



OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Justice Sub-Committee on Policing

Thursday 20 April 2017

Session 5



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Thursday 20 April 2017

CONTENTS

	Col.
DECISION ON TAKING BUSINESS IN PRIVATE	1
POLICE SCOTLAND AND THE SCOTTISH POLICE AUTHORITY (FINANCIAL PLANNING).....	2

JUSTICE SUB-COMMITTEE ON POLICING
7th Meeting 2017, Session 5

CONVENER

*Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
*Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
*Ben Macpherson (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
*Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD)
*Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

Drew Livingstone (Unison Scotland)
Calum Steele (Scottish Police Federation)
Craig Suttie (Association of Scottish Police Superintendents)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Diane Barr

LOCATION

The David Livingstone Room (CR6)

Scottish Parliament

Justice Sub-Committee on Policing

Thursday 20 April 2017

[The Convener opened the meeting at 13:01]

Decision on Taking Business in Private

The Convener (Mary Fee): Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to the 7th meeting in 2017 of the Justice Sub-Committee on Policing. No apologies have been received.

I invite John Finnie to make a brief declaration.

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green): Thank you. Given the nature of our discussions today, convener, I should indicate that I am in receipt of a police pension.

The Convener: Thank you, John.

Our first agenda item is a decision on whether to take in private item 3, which is consideration of our future work programme. Do we agree to do so?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority (Financial Planning)

13:01

The Convener: Our next item of business is an evidence session on the short-term financial planning of Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority. I welcome our witnesses: Craig Suttie, general secretary of the Association of Scottish Police Superintendents; and Calum Steele, general secretary of the Scottish Police Federation. George McIrvine, the branch secretary of Unison Scotland's Police Scotland branch was supposed to be here, but is not.

Drew Livingstone (Unison Scotland): Sorry, I am a last-minute replacement.

The Convener: I welcome Drew Livingstone, from Unison Scotland. Thank you all for providing written evidence. We will move straight to questions. I refer members to paper 1, which is a note by the clerk, and to paper 2, which is a private paper.

I ask the witnesses for their views on whether they are being included in discussions about financial planning and priorities. Has the situation changed? Following previous evidence sessions, we have been concerned that there almost seems to have been an exclusion of staff associations and unions from discussions on those matters. That is quite concerning. Given that the police force relies heavily on its staff, it would seem to me to be quite unsatisfactory to exclude them completely from all those discussions. We received a commitment that the situation would change. Has there been any change?

Drew Livingstone: We have not seen any longer-term financial planning concerning the next three years. I believe that the planning will be influenced by the policing 2026 strategy. We find it reassuring that commitments have been made to engage us in further talks about what sort of financial planning will take place. There are some concerns as we are aware that in this year's budget, for example, a £4 million non-recurring vacancy factor saving is listed on the police staff budget. We are not entirely sighted as to what that is broken down into and what areas of the business are affected. The situation is not great at this moment in time but there is certainly a commitment that it will improve.

The Convener: I will follow up on that response before I bring in Calum Steele and Craig Suttie, who I am sure will want to add something. You say that there is a commitment, but that commitment could be either, "We will include you," or, "We will

include you and this is how we will include you.” Which is it?

Drew Livingstone: Unison raised some concerns about the governance structure that was going to form part of the renewed approach to the SPA’s governance. We have had a commitment that that will be looked at over a six-month period. As far as we are concerned, that should probably happen sooner. We just need to wait and see. David Page has given commitments that we will be included and that he will take us with him on that journey, but we need to see how that will take shape.

Calum Steele (Scottish Police Federation): The position that Drew Livingstone articulated is probably a close description of where we are. The SPF is aware of the generalities and the wide issues that the service faces, and we have had more engagement with the SPA in particular and the chief financial officers fairly recently on those generalities. We are aware of what was in the budget that was presented to the SPA.

In terms of dealing with the challenge that is there in black and white for all to see, no detail has been shared. More importantly, I do not think that there has been—in fact, I can say that there has not been—any specific effort to seek from us suggestions about what can be done to mitigate or ameliorate some of the challenges that are coming. I find that frustrating; we are not an organisation to be patted on the head and stuck in a corner. All our members—mine, Drew Livingstone’s and Craig Suttie’s—see daily the realities of what takes place on the ground, and they have more than an appreciation that the language around sustainability and so on means “cuts”. It would appear that there is an unwillingness to say what those cuts will amount to, other than to give broad aspirational statements about taking X from here and putting it there.

Craig Suttie (Association of Scottish Police Superintendents): I will reiterate what has been said. We have had significant consultation around the policing 2026 strategy, which we have found to be very positive. However, that is very much at the strategic level. We really want to get into the detail of the delivery and implementation plans, and we have had no detailed discussion of them. The Police Scotland executive and the SPA have been open to discussing where things are going in general terms, but we need to get into the detail, particularly of what the operating model will be and of how we will change the organisational culture. Like Calum Steele—and Drew Livingstone, I am sure—we would like to assist with that.

The Convener: Before I bring in Margaret Mitchell, who wants to continue this line of

questioning, I will ask what impact, if any, this has had on the force’s morale.

Calum Steele: It has not done much to improve it, but given that our starting point, which was re-established in December 2016, was that only 8 per cent of police officers—I have distilled the figures down to police-officer level—believe that the organisation is genuinely interested in its people, things can only go up. However, that is also what I thought in 2015, when we had the original survey, but it turned out that they went down.

By and large, police officers tend not to care about the money. They just want to ensure that they are capable of doing the job. The reality, of course, is that when there is a lack of money it impacts on their ability to their job. The things that have the biggest impact and which create the biggest source of anxiety for our members are resources. I regularly hear from members who express the greatest of frustrations at working in shifts that have been if not quite decimated, certainly very close to it. They are constantly chasing their tails, and whenever they hear management’s language of sustainability and efficiencies, they know, because of the many years that the service has invested in their skills, that things are going to be harder from them. They have no experience of things being any better when that kind of language is used.

The Convener: Recently, you said that policing was “really under the cosh”, and you mentioned the

“ludicrous working hours and demand”

and the fact that officers were starting shifts with “dozens of jobs outstanding”. I take it that there is no change to that position.

Calum Steele: I would like to think that the dozens that were outstanding when I wrote that submission have—

The Convener: It might be a different dozen.

