the process.

The Chairperson: I want clarification on a couple of points before we finish. What exactly is being considered for Lisnevin and Massereene?

Mr Rossington: What is being considered is the use of those sites as contingency accommodation. If we lost a square house through fire or riot, where would we put the prisoners? Such a location might provide that facility.

The Chairperson: Is there any particular type of prisoner in mind?

Mr Rossington: It would probably be for the lowest category of prisoner. We would then move people around in the existing facilities so that we got the lower risk prisoners in that type of facility.

The Chairperson: Thank you very much. Colin, I am not sure whether this is the last time that you will appear before the Committee.

Mr McConnell: That may well be down to you, Chairman. *[Laughter.]* It is the last planned appearance, but you may decide otherwise between now and then.

The Chairperson: I do not think that there are any plans. I suspect that it probably is your last appearance, so I thank you for your attendance at our meetings. You always made yourself available for us. I think that it is fair to say that members did not always agree with you, but you were always willing to come before us and give the Committee its due place. We certainly appreciate that. On behalf of the Committee, I wish you well in your future post. Thank you very much.

Mr McConnell: Thank you very much.