Calum Steele: The general trend of our picking up many jobs from the previous shift continues. To some extent, it was ever thus: there were always jobs on which, if a call came in half an hour before a change in shift, the reality was that, unless it was an absolutely pressing emergency, it would be bound over to someone else. The situation has developed from then, in that many calls are simply unable to be got to, rather than there just being a coincidence in timing.

The Convener: Do Drew Livingstone or Craig Suttie have any additional comments?

Drew Livingstone: Our experiences are very similar. A pulse survey offered a bit of insight into staff and morale within the organisation. From a police staff perspective, there have been

significant delays to the harmonisation programme of work, and there are huge differences in the rates of remuneration for police staff across the board. In its review of call handling, Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary in Scotland picked up on a situation in which police staff were receiving different rates of pay from other police staff who they were working alongside. That was meant to be addressed in October 2016, but it has had to be put back.

Across the organisation, we have hundreds of police staff vacancies that are not being filled. A lot of the cost-cutting measures have had the aim of reducing police staff numbers so that we could achieve recurring cost savings. Police staff are increasingly being asked to deliver a lot more with less, which is having a huge impact on morale. However, because of their professionalism, they will continue to deliver a service. For an example of that, we have only to look at the Aberdeen staff, who carried on delivering a service for the contact, command and control division even though there were imminent closures. Above and beyond is how police staff go about their business.

Craig Suttie: It is fair to say—as both Calum Steele and Drew Livingstone have done—that members of the SPF, police staff members and, indeed, members of the ASPs are overstretched just now. In many cases, they are working beyond what can reasonably be expected of them. The service is trying to address some of those issues. A good example of that is the policing 2026 strategy, which has involved some real attempts to go out and speak at front-line levels.

However, until we see some demonstrable change—or a change to the organisational culture—and an indication of what the operating model will be, it is very difficult for staff to accept that and see what difference is being made. It is going to be a critical time. The budget is quite clear. The situation is challenging just now, but it will become even more challenging in the years ahead. If we do not engage with staff, we will have real issues.

Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con): I want to follow up on the engagement issue. You will be aware that the committee has today received a letter from Derek Penman, Her Majesty's chief inspector of constabulary. It is fair to say that it is very critical of the SPA's decision to hold committee meetings in private. In particular, I want to hear your views on what Mr Penman has raised on oversight and scrutiny. In his letter, he refers to meetings of the SPA's audit committee, its finance committee and its policing committee all having been held in private. He makes the point that

"The new Policing Committee in particular will deal with a range of business that would previously have been heard in public",

which would have meant that you would have been party to everything that was discussed. He said that that business would specifically include

"operational performance and complaints handling".

How early were you aware of that letter and those concerns? Can you comment specifically on meetings on operational performance previously having been held in public and now being held behind closed doors by the SPA's committees?

Drew Livingstone: Unison is particularly concerned about that. We have been quite vocal on how the SPA and Police Scotland go about their business. When organisations undergo massive structural change, it is important that they take their staff with them. We have been quite outspoken and critical, and I think that there has been a reluctance on the part of the organisation to listen to opinions that might come across as being slightly dissenting.

Margaret Mitchell: When were you first aware of the letter and the concerns that HMICS had brought up with Andrew Flanagan?

Drew Livingstone: I believe that the first time that we became aware of it would have been when an article appeared in the press in relation to the letter not having been put forward at the board meeting.

Margaret Mitchell: When would that have been, roughly?

Drew Livingstone: It would have been perhaps six weeks ago. It was around the time when the story on Moi Ali started coming to light.

13:15

Calum Steele: Likewise, I became aware of the existence of the letter when Paul Hutcheon ran the story in *The Herald* or the *Sunday Herald*, which was about six weeks ago, as Drew Mitchell said. However, the matter was also addressed at fair length by John Scott QC at the recent Scottish Police Federation conference.

On the issue of the manner in which the SPA conducts its business, I fundamentally believe that it undermines the SPA's legitimacy. The SPF's view of the SPA is that, although what existed in the past with the police forces and local police authorities might not have been overly effective, there could be no doubt that the authorities had legitimacy because the public could be involved or could at least see what was going on. I appreciate that the jury might be out on this, but it is certainly my view that, to an extent, what we currently have

is more effective but a lot less legitimate because of the closed-door approach.

Margaret Mitchell: My specific point is that the letter of 9 December said that meetings were held in public previously and that, if they were still held in public, you would have had the opportunity to see the finance committee's deliberations and to comment on operational performance discussions. However, months were wasted with regard to the information that could have been provided to you. Someone could have looked at the letter of 9 December and said "HMICS has brought this to our attention and is most unhappy with it. It isn't the best practice of effective scrutiny and transparency." I would have hoped that, somewhere along the line—in January or February at the latest—somebody would have said, "Right, we must fix this right away." Instead, we have had more months of the ASPS, staff representatives and Unison being kept totally in the dark.

Calum Steele: I do not disagree. However, the correspondence was from HMICS to the Scottish Police Authority. If the chair of the SPA declined to share the content of that correspondence with members of the SPA itself, it does not really come as a surprise to me that it was not shared much further.

Craig Suttie: There were concerns much earlier than that, because we had concerns when the governance review came out, which was the middle of last year. I agree with what Calum Steele said about the previous police boards. Some were very effective, but there were shortcomings in that system. Regarding the openness of the board meetings in the early years of the SPA, I am not sure that we were always being listened to even then. We got the chance to sit in, but we did not get the chance to speak.

I heard the SPA chair speaking about some of the things that he said that Police Scotland got wrong around armed policing, traffic wardens and stop and search, but he could have gone on to talk about the performance model and the counter-corruption unit. They are all issues that the staff associations and the trade unions previously brought to the attention of the Police Scotland executive and the SPA. However, the question is whether they were listening to us and whether anything was being done about it.

I am encouraged by the new arrangements that have been put in place, though. For example, we have been invited along to the human resources and remuneration committee meeting on 27 April and I think that colleagues have been invited as well. It will be interesting to see how we are listened to and how we are able to engage with the SPA at that.

Margaret Mitchell: I do not think that it was just a case of whether you were listened to in the past; it was a case of whether you knew exactly what was being discussed and whether supporting papers were available to you. There is a lot more to it than just holding a meeting in public, because it is important that you have the information that you need to make your case and properly represent your members.

Calum Steele: In order to avoid any misrepresentation of the reality here, I point out that we were able to attend the meetings but were not contributing members at them. I just want to make sure that that is properly understood.

Margaret Mitchell: You are talking about the previous meetings that were held in public.

Calum Steele: Even at those meetings, we were not contributing members but were there in an observation capacity.

Margaret Mitchell: But at least there was transparency so that you could clearly see and hear what was going on.

Craig Suttie: Just on that, there has been a development whereby we now get papers—we were surprised that we got papers a few days before the most recent meeting. That is a helpful development on the part of the SPA.

Margaret Mitchell: The SPA recently approved its 2017-18 budget, which includes a £47.6 million revenue deficit. What discussions and input did you have prior to the budget been presented? What do you think the impact of the budget will be?

Craig Suttie: Our association had no discussions on the matter prior to the budget being presented, although we had an understanding of what the budget deficit was. The Audit Commission had had a look at that, and we knew that the deficit was there. I was surprised that it was described as an underlying budget deficit; I had never previously heard of anything like that.

There is a £47 million shortfall, which will have an impact—not immediately, because arrangements are in place to cover that, but it will have a massive impact on how we deliver services in the future. The policing 2026 strategy is all about identifying where the demand is, reducing that demand and identifying efficiencies. There will have to be significant changes in how we deliver business so that we can balance our budget, and I cannot see that being done without staff being lost across the board.

Calum Steele: As Craig Suttie has highlighted, we had no discussions on the specifics, although we were aware of the generalities of the scale of the hole in the budget that was to be presented. What is most concerning about that is probably

that even the budget that was passed, with its £47 million deficit, contains unidentified savings. It will be interesting to find out how they will be addressed.

Drew Livingstone: My point of view is similar to that of my colleagues. We have not really been part of the process, although we were aware of the generalities of the situation. As I mentioned earlier, paragraph 5.4 in the 2017-18 budget refers to the

“application of a non-recurring vacancy factor saving of (£4m) to the Police Staff budget”.

That relates to a number of unfilled police staff vacancies across the organisation. We have yet to see what those will be broken down into.

Margaret Mitchell: That will have to be analysed carefully so that we do not go back to a situation in which police officers end up backfilling and being taken off front-line duties.

The Convener: Before you move on, Margaret, Liam McArthur has a supplementary question.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): Calum Steele made a point about unidentified savings. Can you quantify the scale of those so that we have a picture of what the total is?

Calum Steele: Off the top of my head, I cannot, but from memory the figure was identified in the budget document. I will make sure that a copy is forwarded to committee members.

The Convener: That would be helpful—thank you.

Margaret Mitchell: My next question is quite a big one. Going forward, what do you consider to be the financial priorities for Police Scotland and the SPA? Are you all on the same page? I suspect that I already know the answer to that. *[Interruption.]*

I am sorry—that was Stewart Stevenson’s question.

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): You have asked it.

Margaret Mitchell: Perhaps the witnesses can answer Stewart Stevenson and I will ask about another aspect.

In his letter, Derek Penman said:

“On the basis of our previous discussions and given that you will be implementing your new governance arrangements in 2017/18, I have decided that it would be timely for HMICS to schedule a statutory inspection into the state, efficiency and effectiveness of the Authority.”

The SPA will potentially be involved in the integration of the railway police into Police Scotland. It will have the ability to negotiate with the railway operators and to make sure that the railway policing agreements are a success, yet

here we have what is tantamount to a vote of no confidence in the SPA. *[Interruption.]* If it is not a vote of no confidence, the concerns are sufficiently severe to warrant a statutory inspection of the

“state, efficiency and effectiveness of the Authority.”

In those circumstances, is it sensible to consider giving the SPA even more responsibility?

Calum Steele: I am sure that Derek Penman can speak for himself, but I certainly do not take the view that the fact that an inspection is to be carried out of part of the area in which he has responsibility for performing his duties is in any way a signal that there is a lack of confidence or a vote of no confidence in the SPA. That might well be the case, but you would have to ask him whether that is his intention.

I thought that we had done the railway policing stuff, to be honest. For what it is worth, I do not envisage that the Scottish Police Authority would be any less capable of dealing with whatever comes its way than is the case under the existing governance arrangements for railway policing. That is just a generic view.

Drew Livingstone: On railway policing, the committee that would deal with and address some of the governance and the integration of the British Transport Police would be a private committee. If we are talking about legitimacy and transparency, that does not necessarily bode well.

On whether the British Transport Police should be integrated, the question was framed in terms of how we integrate as opposed to whether we should integrate. The British Transport Police Authority provided significant input, but its proposals seem to have been dismissed out of hand.

Stewart Stevenson: I want to move on to a more strategic view. The submission from the Association of Scottish Police Superintendents contains the comment that

“the association is supportive of the general aims and objectives of the 2026 Strategy.”

That is not totally a green light. Similarly, Unison Scotland makes the interesting and related point that

“There is a requirement for partner agencies to buy into the 2026 project.”

First, I think that the committee will be interested—I am certainly interested—in your views on whether the policing 2026 strategy is in general terms moving in the right direction. More fundamentally, is it good enough to start to inform some of the more tactical decisions that need to be made in the shorter term or is more work required on the strategic vision that is encapsulated in the draft strategy? At this

distance, it would be spurious to suggest what we might spend in 2025-26, but does it help us to understand where the police are going in the shorter term? That is the important issue for us today.

Drew Livingstone: It was certainly reassuring that the policing 2026 strategy contains, for the first time, a frank admission that backfilling took place in Police Scotland, and given our campaign on the need to move towards a balanced workforce and best value, it was reassuring to see some of those terms creeping into the strategy. At the same time, in some of the work on organisational change, we see areas of collaboration such as partnership working, but some of those posts have been removed because there is no longer a commitment from local authorities and so on to continue to finance them.

Stewart Stevenson: To help us to understand the situation, it would be helpful if you could give us specific examples. What you have said so far is quite open and general.

Drew Livingstone: Yes. There are certain collaborative roles that are financed by local authorities. For example, a youth justice assessor organises meetings between various stakeholders with an interest in people who are vulnerable and at risk. If a local authority no longer makes a commitment to finance that role, the onus switches to the police, who have to determine whether they are willing to continue to finance it.

There is a lot of work to be done to establish the boundaries and harness the synergies between who we collaborate with and how we go about that. It is a long road, but we can release a lot of value there.

Craig Suttie: The policing 2026 strategy covers a number of issues. Fundamentally, nothing in it comes as much of a surprise—it is what we would expect a progressive police service to be looking at. Police services prior to Police Scotland were—and other police services elsewhere are—looking at similar things.

The 2026 strategy contains an important reference to working within the budget. That is a massive issue for policing because the police service does not set the budgets. Politicians and others do that, and it is then up to the police service to ensure that it delivers its services within that budget in the best way that it can.

I mentioned earlier that it is important to identify what real demand is, and I talked about how we reduce demand and create efficiencies. The 2026 strategy talks about making efficiencies in the back office and ensuring that we prioritise the front line. We accept that. For me, however, the strategy is fundamentally the start of a discussion with the communities that we serve about what

they want from policing in the future, because there are massive strains on policing. The demand on policing has gone up over previous years. The thought that, because crime is down, policing has gone down is a fallacy. There are massive demands on policing and our communities need to understand where we are with that.

It is interesting that today, down in England and Wales, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary has spoken about the massive demand that mental health is placing on policing. We need to engage with communities on that issue so that they and our partners understand how we will improve. It has been said many times that policing is far too important to be left to the police, and we really do need to start talking about how we will deliver that in Scotland.

13:30

Stewart Stevenson: When you talk about the tactical determining of budgets in the short term, are you therefore saying that, when we describe the budgets for next year and the year after, we should always do so in the context of the strategic objectives, rather than simply looking at the year-to-year tactical requirements?

Craig Suttie: Absolutely. That is what the strategy is for. In policing, we are quite familiar with using strategies to inform tactical delivery.

Stewart Stevenson: That is what I heard you say. I just wanted to hear you say it, if you see what I mean.

Calum Steele: I align myself with what Craig Suttie has just said. Policing priorities are determined by Government, and thereafter the strategic plan should be a matter for the authority.

However, there is a more fundamental issue than partner agency buy-in and whether we have got that right in the shape of policing and what it could look like in the next few years, and that is that the service itself has to buy in. That was recognised in the foreword to the policing 2026 strategy, which was signed jointly by the chief constable and the chair of the Scottish Police Authority. It states that the staff's

"input and wellbeing are critical to our continued success."

However, when staff morale and wellbeing were talked about at the recent meeting of the Scottish Police Authority, the chief constable openly conceded that he did not see the situation improving any time soon. That is a fundamental weakness given that the foreword recognises the importance of successfully delivering a change programme as significant as this one. I am sure that the chief constable would say that he is not giving up on morale, but it could be construed that,

by saying, “I don’t see it getting better any time soon”, that is exactly what he was doing.

The situation is that—I have distilled the numbers down to police officers—only 16 per cent of police officers who responded to the previous survey said that they believed that they had enough resources, 13 per cent believed that managers were committed to improving ways of working, 12 per cent believed that the service was changing for the better and 11 per cent felt positive for the future.

Against that backdrop, it is hard to align the tacit statement that will be recorded in the notes of the previous meeting of the Scottish Police Authority—it took place on the same date as the terrorist incident at Westminster—with the statement in the strategy’s foreword that the staff’s

“input and wellbeing are critical to our continued success.”

To me, that is much more important than what is believed to be the aspiration for the future of the police service. If it cannot persuade and bring its workforce with it—not just the 17,234-ish police officers but the large, although depleted, number of support staff, whose survey results were similar to those for police officers—the strategy will be a waste of time. As things stand, because of what we have discussed from the start, when we talked about generalities rather than specifics, it is difficult to see how it will make the quantum leap from saying, “We have to introduce a culture change” and “A culture change is important to the successful implementation of the strategy” to making that happen.

I am not saying that police officers are change weary, but we are weary of being told that things will get better and then not seeing it. Often, that is because of organisational failure and not because of individuals’ lack of will.

The Convener: The public expectation of what the police force should provide and public demands on the police force have changed dramatically over the years. It seems that what the public expects from the police gets bigger every year. Was there a tipping point for that? Is it because of general societal change or because the police are expected to do tasks that partner organisations might have done in the past? Is enough of that considered in the 2026 strategy to ensure that the force is brought along with the changes that are happening?

Drew Livingstone: A strong theme in the policing 2026 strategy is the idea of establishing capacity through demand reduction. We believe that that is sound, but in certain areas in which restructuring has taken place, especially in the early stages, demand has increased both internally and externally. In the C3 division, for example, call volumes have increased. Allied to

that, station closures have forced demands down other channels and so on.

We require significant investment in information and communications technology and in staff in order to overcome that. In certain areas, we advocate that police staff can be a more cost-effective solution to address some of the demand issues.

Calum Steele: I am not sure that public expectations have changed. The public has always had fairly high expectations in what people want their police service to do. At the risk of stealing Assistant Chief Constable Malcolm Graham’s language, I add that the public has always known what the police do because it is the public that asks us to do it. When we ground ourselves in that reality, it acts as a stark wake-up call. We talk about changing priorities, demands, expectations and all the rest of it, but it is the public that tells us what it expects the police service to do. That can probably be distilled—again, I am stealing someone else’s language—into the idea that the public love the police but people, or the politicians, do not want to pay for us.

There are all the realities that exist in our wider society, and there are the expectations that are placed on us. There is a huge change as we move away from criminalising people in the way that we did in the past. That is undoubtedly a good thing, and the much trotted-out line that only one incident in five results in a crime being recorded is arguably a consequence of the change in the approach to policing rather than a change in reality. A crime that would, once upon a time, have resulted in someone being locked up now results—although it will probably still be legally defined as a crime—not in a crime being recorded but in some kind of diversionary activity being put in place.

From a societal perspective, those additional diversionary activities are much better and more effective than simply locking someone up and passing them on to someone else only to get them back in a few hours, days, weeks or months. That element of policing has changed. The wider holistic approach to the care and wellbeing of people in our society is far from perfect—let us not kid ourselves—but it is much more labour intensive than simply turning up, dragging someone away and putting them in a cell.

Craig Suttie: On the point about timing, a significant moment was April 2013, when the single service was brought into being. For the record, ASPS absolutely supported the single service and we still think that it was the right thing to do. We could not deliver policing in the way that we are currently doing without it. The service has produced great dividends and performance in

operational policing, but in other respects we have not been so good. Individual officers feel under pressure because they are under greater scrutiny, and the single service exacerbates that. Some people have used it as a rubber ball to kick around, which has not been helpful for individuals or for public understanding of what the service is delivering.

As a service, we fundamentally need to get better at explaining to the public what we actually do. That has been one of our failings in previous years, which has not helped matters.

Liam McArthur: I take issue with Calum Steele's comment—which Craig Suttie touched on—that the public know what we do because they ask us to do it. One of the concerns that I hear at a local level, and which is reflected nationwide, is about the amount of officer time that is taken up with managing cases involving vulnerable adults and others. That engagement is entirely appropriate, but I am not sure that the public recognise the extent to which it is on-going, rather than simply an interaction before the individual is passed on to the community mental health team or whoever. There is continued involvement beyond the initial contact, which I do not think the public see. The public do not realise that it takes up an amount of police resource on an on-going basis. It may be a nifty phrase, but I am not sure that Mr Graham has it entirely right about the public's expectations.

Calum Steele: He would not be the first assistant chief constable to be wrong. *[Laughter.]*

Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): We have heard you explain at some length that you felt that officers and staff did not have enough input into policing 2026. Can you say anything positive about it? What are the positive aspects of the report?

Craig Suttie: I think that it is a fundamentally positive report that looks to the future of policing and how we will deliver policing in the future. There have been great attempts to get staff input into it, but I understand why staff may feel that it is not important for them. If you stopped a police officer in the street just now and asked them about policing 2026, I am not convinced that they would know much about it. However, I think that fundamentally, it is the right direction to go in.

Part of the challenge is, as Calum Steele has already said, to bring staff along with us so that they understand what policing 2026 is about.

Rona Mackay: Your specific complaint about it is that staff were not included as much as they should have been.

Craig Suttie: I do not think that it is a complaint; I think that there have been attempts to include staff, but that is very difficult to do.

The report mentions the four pillars, which the new chief constable, as he then was, talked about last year. He talked about organisational capability and changing the organisational culture. That is massive and will take some time to do. We have to build on what has happened in the past, so it is a difficult job. I think that the service is trying to do it, but I am not sure whether it will achieve it or, if it does, how quickly.

Rona Mackay: Is it too late to have a culture change?

Craig Suttie: No. Culture develops over time.

Rona Mackay: Will that change be on-going?

Craig Suttie: Yes, it will take some time. However, we need to accept that the culture will have to change at a time when the number of officers and staff available to deliver the service is being reduced. If we live within our budget, which is a lot of what policing 2026 is about, that will have to happen. Some efficiencies and savings can take place, but they will be difficult to achieve.

Rona Mackay: Are any of them achievable? You say that it will be difficult to achieve them but, ultimately, are they achievable? Will they have to be achieved?

Craig Suttie: They are absolutely achievable—efficiencies are always achievable. Policing 2026 also talks about our operational delivery model and we need to look at that differently. We have come under pressure over how quickly we answer the phone or how quickly we dispatch resources. Those timings have become the target, rather than what we do with the calls that come in and how we respond to them. That is one way in which we can look at things differently and perhaps make some savings.

We talk about reducing demand; a lot of the demand within policing is internal demand or failure demand and we need to look at that differently. We need to stop the culture in which everything has to be reported up; we need to give more discretion and freedom to our very able officers who are out in the front line and to police staff—we need to let them get on with their jobs.

Calum Steele: I do not often try to pick up on what has been said by my friend Craig Suttie from ASPS, but I think that what he said about the culture having to change indicates the difficulty in implementing the changes that the policing 2026 document lays some of the foundations for, because just telling staff that their culture has to change, their approach has to change and the organisation's culture has to change does not necessarily mean that it will happen.

To answer the specific question about the positives, the document does a lot of things. The one thing that it does not do—self-evidently, no strategy document ever would, but it is what will matter most to the police service and to the police officers and staff who are working in it—is set out the how. It is not about what the problem is or why there is a problem but about how we are going to change it. The how does not exist anywhere in the document, and that is a big part of it.

I think that the document is neither here nor there, for what it is worth. However, if I am looking for positives, I will say this—and I hope that, despite the fact that I disagreed with his comment a few seconds ago, Craig Suttie will agree with me on this point. I am enormously positive about the fact that the Scottish Police Federation has been actively engaging with the policing 2026 team, in particular with Chief Superintendent Angela McLaren and Assistant Chief Constable Malcolm Graham. There has also been significant buy-in from Deputy Chief Constable Iain Livingstone on the whole matter.

We are hoping to bring in an academic of significant international standing to work with the service to try to identify and work on some of the change challenges that are likely to be presented. The service's willingness to work with us in that way thus far has been second to none—more than I have ever seen before. The service is not quite biting our hand off, but that is the closest metaphor that I can find. There is a lot of engagement and a willingness to utilise international expertise to try to put in place something that will work for the future of all communities in Scotland.

13:45

The consultation is still live. I know that some of what has been said makes it sound like we are giving it a bit of a hard time, but I sense from the team—Craig Suttie and Drew Livingstone will speak for themselves—a genuine willingness to take on board the issues that are being presented to them. That is not to underestimate in any way the scale of the challenge that the service is facing.

John Finnie: I want to ask about the workforce profile. Under the 2026 strategy, current police numbers are to be maintained in the coming year and the changes in the profile of the workforce are expected by 2020. I want to read part of the document and ask you to answer my question in light of it:

“We will increase the flexibility of the terms and conditions for both existing members and new roles with the organisation.”

How do you see things going with the workforce profile? Do you have concerns about your members' terms and conditions?

Drew Livingstone: Unison has significant concerns. As I mentioned earlier, the harmonisation project is overdue. We expect the service to modernise, if not necessarily improve, terms and conditions. We will have to engage with our members on that.

Unison has been calling for a thorough breakdown of the workforce profile and where police officers are deployed. There are attempts to address our concerns by producing a workforce planning model that will show where people are deployed. Previously, information on, for example, gender segregation in policing has not been available as part of the quality outcomes for the Scottish Police Authority—it was included at the last SPA board meeting. Formerly, all that analytical data about the impact on the working population in Police Scotland of having 17,234 police officers has been unavailable. I do not know why that has been the case. We want that to be addressed as part of the 2026 strategy. We want to look at exactly what the make-up of the workforce is.

As Unison Scotland's Stewart report says, between 2007 and 2012 only three out of the eight legacy forces—Central Scotland, Strathclyde and Tayside—conducted any research into what roles could be civilianised in policing. There is a shortage of knowledge about what we can do to deliver best value in a balanced workforce in the framework of the 2026 strategy.

Calum Steele: To answer the question, it comes back to the how—it is all very well talking about the what and the why but, ultimately, it comes down to the how. One thing that I am acutely aware of is that the terms “flexibility” and “modernisation” mean “cheaper”—they always have done and anyone who says otherwise is lying. If there is going to be a how that looks towards making things cheaper and making it more inconvenient to work as a police officer, that will work against the important work of trying to change the culture. It is difficult to see how changing the culture against a background of reducing numbers and increasing demand is anything other than opening a Pandora's box of problems.

Craig Suttie: We very much welcome the point about flexibility, which will be a very important one as we move forward. At times, flexibility can be cheaper, for example if we encourage the retention of a lot of our staff, particularly those with caring responsibilities. Our association is unrepresentative of the community, particularly on gender but also in other respects, and our force executive is even less representative, so there is a big challenge there. We have discussed that point with the policing 2026 project team. Our advice to them was to look at England and Wales to see

what tinkering with terms and conditions has done down there. It is a disaster, and it has done nothing for morale. I see no benefit in bringing that to Scotland.

John Finnie: I have a question specifically for the operational police officers' staff associations. In that statement, do you see any threat to the role or status of the office of constable?

Calum Steele: As is often the case, the answer to that question will have to be one of wait and see. There is always the danger that that could be one of the implied conditions that come from that expression.

In 2004, I was at the Scottish Police College, at the very significant launch of what was then called flexible working works, which was an initiative of the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland. The then president of ACPOS and, I think, the chief constable of Grampian—who might have been one and the same person—stood up in front of a packed lecture hall and said, "I can see no reason at all why every police officer in Scotland cannot work flexibly if they want to." Yet, here we are, 13 years later, and, let me tell you, trying to work flexibly in the Police Service of Scotland is the devil's own job. In the real-life experience of police officers, that will not be changed by writing some warm, cuddly words on a page.

John Finnie: And I suspect that we would all have an entirely different view of what flexibility is.

Craig Suttie: Absolutely; I can accept that. On John Finnie's question about the challenge to the office of constable, I hope that the strategy improves the situation. I see that there have been some moves to bring in non-warranted officers. That is a dangerous thing to do, but it is not the same as having the right person with the right skills being paid the right money to do the right job. I see some benefits in that. There are a number of roles that are being carried out by police officers just now that could be more ably carried out by police staff colleagues. As Drew Livingstone spoke about earlier, over the past few years we have taken officers off the front line and put them into offices to do those jobs—though perhaps not as well as by the people we have lost.

We had some concerns when we saw some of the early manifestations of policing 2026 in the advertisement of some very highly paid jobs in the service. We have raised those concerns with the executive and with others, and we have been reassured that those jobs are for people who have the specific skills to come in and make a change. It is fair to say that the policing 2026 strategy is about transformation. The service has been terrible at that over the past few years, so if we need to bring in some skills to drive that process,

that is the right thing to do. However, we need to remember that we cannot denude the service of our members who have real operational responsibility. We need to be careful when we talk about reducing the number of supervisors that we have elsewhere in the service.

John Finnie: May I read another quote to you, please? The chief constable said:

"a narrow assessment of success, predicated simply on crime figures, officer numbers and cost savings, no longer represents the true test of an effective police service capable of meeting the challenges of the future."

Do you have any concerns about that?

Calum Steele: Again, that statement was always true. The difficulty that this chief constable and many others have is that they created the illusion, and the thing that they say is no longer the measure of success is the very thing that they always said was just that. I am not quite saying that there has been a Damascene conversion, but it certainly has the appearance of one.

John Finnie: Drew Livingstone mentioned the year 2007. I do not have the figures to hand, but I wager that there have been at least 2,000—possibly 3,000—additional police officers in the period since then.

Drew Livingstone: Over the period since 2007, we have lost approximately 2,000 members of police staff. As we alluded to earlier, there are a large number of police staff vacancies. For example, in the C3 business area, there was an uplift of approximately 45 per cent in the number of police officers in area control rooms. However, part of HMICS's findings in the "Independent Assurance Review Police Scotland - Call Handling Final Report" was:

"HMICS would have expected a more detailed rationale and supporting data to justify this workforce balance."

Clearly, there were area control rooms and, indeed, service centres in the legacy force areas that were more intensively staffed with police staff, so the justification for protecting police officer numbers in such business areas is unclear.

Calum Steele: Of course, 2007 was a fortuitous year because it was the year when every politician and his or her granny was standing on a manifesto commitment to increase police officer numbers, with the notable exception of the convener's party. The 1,000 number was anchored to 2007 and there were 16,234 police officers then, so the uplift is broadly 1,000.

John Finnie: I want to ask about the effect of that 1,000, because we need to understand whether the finance is in place to deal with the workload. Has the workload been assessed? Are we deploying the appropriate people for the tasks? I suggest that Drew Livingstone has told us that

we are not. Is assessing that part of the 2026 strategy? It is a fairly simple series of things, although it could involve a very complex process or could be treated as one. However, what are we to do and what do we need in order to do it in terms of human and financial resources?

Craig Suttie: That is part of the 2026 strategy, but I cannot see how we can look forward without looking very carefully at how we use resources. We have always said that 17,234 was just a number that was made up at one point and that it is not really for us to decide whether it is too many or too few. What we need to do is to ensure that the officers and the budget that are available to us are used as effectively and efficiently as they can be.

Calum Steele: The issue of demand is very important, because demand comes in many ways, shapes and forms and it is not just about the number of times people phone the police. There are not only demands but expectations about reassurance from the community presence of patrolling police officers and various policing initiatives. For example, we have to have enough police officers to be able to deal with elections, and—let us be honest—we have no shortage of those. There is also a Scotland versus England football fixture coming up and we have sporadic no-notice demonstrations taking place. Those things are demands in their own right, but they do not feature as such in the broad statistics that we have.

The way in which the organisation has responded to some of the financial challenges has created additional demands. For example, we have reduced the number of custody centres and are now transporting people for greater distances in the backs of cars to put them in a cell. That is a danger and I believe that it is probably one of the biggest risks that the service is facing.

There is a host of issues around demand, but I fundamentally do not disagree with the point in Mr Finnie's question, because we have to understand the holistic nature of what it is that the police are doing and are expected to do before we can come to an answer about demand. Traditionally, the answer was always what our starting point was: if we had 1,000 officers and the question was about how many police officers we would have if the budget did not change, the answer would always be 1,000. However, I genuinely fear that, in this current exercise, we are looking at the money first, rather than looking for a true answer to what policing in Scotland could cost and then having a conversation with people such as this committee and with communities about whether they would be willing to pay for it.

Ben Macpherson (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP): On the point that Calum Steele has

just made, is there a responsibility on all of us as politicians—

Calum Steele: Yes! *[Laughter.]*

Ben Macpherson: —and those working as public servants and beyond to increase awareness among the public and other service providers of the level of demand for policing and its complexity?

Calum Steele: Probably the only answer that I can give to that question is yes. One of the Scottish Parliament committees had a round-table meeting on the demands placed on the police service and, after that evidence session, some of the people who had been present said to me, "Let's not kid ourselves—the police service is the out-of-hours service for every other service." If we maintain that expectation—and I do not think that it will ever change—we must ensure that that catch-all safety net for everyone else is not in itself undermined as a consequence of the budget challenges that we face.

14:00

Ultimately, although police officers and support staff might not be happy at their work—they might be working long hours and getting assaulted or injured—it is our communities that will feel the greatest brunt of that situation. That will result in an ebbing of public confidence across the piece; it will drive down economic activity; and, as a nation, we will go backwards. The fundamental building blocks of successful communities start with shelter and sustenance and then move on to safety and security. If it is taken as a given that, at the very least, we have basic shelter and sustenance, the importance of safety and security cannot be undermined thereafter.

The Convener: In light of our discussions over the past hour and the issues that have been raised, do you think that the ambition and the aspiration in the policing 2026 strategy document are achievable in the timescale that has been set out?

Calum Steele: No.

The Convener: What is the reason for that?

Calum Steele: The document talks a lot about what the problem is and what the service needs to do; what it does not say—although it is implied in many places—is what the service will stop doing.

I will give a simple example. An underlying assumption is that a frail woman in her dotage is in effect more likely to be a victim of crime than a young strapping male, but there is no scientific evidence that that is the case. The danger is that the service will, in certain areas of crime, move to

becoming facilitators for the insurance industry, and that would not be good for public confidence.

There was a fairly recent withering commentary in one of the tabloids—I forget which one; it might have been the *Daily Record* or *The Sun*—with regard to Bill Leckie’s experience as a victim of crime. Although there was a lot of hyperbole in the article, it laid bare existing concerns that the police service risks being seen as one that will walk away from certain elements of the communities that it serves while it talks about chasing other parts of it. It should not be one or the other—it must be one and the other. If we give up—or are seen to be giving up—on community presences and engagement or taking existing concerns seriously, we will lose the public’s support.

The importance of tackling cybercrime, which is alluded to heavily in the strategy, risks being overplayed simply because of the reality of geopolitics. On the one hand, if we are to look at people calling each other names and being offensive on Facebook and Twitter—which, to be honest, there is no shortage of—we will tie up the police service forever and a day; we will be doing nothing else. On the other, if we are to look at the complexities of online fraud, child exploitation, paedophilia and so on, the fact is that many of those crimes take place through multitudes of proxy servers located in nations across the world to which we simply will not be able to get access.

Identifying the problems is one thing, but pretending that we are going to be able to solve them is another entirely. We need a much more honest discussion about the whole cyber element of the strategy instead of simply talking about it in the hope that people will believe that, because it is an online crime, the service must throw a fortune at it, even though that might not result in any material change in the experience of the member of the public who has been a victim of crime through that media.

Craig Suttie: Calum Steele could probably have stopped at “No”. [Laughter.]

Calum Steele: I did, but I was asked for a specific reason.

The Convener: I did ask him.

Craig Suttie: It is interesting that policing 2026 is a 10-year strategy, because we have only got nine years left to deliver it. The term is unfortunate, and I do not think that we should have called it “2026”. I filed it next to 2025 and 2020, which were other initiatives that have been started.

The strategy will succeed in so far as we will try to look at what we are doing in a different way. That is a big challenge. There again, if we had listened to people such as Professor Harry Burns a number of years ago and started to put all our

resource into early intervention, we might not be in the position that we are in.

Drew Livingstone: I kind of agree with that. It depends on exactly how prepared the service is and on the planning and preparation that go into delivering competent and coherent ICT strategies and workforce planning models. The strategy certainly talks a good game in identifying where the risks lie.

Craig Suttie mentioned Sir Harry Burns. I do not know whether anyone else here has heard him speak about his ideas on salutogenesis and identifying the problems. If we foist on people more remote platforms for contacting the police that only leave them more isolated, to what extent will we deliver a self-fulfilling prophecy? There are all sorts of very good ideas in the strategy document, but addressing them—the “how” that Calum Steele has referred to—is the issue.

Liam McArthur: On the “how” question, we have heard concerns from the Auditor General about incomplete records and poor financial management; indeed, in an previous session, I asked Calum Steele about the expectation that Police Scotland’s deficit of £180 million—and growing—would be turned around in the next two or three years. Given what has happened to date, that lacks credibility. Whatever the “how” is, it will come with a price tag attached. Are you confident that the financial underpinning for the policing 2026 strategy is credible, or are we just being told that the deficits that have built up are going to be turned around because that is what the SPA and Police Scotland feel that we need to hear?

Craig Suttie: There is a bit of that, but policing 2026 is more about changing the way in which we do things and creating capacity. That is the real challenge. It sounds really simple, but I am not convinced that we will be able to do that within the timeframe. We can try, but other demands will come in.

I note that i6 was also put forward as a way of increasing capacity; we did not achieve that, so we will face challenges in doing this. We might be able to achieve it, because we could project ahead and reduce the number of policy officers that we recruit. Policing 2026 talks about reducing police staff as well as about bringing other police staff in, so we could do that and balance the budget, but is that the police service that you want?

Calum Steele: I broadly agree with Craig Suttie’s observations. The service could balance the budget if it wanted to, but at what cost?

Members will be aware of the narrative that the failure to deliver i6 has set the service back by five years, but I think that the period it has been set back is much longer than that. We have very fragile and antiquated information technology,

which impacts on the capacity of the service, and if we do not deliver on our IT, we impinge on the ability to create additional capacity to deal with demand. That is, undoubtedly, the biggest problem.

When the service was established with the expectation of saving £1.1 billion in its first decade of existence, that was underpinned by the expectation that it would be delivered. That has gone, and everybody knows that it has gone. As parliamentarians, every one of you has an obligation to say that we cannot hold the service to the delivery of savings that were based on something that no longer exists. It is also worth noting that when the budget was set—or, certainly, when the expectations were set—the terror threat around the world was totally different, and the situation has created additional demands and drawdowns on the police service.

The service can save money, but the question is what that will mean for the quality of investigation and victim care. Something that is directly linked to the service—although it is not its responsibility to deliver it—is the unavailability of medical professionals to undertake examinations, which affects the experience that rape victims have to go through, particularly in Orkney and Shetland. All of those things impact on people's view of the police service. As horrific as the experiences of a victim or survivor of rape are, the additional horrendous experience of having to wait several days before they can properly wash can only make things worse. Even though it is a medical consideration, it still reflects badly on the police service.

This is a suspicion rather than an evidenced position, but, ultimately, the reality of the wider justice arena—the inconvenience, the operation of court systems and so on—makes it unattractive for many people to put themselves forward to give evidence on a regular basis. The situation is even more challenging for female professionals, because of the self-evident expectation in their own societies that they will be the primary carers. There is a whole host of different things to consider. We can have less investigation of our murders; we can have less investigation of our organised gangs and our organised criminals; or we can undertake fewer investigations in a variety of different areas, but that will filter through into the experiences of victims and impact on public confidence.

Liam McArthur: Can I come in briefly, convener?

The Convener: Very briefly, because I want to move on.

Liam McArthur: On the specific point about financial management and oversight, the Auditor General was pretty explicit in her criticisms. Is

there evidence that those safeguards and that oversight have been tightened up so that we will no longer see some of the problems that have emerged in the past?

Craig Suttie: Yes. From speaking to senior members of the executive, I see that they have tighter oversight. They have learnt from what has happened over the past few years and we are in a better place, but that does not take away from the very significant challenges that they will face in delivering the budget.

Calum Steele: I am more optimistic, but I am not completely convinced. Our service still tends to be penny wise and pound foolish; indeed, the undermining of the morale, the confidence and the belief of the officers who deliver the service goes back to those penny-pinching elements.

I do not think that, up until very recently, many of the senior managers in the service—and I include a large number of Craig Suttie's members in that and to some extent possibly even some chief officers—genuinely believed that there was a financial problem facing the service. It was a case of their thinking, "We'll continue to do this because we can. It won't be my problem, because I'll be retiring and someone else will have to pick up the pieces." There was a failure to communicate the reality of the financial situation to the wider workforce; things were put in brutal terms—"You're not going to be getting overtime", for example—and then something would happen or an initiative would come along and overtime would get thrown at the most ridiculous of causes. I think that the service was kidding itself about the reality of what it was facing in many areas. We did not deal well with the communication about the reduction of counter hours or with the issue of station closures. I do not believe that it was a service issue as such, but it should have been handled better by the authority.

All of those things might have been less painful had they been much better explained not just to the communities but to the police officers who had responsibilities for the area. However, you are up against a police service that is inherently cynical about many of the promises about saving money and improving. When you say, "We're going to close a station but we are still going to have the same presence that we had before," everybody knows that that is not the case. They see it as nothing more than making cuts for the sake of it and not necessarily understanding the impact on wider organisational capability and capacity.

The Convener: I am sorry, Mr Livingstone, but I will have to ask you to be brief.

Drew Livingstone: We are certainly more optimistic. We are looking to echo the sentiments of ASPS, and we think that the approaches to

financial monitoring and reporting, including areas such as the Police Scotland internal audit strategy, are certainly positive developments.

However, I will temper that by saying that we would like to see more of a shift from the management of cost to the management of value. As a case in point, the contact, command and control division has in four years run £12.5 million over budget and any suggestion of significant savings being delivered by that business area has been somewhat eradicated to the point that the Scottish Government gateway review is now suggesting that there are only modest savings to be made within that programme. Multiple sites have been shut down, but only modest savings are being delivered.

We have to be a bit more realistic about maintaining a footprint and about what we can actually deliver in terms of localism across Scotland. Technology is developing at such a pace that we need to look again at how we maintain that footprint and that profile within our communities.

14:15

Margaret Mitchell: I suppose this is a catch-all question. The cabinet secretary has said that, despite the transformation in the police service, the right balance and the correct mix between civilian staff and police officers have not yet been achieved. You have already given us lots of examples of that situation, but I want to drill down and find out whether there has been any in-depth analysis of the civilian staff, what they do, what their core function is and what you need to operate, regardless of whatever. You come to the committee and tell us these things, but where is all of this written down to ensure that it is right up there and can be seen for every decision that is taken?

It is the same with the number of police. Calum Steele has talked about various things, including the fear of making cybercrime a priority when there are so many other things that are not recorded as crimes but which the police are involved in day to day. Where has all of that been put down on paper so that it can be seen whenever this particular discussion comes up to ensure that you do not have to keep coming to this or that parliamentary committee and telling us the same things? Where is that information available so that we can look at it right from the beginning of the process of considering the difficult decisions about what to fund?

The Convener: I must make a plea for the witnesses to be very brief, because we are running short of time.

Calum Steele: The simple answer is that there is very little analysis. Ironically, the area of the service where we would expect analysis to be undertaken is corporate function, but because it is going to be significantly reduced, it is less likely that it will have the capability to undertake analysis in the future. Of course, any element of analysis creates a degree of bureaucracy. It has to be accepted that bureaucracy will be part of the machine in any large organisation, but over the past number of years we have been stripping out what we have considered to be unnecessary bureaucracy.

Craig Suttie: I think that that analysis is what the 2026 strategy is about. Unfortunately, in order to cut budgets, we have over the past few years been looking at reducing the number of our police staff members in what I think has been a brutal, uncaring and not very sophisticated way. Ms Mitchell is right that we need to start building from the bottom up again and look at what we need to deliver and the skills that we need in that respect. As I have said, that is part of what the 2026 strategy is about.

Drew Livingstone: Certainly, business cases were presented that included the removal of police staff, with the justification being that 20 to 30 per cent of their duties would be absorbed by local policing. However, that is simply not true, because some units deal wholly with citations work, firearms inquiries and so on. The problem is that we have stripped away police staff resources and taken capacity away from police officers.

The Convener: As there are no further questions from the committee, I thank our witnesses for coming along and for the evidence that they have given.

We now move into private session.

14:17

Meeting continued in private until 14:19.

This is the final edition of the *Official Report* of this meeting. It is part of the Scottish Parliament *Official Report* archive and has been sent for legal deposit.

Published in Edinburgh by the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, the Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP

All documents are available on
the Scottish Parliament website at:

www.parliament.scot

Information on non-endorsed print suppliers
is available here:

www.parliament.scot/documents

For information on the Scottish Parliament contact
Public Information on:

Telephone: 0131 348 5000

Textphone: 0800 092 7100

Email: sp.info@parliament.scot



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba